- **Spring 2022 (Vol. 4, Issue 1)**

UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND, BALTIMORE

CATALYST

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STUDENT LIFE
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Studying During a Pandemic: Two-Year Degree Program Students Reflect on Challenges, Achievements as They Prepare to Graduate

For these students, the pandemic has been a part of their entire time studying and training at UMB.

Jen Badie

Fear, uncertainty, the unknown. Many University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) students have dealt with those emotions for the past two years during the ups and downs of the COVID-19 pandemic. But one group of students has faced perhaps an even more unusual circumstance: They are earning two-year degrees, so the pandemic has been a part of their entire time studying and training at UMB.

UMB offers numerous two-year programs such as the Bachelor of Science Dental Hygiene and Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) programs at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) and the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at the University of Maryland School of Nursing.

Some students in those programs said they faced challenges from the pandemic even before arriving at UMB in fall 2020. For instance, Hee Yeon Kim, who is completing the dental hygiene program, said the pandemic indefinitely postponed her permanent residency interview.

“When the pandemic first hit, I thought it would last about six months. However, things escalated quickly, and my permanent residency interview was canceled by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services due to the pandemic,” she said. “I had been counting on becoming a permanent resident for UMB to consider me to be an in-state student, so I thought I would have to give up the admission for at least a year. Thankfully, UMB granted me in-state status, so I was able to pursue my dream without delay.”

Max O’Sullivan, who was an active member of the Navy for 12 years before coming to UMB and will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, was working at a military trauma center in North Carolina when the pandemic started.

“Moving here was stressful on my wife because of the military restrictions: I couldn’t leave our duty station. She had to come look at a house with her mom in Maryland, and I was not able to come, so that was the first challenge,” he said. “The second challenge was we moved here at 24 weeks’ pregnant expecting our first child, so there was kind of fear of the unknown coming into a new place.”

Challenges and Positives of Online Learning

Once at UMB, the challenges continued when the academic year got under way in fall 2020 since many classes had to be offered online.

“It has been very frustrating. With my military experience, nursing is very hands-on: You learn by doing, being in person, engaging with people, patients, instructors,” O’Sullivan said. “So for me, not having that was actually a very big challenge. As far as coursework, imagine taking the hardest courses you’ve ever taken, and doing it through Zoom.”

Kim saw the bright side of online classes: “I loved waking up five minutes before my lectures for the didactic courses and wearing my fuzzy socks all day. Professors were attentive to the students’ needs and kept us encouraged,” she said.

As the pandemic wore on, these students were able to get hands-on instruction working in clinics and the hospital, though Venkata Ratna Kumar Rudravaram, DDS, a resident in UMSOD’s AEGD program, said he felt uncertainty when working in the AEGD clinic.

“It was hard to communicate with patients. I struggled to get used to wearing respirators and surgical masks,” he said. “Patients were scared and apprehensive to make dental appointments, and I was also worried about going to school and getting sick. It was a very uncertain time, and that was a big obstacle to overcome.”

He added, “UMB did an amazing job providing all health care providers with COVID vaccinations at the very beginning and providing extra protection.”

Like many others, they also said they felt isolation because of COVID-19 restrictions and the lack of socialization with their peers.

“My whole career, people have said you need to find study groups while you’re in nursing school. Because of COVID, for my entire four semesters, I did not have a single study group, so a lot of it was relying on yourself,” O’Sullivan said. “But if you’re struggling with something, how are you going to get better at it? So it was becoming very resourceful, meshing styles of studying together to create what worked best for me. And it differed every semester.”

Meaningful Connections

Patty Alvarez, PhD, MS, assistant vice president of student affairs, said these students experienced UMB in a unique way.

“For some students, becoming engaged ‘on campus’ was a little more challenging as they balanced the stress of the pandemic and its impacts on their lives and academic experiences. For other students, it was a little easier to attend online events or take advantage of student support resources and services due to the virtual format,” she said. “I hope that students were able to make meaningful connections with their peers that will continue beyond graduation.”

Some students found resources at UMB to give them support like Kim, who participated in the Crazy Stressed Asians discussion group.

“I have become aware of how some view people like myself differently,” she said. “The group has been a great comfort.”

Hee Yeon Kim hopes to work part time in a public health job and part time in a private

practice job after her graduation from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry in May. Photo by Matthew D'Agostino

'Best Years of My Life'

In spite of what they've had to overcome during the pandemic, the students said they feel pride in all they have accomplished.

"It gave me immense pleasure providing service to people who were in pain during the pandemic because a lot of private offices were shut down," Rudravaram said. "I remember on some days, only the AEGD clinic was seeing and treating patients; all other clinics were closed. I felt a great sense of purpose, and it reminded me why I enjoy dentistry so much."

Kim was a finalist for Grid Pitch 2021, a student incubator program at the University of Maryland Graduate School.

"The venture idea I entered with is an oral hygiene product subscription plan that promotes children's oral health through letters from the Tooth Fairy. By the time I graduate, I will have registered it as a nongovernmental organization [NGO]," said Kim, who hopes to work part time in a public health job and part time in a private practice job as well as make her NGO a reality.

The students said that earning their degrees during the pandemic has taught them to be patient and to remain positive as they face challenges.

"You can't control everything. You need to make sure that you remain calm and adapt to the environment or the situation," O'Sullivan said.

Rudravaram is thankful for his time at UMB.

"Despite having to live through a pandemic, my experience at UMB has been the best years of my life," he said. "I'm so thankful for my AEGD family, and I have built lifelong friendships. The people I've met while in AEGD are so talented, and the faculty are so knowledgeable."

Jen Badie

Jen Badie is the managing editor in the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

A Sharp Leader: The Shining Light of SWCOS' Wendy Shaia

She has has led the school's Social Work Community Outreach Service since 2013.

Charles Schelle

Standing in the shadow of the Superdome in 2006 after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma devastated New Orleans the previous year, an American Red Cross worker found herself feeling guilty.

Wendy Shaia, EdD, MSW '01, had the luxury of being able to return to her hotel room or fly back to Washington, D.C., to evaluate the Red Cross' long-term recovery efforts in the Big Easy and collect her paycheck while the people she encountered continued to be traumatized.

"If 100 percent of people do not have the opportunity to be able to make it, we are failing as a society," Shaia said. "We don't often say that because we're caring, good people. But if you're caring, good people, and you're not having an impact, then what's the point?"

Why couldn't nonprofits use their money to help people who received Federal Emergency Management Agency money but couldn't finish rebuilding their roof? Or help find dry land and a property with working indoor plumbing?

"I got to the point where it was very hard for me to even really reconcile my role in that," said Shaia, a clinical associate professor at the University of Maryland School of Social Work

(UMSSW) who has led the school's Social Work Community Outreach Service (SWCOS) since 2013. "The way that I have lived my life, since then, is asking myself those questions."

Admittedly, they are uncomfortable questions when they are turned inward toward the organizations where she has worked since. That hasn't changed one bit since then for Shaia. She asked herself this question: What is the point of being in the business of helping people meet their basic needs if you can't address the external forces impacting their lives?

SHARP Framework

Less than a decade later as executive director of SWCOS, her clinical director, Christopher S. Beegle, MSW, LCSW-C, asked Shaia a similar question about the effectiveness of the Family Connections program, which helps families meet basic needs when their children meet the risk criteria of maltreatment. He said he kept helping the same families who were coming back for more help.

Peeling back the layers, Shaia and SWCOS found that they weren't addressing the root causes and barriers these families would face. Most important of all, they weren't talking about race; racism has been the genesis of much of the poverty in Baltimore. That grew into bigger conversations about the policies inherent in many organizations and government services that fostered structural oppression and systemic racism.

To get to the point where the program could start funding immediate needs for families without putting so many conditions on receiving assistance, the staff had to reverse-engineer how assistance would be granted.

That led to Shaia creating a framework that would train social workers and the clinical students at SWCOS through a lens of anti-racist policies. In 2019, Shaia published this framework called SHARP:

- **Structural oppression:** What are the issues in the person's physical and social environment that impact the person and his or her ability to be successful?
- **Historical context:** What historical issues impacting the person's environment/community might be relevant to the issues the person is experiencing now? How has this history contributed to the situation the person is in now?
- **Analysis of role:** What will be the provider's role in this service relationship: maintainer or disruptor of the status quo? There is no neutral space.
- **Reciprocity and mutuality:** What strengths and gifts can the person share with the provider and with his or her community?
- **Power:** What can the person do, alone and/or with others, to change the impact of historical and structural oppression?

Since then, that framework has been applied to all of the programs within SWCOS that has made it a true wraparound organization. There is the Positive Schools Center that focuses on the well-being of K-12 principals and staff and empowers them with strategies to have students communicate with each other to resolve conflicts as a deterrent to suspensions. Or

the Social Worker in the Library program where patrons at Enoch Pratt Free Library branches can get assistance from a Master of Social Work student. And the list goes on with program management, public policy work, and care coordination for families referred to SWCOS.

In fall 2021, a restructuring of Promise Heights put that organization under the SWCOS umbrella in tandem with the Positive Schools Center for the school-based programs in the Upton and Druid Heights neighborhoods.

Now, the SHARP framework will grow beyond SWCOS to directly train 2,000 social services employees in Maryland to study its effectiveness thanks to a five-year, $2.9 million grant provided through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative in partnership with the Kennedy Krieger Institute, Baltimore Racial Justice Action, and the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Growing Up in Jamaica and England

While her work in New Orleans is the genesis of the inward-facing questions, looking back at Shaia's life, which could influence the fiction books she writes as a hobby, you can see how key moments factored into who she became as a person and her work.

"I learned to lead by making a lot of mistakes and having a lot of grace from people. I had good mentors and good supervisors," Shaia said, including a former Army captain at the Department of Defense who saw her potential and brought her to tears when he told her in no uncertain terms she could do more.

Born in England to Jamaican parents, Shaia and her family shuffled between the two countries.

"What I think I did not anticipate was how difficult it would be for me to move back to England after having lived in Jamaica," Shaia said. "Some of that is my personality because I never run from a fight, which is a flaw of mine. I am working on that, I really am."

Racist bullying — including children spitting at her, an assault — would fuel those fights. Her teachers didn't make it any better to be at school either.

"It was one of those things where the teachers would turn away when the children would hit me, and that really began to sort of fester and grow in me," she recalled. The system that should have encouraged her success wasn't there to protect her.

Strong Leader

Maybe it isn't a surprise that Shaia chose not to funnel anger, resentment, and hate into how she runs SWCOS and instead created a tight-knit, uplifting environment.

The way Shaia transformed SWCOS organizationally is her ethos: breaking down barriers and celebrating people.

“She’s a strong leader, but she does it with grace and compassion,” said Nia Speaks, program management specialist at SWCOS.

The SWCOS staff says she eliminated a siloed office environment through a restructuring that fostered more communication among programs. And they say that she memorizes the names of every staff member’s children, checks in on the well-being of her staff, and hosts staff at her home for annual retreats where she makes a flavorful jerk chicken.

The people-first office does not mean that the community work comes last.

Becky Davis, MSW, assistant director for SWCOS, said Shaia has shown her how high standards can be woven into a results-oriented workplace without being a detriment to being fulfilled as a person.

“Wendy has really showed me a lot about how you manage holding folks to a high level of accountability to the community, while at the same time being flexible, focusing on people’s self-care, and making sure that our department is a nurturing and welcoming place,” Davis said.

Charles Schelle

Charles Schelle is lead social media specialist in the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

This is a landmark year for the UMB CURE Scholars Program as its first cohort of scholars, who began as sixth-graders, will be graduating from high school and heading off to college. The scholars celebrated the huge milestone with a special graduation ceremony on May 6 at Westminster Hall. Photo by Matthew D'Agostino

Red-Letter Days: CURE Scholars Accepted to College

See full article at http://hdl.handle.net/10713/17830

Jena Frick

Jena Frick is a senior media relations specialist in the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

“Their openness and willingness to let me try something new was amazing and quite frankly was where I found my passion, on that line between law and business,” Tamika Tremaglio, JD, MBA, says of Maryland Carey Law’s willingness to let her pursue her MBA while she was also in law school. “Certainly, but for the opportunity to do that, I would not be here in this role and would not have the unique perspective I am able to offer.” Photo courtesy of National Basketball Players Association

A-Game: Alum Tamika Tremaglio brings legal and business acumen to National Basketball Players Association

Christianna McCausland

She credits her time at Maryland Carey Law with putting her on the path to her new position as executive director of the players union.

Tamika Tremaglio, JD ’95, MBA, earned her law degree at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law but now finds herself working on court proceedings of a different sort.

Tremaglio began her four-year tenure as executive director with the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) in January, and she credits her time at Maryland Carey Law with providing the foundation she needed to take on the job of safeguarding the rights of NBA players.

“When I came to the University of Maryland, getting a JD/MBA was unheard of,” she said. “Most people went to law school to avoid numbers. I went to law school thinking there must be a way to join the two.”

She approached the dean at Maryland Carey Law and asked to remain enrolled there while also attending the University of Baltimore's MBA program. "He said, 'No one's ever done it, but why not?'

"Their openness and willingness to let me try something new was amazing and quite frankly was where I found my passion, on that line between law and business," she said. "Certainly, but for the opportunity to do that, I would not be here in this role and would not have the unique perspective I am able to offer."

Tamika Tremaglio, shown with NBA Commissioner Adam Silver, began her four-year tenure as executive director with the National Basketball Players Association in January. Photo courtesy of NBPA

Tremaglio came to NBPA after a 26-year career in consulting. She recently retired as the managing principal of Deloitte's Greater Washington practice. While at Deloitte, Tremaglio was integral to bringing the consulting firm on as a corporate partner in Maryland Carey Law's Diversity and Inclusion Scholars Initiative, and she remains a vice chairman of the Board of Visitors. Her business acumen and experience — NBPA was a Deloitte client and Tremaglio participated in the WNBPA's collective bargaining agreement negotiations in 2020 — are a winning combination.

"The union is in a good position to work on its business aspect, a place I felt I could lend tremendous value," Tremaglio said. "Having a business and a legal background, it was the perfect way to go into this next phase of my career."

'Reimagine the Possible'

Tremaglio is a high-energy, high-achieving individual. She kicked off her tenure with NBPA by spending the first 21 days asking staff to "reimagine the possible" to encourage out-of-the-box thinking at the union. She entered her new position with a clear idea of her objectives and a plan to execute them. Her focus as executive director will be in three areas: business opportunities, the future of the game, and the development and protection of players.

From a business perspective, she sees a game that is in a healthy place. The NBA is a global brand and, since COVID-19 significantly changed live sports, the NBA and NBPA have jointly

found and continue to develop new revenue streams. Tremaglio wants to make sure all this good fortune serves the players.

“I’m really focused on generational wealth,” Tremaglio said. “There’s a difference between making lots of money and having lots of money. Understanding that and looking at how we structure our organizations will be significant for us.”

The St. Mary’s County, Md., native laughs that in her interview process she was asked her thoughts on the tax implications of cryptocurrency. The world is changing, and she wants to be forward thinking about the future of basketball. That means considering technology, like players using wearable technology on the court, but also the future of players as voices for social change.

Tamika Tremaglio talks with movie director and basketball fan Spike Lee. Photo courtesy of NBPA

“Ten years ago, no one in basketball was thinking about social equity, but now we know the players have a significant platform to make real change, and that’s very exciting to me,” Tremaglio said.

When it comes to protecting and supporting players, Tremaglio says NBPA is interested in their lives on and off the court. “How do we prepare them for the future, for retirement, and for the next stage of their lives?” Tremaglio said. “Historically, we have always looked at that from a physical perspective, but we are also focused on mental health. Given the pandemic, many [players], like so many others around the country, have suffered mentally, so that is first and foremost for us.”

‘They Are Real People’

It’s early days in Tremaglio’s tenure at NBPA, but one thing she thinks would surprise people is that while the players may be stars on the court, off the court they are regular human beings.

“They have been so commercialized, to some extent, that we forget they are real people, that they have families and hopes and aspirations, even beyond the game,” Tremaglio said.

That fact was driven home when she attended the annual “Legends” breakfast for retired players. She points to players in attendance like Dikembe Mutombo, who opened a hospital in his home country of Congo to honor his deceased mother, and Jerry West, who spoke openly about his mental health struggles growing up and how basketball was his healthy outlet.

“To hear their stories and their level of generosity and kindness was overwhelming,” Tremaglio said.

Christianna McCausland

Christianna McCausland is a freelance writer based in Baltimore.

“I’m literally a 10-minute walk from work. I don’t need a car, and it’s just incredibly convenient to be able to wake up in the morning knowing that I’m not going to get stuck in traffic. My neighbors are awesome, too. People are super friendly, and everything I need is right here just across the street,” says Justin Hanna, who works in the School of Social Work and bought a house in Pigtown with the help of the Live Near Your Work program.

Photo by Matthew D’Agostino

Opening Doors: Live Near Your Work Marks $1 Million Milestone

Laura Lee
1 day ago

Justin Hanna still can’t believe he’s a homeowner.

“I kind of have those moments every time I’m cooking or when I’m making coffee in the morning. It’s still kind of a shock, where I’m like, ‘This is mine. This is my home,’ ” he said.

Last year, Hanna, a facilities manager at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, moved into a renovated three-level townhouse in Pigtown with financial assistance from the University of Maryland, Baltimore’s (UMB) Live Near Your Work (LNYW) program, which in December 2021 marked a milestone by surpassing the $1 million mark in homebuying grants awarded to University employees.

Hanna’s spacious and modern home boasts two bedrooms, three baths, a finished basement, and a fenced-in backyard patio complete with a firepit. Standing in his kitchen and speaking above the whir of a blender, Hanna marvels at the home he never imagined he’d be able to buy before age 40.

“I was under the impression that I needed to save X amount of money, and I was like, ‘There’s no way. I won’t be able to do that anytime soon,’ ” Hanna said. He calls the LNYW

program an “absolute blessing” that allowed him to combine his love of city life with his desire to be able to walk to work.

“I’m literally a 10-minute walk from work. I don’t need a car, and it’s just incredibly convenient to be able to wake up in the morning knowing that I’m not going to get stuck in traffic. My neighbors are awesome, too. People are super friendly, and everything I need is right here just across the street,” he said, motioning toward a shopping center up the block.

The LNYW program is a homebuying assistance benefit for UMB employees that offers $16,000 as well as a matching $2,500 Baltimore City grant to be used toward the down payment and closing costs on homes in nine West Baltimore neighborhoods: Barre Circle, Franklin Square, Hollins Market, Mount Clare, Pigtown/Washington Village, Poppleton, Union Square, and Druid Heights and Heritage Crossing, which were added in 2020.

‘Direct Act of Community Engagement’

Dawn Rhodes, DBA, MBA, UMB’s senior vice president and chief business and finance officer, says hitting the $1 million mark was “huge” as the program continues to make employees’ dreams of homeownership a reality.

“It means that 63 of our employees have purchased homes since 2018,” Rhodes said. “We’re just very excited about where we’ve gotten in such a short period of time.”

Rhodes views homeownership as an economic step up for many employees who may not have been able to set aside the significant amount of money required for a down payment.

“Many of our homeowners are female. We have people who are across the educational spectrum. We have people of all different races. This, to me, was a direct act of community engagement,” she said.

Rhodes was instrumental in revitalizing the LNYW program, which increased the previously rarely used benefit from $2,500 to $16,000 in 2018 and boosted community partnerships with Live Baltimore, the Southwest Partnership, and GO Northwest Housing Resource Center to offer homebuying workshops, financial counseling, neighborhood tours, and a housing fair.

A Winning Proposition

According to Rhodes, participating in LYNW is a winning proposition on all fronts.

“Our employees win by establishing personal wealth through homeownership,” she said. “The city wins because these were previously homes that taxes weren’t being paid on. And the neighborhood wins because there’s a new neighbor who helps stabilize and energize the neighborhood.”

Hanna agrees. “There’s something about saying I’m an owner that just boosts my confidence and my self-esteem, knowing that this is my home and I’m here as long as I want to be here,” he said.

Laura Lee

Laura Lee is a senior media relations specialist in the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

B’more for Health Babies team members prepare supplies. BHB promotes breastfeeding by providing breast pumps, pillows, and other tools that moms and babies need. Groups

Photo courtesy of B’more for Healthy Babies

Promoting Breastfeeding: B’more for Healthy Babies Offers Services, Support Groups for Mothers in Upton/Druid Heights

Lisa Lewenz

Jameka Hansen wishes she had had advice and support groups available to her when she was breastfeeding her four children, who now range in age from toddler to teenager.

Because of this, Hansen feels a strong sense of empathy for the women needing answers about breastfeeding whom she has assisted with B’more for Healthy Babies (BHB), a place-based initiative through Promise Heights designed to improve the infant mortality rate in the Upton and Druid Heights neighborhoods. Hansen repeatedly made important parenting

choices without outside advice or guidance and now recognizes how community support would have helped when she made the decision to breastfeed each of her children.

“I’m from Baltimore, but I lived in Pennsylvania for 10 or 11 years, so my first two kids are technically from Pennsylvania. It was just me and my husband at the time — I didn’t have any other family there, so I’m not even sure how I made the decision to choose breastfeeding,” said Hansen, a BHB advocate in the program’s parent-led Community Achievers group. “I guess I wanted to be as natural as possible. I had natural births, so I wasn’t thinking about formula or anything.”

Since launching in 2009, BHB has played a significant role in improving Black maternal and infant health by offering and supporting choices made by Black families in Upton/Druid Heights. Among its many programs, BHB promotes breastfeeding by providing community-based breastfeeding groups and one-on-one lactation support services, connecting mothers with lactation services and support, while also providing breast pumps, pillows, and other tools that moms and babies need.

‘A Lovely Journey’

Jameka Hansen is a B’more for Healthy Babies advocate in the program’s parent-led Community Achievers group. Photo courtesy of Jameka Hansen

Hansen reflected on her own experiences when she arrived at BHB, something that many Black mothers have encountered: a realization that everyone brings their own family traditions, rituals, and knowledge. She reiterated a concern that due to these realities, many Black women can be unprepared for or face resistance about breastfeeding options.

“I was also surprised to hear how many people weren’t supportive of women wanting to breastfeed,” Hansen said. “I mean, it was surprising to hear the nonsupportive stories of people [criticizing] women who were thinking about breastfeeding. That’s why support groups are so important!”

At the same time, the BHB team knows that many mothers find that they’re not able to breastfeed, and that deciding to choose breastfeeding is a matter shaped by culture, opportunity, time, and family and community support. They’ve maintained a consistent focus of aiding a range of family needs, and when the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns made it difficult to provide in-person services, BHB quickly shifted to virtual platforms to remain accessible to potentially isolated families.

Deniya Chapman reached out to BHB for help when she was unable to produce milk.

“Breastfeeding is a lovely journey that may not have been meant for me,” Chapman said. “My body failed me twice by my milk drying up no matter what I did.”

With BHB’s help, she was able to breastfeed her daughter for at least four months.

“The sounds of my baby breastfeeding was music to my ears, and I loved every moment of it, and I hope to hear it one day again,” she said.

Partnerships Are Key

Promise Heights’ BHB director Stacey Stephens MSW, LCSW-C, brings passion to a variety of strategic policies impacting families. Stephens has led the BHB team in collaboration with residents and community partners to a crucial 75 percent reduction in the infant mortality rate in Upton/Druid Heights in the past decade. That neighborhood is now celebrating the lowest rate in Baltimore City, which is among Maryland’s lowest.

This success is in part achieved through partnerships.

“We provide support services and training for program participants and staff members who express an interest in assisting other women in their breastfeeding journeys,” Stephens said. “We’ve heard from clients that they wanted lactation counselors who look like them and were readily available to support their needs in their community, so we invited West Baltimore’s Bloom Collective to provide virtual lactation training to participants during the pandemic. This group of perinatal and postpartum practitioners is dedicated to maternal health, birth and reproductive justice, and community sustainability, and they’ve been essential partners by advancing BHB’s ongoing efforts.”

Angelise Shelby, MSW, one of BHB’s licensed social workers, reiterated the importance of these support groups.

“As an organization, our overall ability to provide wraparound services for these moms has increased. Having BHB staff and community members trained in lactation support services means a referral to another organization may not be necessary, as moms can get the need met where they’re already comfortable,” Shelby said. “We can also answer questions of pregnant mothers who are interested yet may feel ambivalent about the idea. Ultimately, we’re here to support our families’ feeding goals for their babies.”

Supporting Personal Choices

Now that Hansen has been involved with BHB for several years, she brings all of these experiences as a support mom to help share knowledge about lactation with moms like Chapman to explore the full variety of personal choices that all families may face.

“I also found how important it was to support whatever decision a mother makes, while leaning more closely to the benefits that breastfeeding offers,” Hansen said.

For Hansen, the BHB experience fostered a bond among mothers who shared the importance of prioritizing their health for the sake of their children.

“Being a parent is the whole experience, especially when the kids are little. The team inspires me to start sharing something, and the whole rest of the conversation is about sharing your experiences. You want to stay on top of it,” Hansen said. “Time goes so fast with our kids. It’s so important that you know how to take care of yourself so you can take care of the baby in as caring an environment as possible. This sets the tone for everything else around you. It’s a continuation — from being pregnant to breastfeeding — our own health is very, very important.”

Today, Hansen remains an active member of the BHB advocacy team of Community Achievers and continues to volunteer to help families through various activities such as making care baskets.

She also continues to advocate for families who choose breastfeeding, while helping countless caregivers improve their family’s health and “make the best of it.”

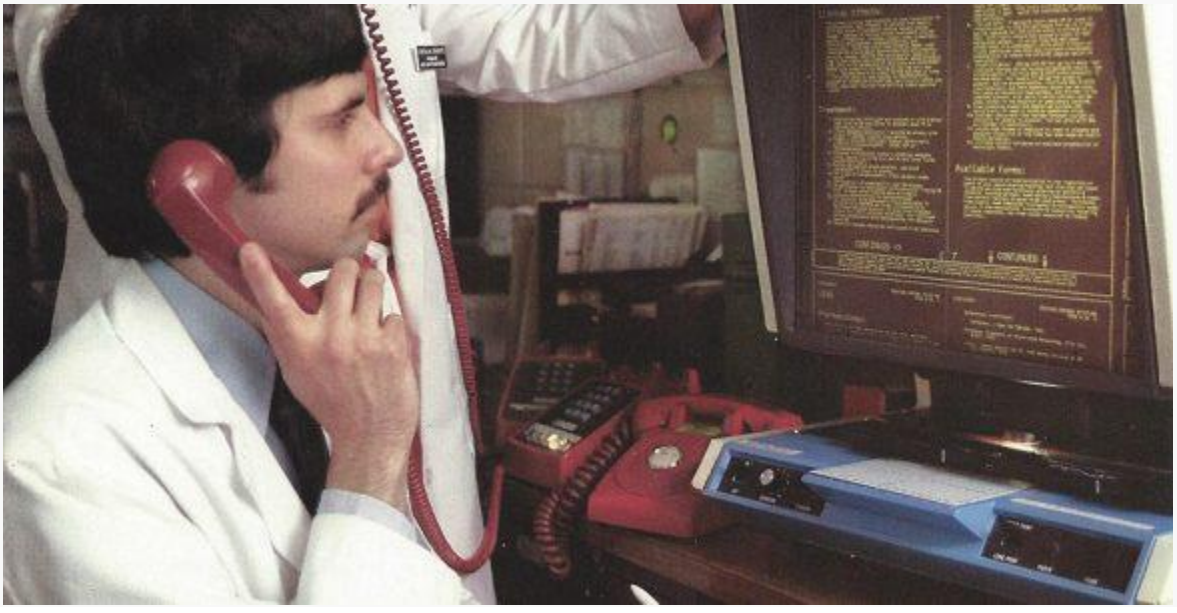
Thankfully, these advances are likely to bring continued BHB reports of reductions in Upton/Druid Heights’ infant mortality rate as well as increased prosperity among their residents.

Lisa Lewenz

Lisa Lewenz is the communications specialist for Promise Heights.

ETC.

VIEW ALL ETC. POSTS



Rooted in History: Help Is Just a Call Away at UMSOP, Which Is Marking 50 Years of Partnership with the Maryland Poison Center

Learn the history of the Poison Center, which took over 37,000 phone calls in 2021.

Tara Wink

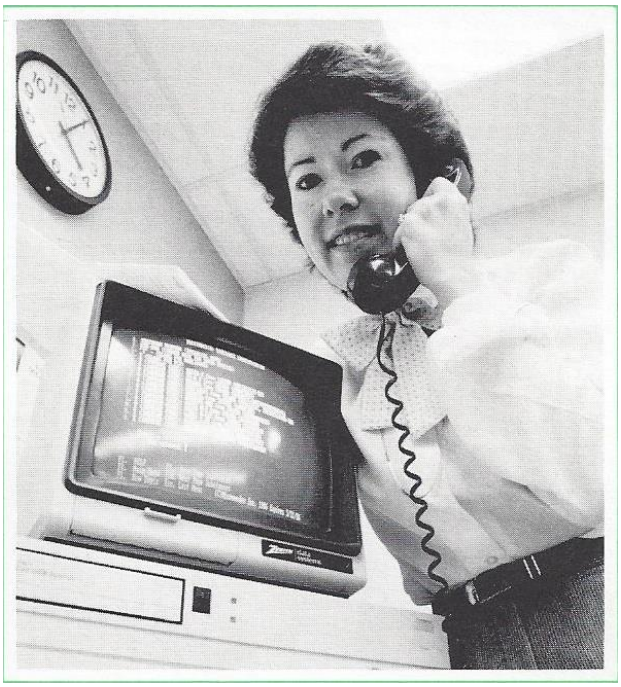
Chances are, particularly if you are a parent, you may have had to call the Maryland Poison Center (MPC) at some point for advice. But did you know that the center has been part of the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy (UMSOP) for 50 years?

On Feb. 1, 1972, the Maryland Poison Information Center (MPIC), the predecessor of the Maryland Poison Center, became part of UMSOP. At the time, MPIC had a budget of $70,000 a year and operated with three full-time staff members: director, medical director, and poison information officer, working Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Eventually evening and weekend telephone coverage was provided by University of Maryland School of Medicine and UMSOP students, allowing the center to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In 1972, the center received 5,707 human exposure calls on rotary phones. Operators used triplicate forms from the federal government's National Center for Poison Control and Prevention to record case information. Later, the center moved to forms provided by the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) that incorporated a written portion and a Scantron portion for all data to be scanned into a computer database.

MPIC had a library of books and a physical card catalog that included information on the ingredients found in common household products for quick reference. Uncommon brands and items required a call to a manufacturer or distributor, which resulted in longer response times. Later, the staff used microfiche readers for Poisindex, a comprehensive database of household products, chemicals, and medications. This resource continues to be used today via the internet.

Introducing the First Toll-Free Phone Number



Lisa Booze answers a call circa 1980. With over 37,000 calls — an average of 101 per day — in 2021, responding to phone calls remains a large part of the Maryland Poison Center's functions. Photo courtesy of MPC

When MPIC moved to UMSOP in 1972, a toxicology specialization did not exist, so a major goal of the center was to expand its role to include opportunities for professional and public education and research. In 1975, the center introduced its first toll-free phone number; initially the center had two numbers, one for Metro Baltimore and one for outside that region.

Also in February 1975, MPIC introduced Mr. Yuk, an icon created by Dr. Richard Moriarty at the Pittsburgh Poison Center a few years earlier. The Mr. Yuk stickers served as the primary form of education and outreach for MPIC. Stickers were printed and sponsored by the Randallstown Jaycees and Blue Cross Blue Shield and included MPIC's phone number, which today is 1-800-222-1222.

By 1979, the named changed to the Maryland Poison Center (MPC), and it became one of the first 16 centers in the country to be certified by AAPCC and was named the regional center for Maryland. As part of this certification, the center was required to offer outreach and education, staff the phones with health professionals working as poison information specialists, all while operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Before 1985, the poison information specialists were pharmacists, but after this point nurses joined MPC in these roles.

At the time of its 20th anniversary in 1992, the center was staffed by 10 health professional employees and six part-time health professions students. The number of calls had grown to over 54,000 per year. The center offered two-year PharmD toxicology fellowships, which are still offered today. Many past fellows have gone on to run their own regional poison centers because of their experience gained in the program. Additionally, the center was one of the first in the country to become computerized and introduced its website in 1995.

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the center implemented a system of data collection and analysis to quickly identify potential bioterrorism attacks. Today, technology allows the center to track data and outbreaks in real time, meaning quicker alerts to law enforcement and emergency rooms. The center has been instrumental in managing poison outbreaks including gasoline siphoning (1979), Tylenol tampering (1982), anthrax letters (2001), and “bath salt” consumption (2012).

With over 37,000 calls — an average of 101 per day — in 2021, responding to phone calls remains a large part of MPC’s functions. The volume of phone calls has changed over the years yet these calls have evolved into more challenging cases, requiring multiple interactions over an extended period of time.

Center staff, consisting of nurses and pharmacists trained in toxicology and certified by AAPCC, work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB). They continue to respond to calls involving human and animal poisonings, overdoses, pill identification, and general poison information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

However, the center also is instrumental in providing education to the public and medical professionals on poison ingestion, safety, and prevention. Since 2000, the center has led over 1,000 education programs for the public and over 1,000 programs for health professionals, reaching more than 250,000 people.

The center provides an excellent example of UMB’s commitment to community engagement and partnerships, providing a necessary service to the citizens of Maryland.

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