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# The Elm

ELM STORIES

## Standing Tall: Paris Barnes Wins UMB Community Service Award

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Nicknamed “The Quiet Giant” by her family, the School of Pharmacy senior training specialist is recognized for her sizable volunteer efforts to aid people facing barriers in Carroll County and beyond.

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*Photo: Standing between Malika Monger, left, and Sarah Michel, Paris Barnes holds up her crystal plaque after winning UMB's Community Service Award. (Photo by Matthew D'Agostino)*

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Paris Barnes, MS, looked a little stunned when her name was announced as winner of the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) Community Service Award at the Employee Recognition and Service Awards Luncheon on March 20 at Westminster Hall.

Sitting near the front of the hall, she quickly regained her composure, flashed a smile and a peace sign to the audience, and accepted an oversized check for \$750 from University of Maryland School of Pharmacy (UMSOP) Dean Sarah L.J. Michel, PhD, before a cheering crowd of 200 UMB staff members enjoying their meals inside the historic building on West Fayette Street.

“I'm not one who likes surprises, and I was shocked,” said Barnes, a senior training specialist for the PATIENTS Program at UMSOP. “I thought I was attending the event to support my supervisor, Joe Howarth, who was awarded Employee of the Month recently. I almost did not believe it when Dean Michel said my name.”

*(Read about [Employee of the Year Elizabeth Main](#) and [James T. Hill Scholarship recipient Jahmoy Colquhoun](#).)*

Barnes has been volunteering at the Eagle Center in Westminster, Md., since 2021. The center is part of Eagle Restoration Ministries and works to empower low- and no-income families by connecting them with education, resources, and opportunities to thrive.

Her volunteer efforts span about 20 hours a month and include monthly meetings, weekly outreach to schools, weekly planning for the summer Camp Soar, and one week of camp counselor activities.

“My volunteer work with the Eagle Center directly correlates with many UMB core values, but the most notable are Respect and Integrity,” Barnes said. “Through my volunteer role, I work to uphold these values by treating individuals with dignity, ensuring ethical stewardship of resources, and fostering trust within the community.”

With Camp Soar, Barnes designed and implemented a free summer camp program to provide children with recreational, educational, and developmental opportunities that include career planning, teaching about civic duty, working with local financial institutions on how to manage money, and team building.

“I secured 100 percent of the funding needed for the camp through successful grant writing, crowd sourcing, and fundraising efforts,” she said. “I also create all of the marketing and advertising for the camp to draw in members from the community. I serve as the volunteer director, overseeing in-person activities and ensuring a safe, engaging, and inclusive environment for all participants. Myself and two other people volunteer to facilitate the entire camp.”

Rev. Simone P. Gibson, MA, DMin, president of the Eagle Center and pastor and founder of Eagle Restoration Ministries, said, “Paris has been a tremendous blessing to our ministry. Through her research, attention to details, and ingenuity, she has advanced the goals of the Eagle Center. She is a great board member and has worked conscientiously to foster our community relationships and partnerships.”

Barnes said winning the UMB award validates the work she and others do in their communities.

“I appreciate that the University cares enough to ask how its employees help our community outside of work,” she said. “I was taught it was my duty to give back to the community. I always aspire to be the light in dark times, and winning this award tells me that I can keep pushing my efforts. As long as God keeps giving me the strength, will, resources, and time to do it, I will do what it takes to serve my community.”

Barnes also is proud of her work to help people experiencing homelessness in Carroll County, having coordinated and provided critical outreach services; delivered essential resources such as food, clothing, and referrals to housing/social support services; connected individuals with long-term assistance programs; and secured continued funding and food donations from retail food chains.

Barnes, who recently was appointed to the city of Baltimore's Opioid Restitution Advisory Board, said her family calls her “The Quiet Giant,” an ironic nickname that she finds amusing.

“I'm a short girl in real life, so the title really makes me laugh,” she said. “But they say the fact that I move in silence with integrity and peace allows me to quietly make change but in a big way. I know what I have been put on this Earth to do, so giving to my community is not a job but rather a requirement to walk in my purpose. I'm grateful to have the ability to advocate for people who are often unheard.”

