

Human Resource Services

Gallery of Winners

Michele Markwardt



Most Employee of the Month ceremonies occur in conference rooms, with President Perman bursting into made-up meetings to surprise the honoree in front of his/her co-workers.

But sometimes rooms are otherwise occupied and alternate measures are needed. Which is how Perman arrived at the fifth-floor lab of Mark Rizzo, PhD, in the Bressler Research Building to introduce himself to one of Rizzo's employees, Michele Markwardt, MS, on Jan. 12.

“This meeting is all about you,” Perman told Markwardt, a research specialist in the Department of Physiology who began as a research assistant in 2008. “You have been named January’s Employee of the Month. You were nominated because Dr. Rizzo and your co-workers felt you, as a member of their team, embodied many of the core values of the University— accountability, collaboration, and excellence were repeated frequently in your nomination. They also mentioned your work, your techniques, and your publications, but mostly your commitment to excellence.”

Markwardt was thrilled, especially when she saw the plaque — “it’s spelled right!” exclaimed Michele, who usually gets a double L — and learned there would be an extra \$250 in her next paycheck.

Going Above the Call

Rizzo said the recognition is well deserved. In his nomination form, he mentioned Markwardt’s ability to learn new things, such as training in protein and DNA purification procedures, and that she “has become an invaluable resource for new trainees. ... The tools she has developed have been used by other research labs at UMB as well.”

He added: “One example highlights her dedication and persistence. Early on in her time here, our laboratory’s work required development of a new type of fluorescent protein suitable for quantitative work in living cells. Michele carefully screened and characterized over a dozen variants, a painstaking process that required extremely careful comparison of the brightness of these reagents that sometimes differed by only 1-2 percent. To make progress on such a project required exceptional rigor and technique,

and we would not to have been able to complete this project without her. The final variant she identified has proven to be an exceptionally useful reagent both here on campus and to the scientific community at large, as her paper has been cited over 80 times in only a few short years since its publication.”

Markwardt, who also was praised for “taking responsibility and accountability for projects” and showing courtesy, respect, and a “team-first attitude,” said being nice is easy in Rizzo’s lab.

Work But Also Fun

“Mark and I have a really good working relationship,” she says. “We have the same kind of working style, just really blunt. He lays out exactly what he wants from me and then I go and do it. We also have a good time, especially now with the girls in the lab [PhD students Kendra Seckinger, Nicole Snell, and Jennifer McFarland], we all laugh a lot. It’s work but it’s also fun.”

Even if sometimes the hours are long and the process of tasks such as seeking grant renewals can be grueling.

“Sometimes it’s easier to get it done now,” Markwardt, who completed her master’s in forensic science in May, says of some 12-hour days in the lab. “I can’t say I’ve ever slept here though,” she adds with a laugh.

And her feelings about being UMB Employee of the Month?

“It’s pretty surreal,” she says, turning serious, “because it’s quite a big University you know. I’m lucky. My co-workers are great, the girls in the lab are really fun. We all just get along really, really well.”

— Chris Zang

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Robert Sauer



Robert Sauer, multitrade chief 3 in the [Office of Facilities and Operations](#), thought he was attending a routine meeting on March 3. Instead, University President Jay A. Perman, MD, came in and surprised him with a UMB Employee of the Month Award.

Perman gave Sauer a framed certificate and thanked him for always being professional and respectful. “You are a very talented Facilities team member,” Perman said. “Your colleagues

and I think that you are a wonderful guy and that’s just one of the reasons we are honoring you today!”

Sauer, who also received \$250 as February’s Employee of the Month, is described by his supervisor, multitrades manager Wayne O’Donnell, as someone who utilizes his talents to complete projects of varying sizes and complexity, doing whatever is needed. A recent project involved him carrying many sheets of drywall up three flights of stairs to build a suite of offices.

On another project “his efficiency and effectiveness allowed the SMC Campus Center to accomplish many projects under budget that were operationally necessary,” O’Donnell said. In one case, he fixed a leak in the parking office in the campus center. “After five years,” O’Donnell said, “Rob is the person who took the time to figure out why it was leaking, where it was leaking, and how to implement a long-term solution.”

Such problem-solving skills are also what makes Sauer irreplaceable. “Rob uses his knowledge to create solutions for problems that aren’t in any textbooks,” O’Donnell said of Sauer, who joined the UMB team 2½ years ago.

In addition to providing excellent work quality, Sauer consistently demonstrates University core values such as accountability, collaboration, excellence, knowledge, and leadership with his carpentry skills, dedication to the task at hand, and customer service, even cleaning up after himself instead of calling on Housekeeping. Sauer “lives the UMB core values,” O’Donnell says, and “is an inspiration” to others around him, colleagues and clients alike.

According to Scott Swank, DDS, curator at the National Museum of Dentistry, Sauer “went well above and beyond the tasks at hand and did an exceptional job of keeping us informed of the impact of the work, progress toward completion, and he followed up on issues that were only tangentially related to the work.”

Grateful for this award, Sauer stated, "First off, I would like to thank my father for the patience and time to teach me a valuable craft. It has been very rewarding over this 37-year span. Second, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to vote for me."

— Sarah Reback

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Lindsay Currier



Don't expect to see Lindsay Currier on a ski slope after she retires many years from now. She's had enough of the white stuff. As the coordinator for scheduling at the School of Pharmacy, Currier has been responsible for rescheduling all the pharmacy classes at the Baltimore location and at the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville, updating the 25 Live scheduling software, and sending out emails to all

involved when classes are canceled or delayed, largely because of inclement weather.

"Snow is one of my least favorite things on so many different levels," says Currier, a UMB employee for 13 years, "because I also have two little girls so, inevitably, not only am I dealing with work stuff, but they're up early and excited because it's a snow day, running around the house like maniacs."

She has an early morning ally on snow days in UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, who surprised her at a supposed 25 Live meeting on March 23 to tell her she was UMB's Employee of the Month.

"It was good to read that since I have to get up to receive a phone call at 4:45, you're waiting at 5 a.m. for the verdict," Perman told Currier. "And I understand you do a very good job of juggling things."

IPE Supporter

Perman also pointed out that Currier helps facilitate his passion for interprofessional education by coordinating the school's academic schedule so pharmacy students can participate in the President's Clinic and UMB's Interprofessional Education Day. "Your school is always there when we have an activity," Perman said. "In fact you probably know I have a bunch of pharmacy students every week in my clinic. Your colleagues talk about you as a collaborative, knowledgeable, gifted, concise communicator. Simply put, they say 'without Lindsay we would be lost.' So congratulations on your honor!"

Shannon Tucker, MS, assistant dean for instructional design and technology at the School of Pharmacy, nominated Currier, citing her day-to-day contributions, core values such as accountability and collaboration, and her proactive nature to solve problems “before colleagues even know they exist.”

And on snow days?

“Lindsay makes literally thousands of changes in the School of Pharmacy scheduling platform so students can get back to studying and faculty back to teaching, research, and service as fast as possible,” said Tucker, who accompanied Currier to the surprise “meeting” in the Lexington Building along with Richard Dalby, PhD, associate dean of academic affairs at the School of Pharmacy and professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences.

“Lindsay’s work requires diplomacy, collaboration, and civility under pressure; then, once a recovery plan is devised, the details must be meticulously entered into 25 Live for distribution to our community,” Tucker added. “One mistake could be catastrophic — integrated courses could become out of sequence, students could end up in the wrong room and miss key instruction prior to scheduled rotations, or an exam proctor or the AV and IT support on which faculty rely for support could be missing. Due to Lindsay’s hard work and diligence, this almost never happens.”

Surprised and Pleased

Currier, who manages the scheduling of School of Pharmacy activities at UMB and USG such as academic courses, student events, special events, and any meetings that need conference rooms, takes pride in her work. She was surprised, and very pleased, to be the March Employee of the Month, which comes with a plaque, \$250, and makes her a candidate for the Cecil S. Kelly Memorial Employee of the Year Award, which will be given at the Employee Service Awards Luncheon on April 7.

“I’m excited to be recognized,” said Currier, who began working at the school as coordinator of mental health programs. “I feel like I work really hard to do really well, but sometimes you’re not sure if it’s helping anyone.”

Now she has a plaque to prove it.

— Chris Zang

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Mark Brueckl



Mark Brueckl, RPh, MBA, has traveled countless miles in making more than 250 site visits since becoming assistant director of the [Experiential Learning Program](#) at the [School of Pharmacy](#) in February 2014.

Few of the trips involved stopping at the Office of the President, however. So he knew something was up even before UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, entered the conference room carrying a plaque.

“Do you know why you’re here?” Perman asked. “Actually I do!” replied Brueckl, who

was joined by former Employee of the Month Nathaniel Thomas and Toyin Tofade, PharmD, MS, BCPS, CPCC, assistant dean of experiential learning at the school.

Perman gave Brueckl a framed certificate and thanked him for taking his time to complete site visits to pharmacies throughout the state as part of the school’s largely successful preceptor program. “Thank you for being such a good ambassador for the University.”

‘Lifesaver’

Brueckl, who also received \$250 as the Employee of the Month for April, is described by Tofade as someone who “is a lifesaver on more than one occasion. He is willing to attend to matters on short notice and works extremely well with the team.”

She said Brueckl goes above and beyond by applying his advanced data mining skills to help manage the copious amounts of student data that the office produces. “The organization is fortunate to have him and I certainly am fortunate to have him on my team,” says Tofade.

Site Visits

Brueckl was praised for demonstrating UMB's seven core values of accountability, civility, collaboration, diversity, excellence, knowledge, and leadership during his travels. Plus his many site visits have improved the customer service component of the experiential learning rotations, an integral part of the school curriculum that constitutes more than 30 percent of PharmD students' requirements.

"In the past few years, the School of Pharmacy was struggling with rotation capacity for our students barely making the capacity numbers required by our accreditor. When Mark joined, he consistently made these visits and now we hear more positive feedback from our preceptors," says Tofade. Through Brueckl's visits, the School can now provide students with the best experiential learning experience.

Brueckl embraces the travel. "It's a task that I enjoy quite a bit — finding out what's going on in the 'real world' of pharmacy. Experiential learning is a very important component of pharmacy education, and everything we do ensures that our students receive a quality educational experience. I am quite honored to be chosen as Employee of the Month."

— Chris Zang

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Malinda Hughes



UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, usually works from a nomination form when he gives out Employee of the Month awards. But no notes were needed for the May 19 ceremony in the Saratoga Building, where Malinda Hughes, academic program manager in the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA), was honored.

“I don’t need a write-up for you,” said a smiling Perman. He did, however, wish he had a bigger award for Hughes, who proved indispensable during the 2 1/2-year Middle States reaccreditation process.

“As I say Employee of the Month, it seems not completely sufficient for you,” he said to Hughes. “Maybe Employee of the Decade. The way you do things, which is always just to a T, what you did with Middle States, and over the couple of years preparing for it, is astounding.”

In addition to her regular duties, which include managing the interaction between OAA and UMB’s schools in matters of faculty appointments, promotion, tenure, and leave, Hughes stepped up during Middle States, coordinating logistics for events ranging from retreats and town halls to the site team visit.

When the nine-member Middle States evaluation team came to Baltimore for four days on April 3, Hughes planned out every detail, from hotel accommodations to the team’s many meetings with UMB leaders, faculty, students, and staff across campus.

“I know from leading these kind of event visits, it makes all the difference how well things are organized and how the visiting team is treated,” Perman said. “In many ways, you won this for us. The least we can do is honor you with this award and the \$250 that comes with it.”

In fact, Middle States evaluation team chair Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP, vice chancellor for interprofessional programs at Rutgers University Biomedical and Health Sciences, singled out Hughes for special praise when delivering a glowing preliminary report to UMB on April 6.

“We need to add a special and heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Malinda Hughes,” said Rodgers, “who coordinated our visit and attended to all of our needs while we were here in Baltimore. Malinda, please be recognized.”

The applause from that day continued at the Employee of the Month celebration, where chief accountability officer and Middle States co-chair Roger J. Ward, EdD, JD, MPA, added to Perman’s praise. “Malinda has been simply outstanding from the first time she came to Academic Affairs,” Ward said. “She is so capable and competent and I knew she could take the Middle States challenge from beginning to end. Thank you for the good work, especially around Middle States, but all of the good work you do that people aren’t aware of.”

Chimed in chief academic and research officer Bruce Jarrell, MD, FACS, “Malinda has this great training as a nurse, and it comes out in all of her activities. She is meticulous and at the same time always sees the important strategic question. She is a pleasure having on the team.”

Hughes, who began working at UMB in 2011, quickly pointed out she was a small part of a much greater team, with hundreds of people helping UMB to hit dozens of Middle States milestones.

“I don’t even know where to begin,” Hughes said at the ceremony. “The first person I have to thank is Roger Ward. Two and a half years ago, he sat me down and we were talking about my career goals and I said I think I want to work on Middle States and he let me run with it.

“I just want to let you know, Dr. Perman, that everyone that I contacted immediately responded with ‘happy to help. Is there anything else you need?’ So I may have coordinated the visit, but it was an army behind me that helped us.”

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Keare Johnson



If you look in the dictionary under the word “stunned” you might just see security guard Keare Johnson’s picture from June 15. That’s when UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, entered the Saratoga Building lobby, as he does numerous times a day. Only this time, joined by a crowd of people, he stopped and pointed to the personable Johnson, saying “so this is about you. You are

UMB’s Employee of the Month.”

Johnson’s jaw dropped and a look of disbelief crossed her face as she let loose a shriek that likely was audible on the roof of the parking garage. The applause that followed from the 15 or 20 people representing the UMB Police Force, Human Resources, the Office of the President, and more made it clear that Perman isn’t Johnson’s only fan.

“I and all the people who work in this building are greeted with sunshine when we see you,” Perman said to Johnson, who was assigned to Saratoga a year ago after two years as a floater. “It’s a sunny day no matter what the weather is outside once you walk into this lobby. You are a real professional. You take care of us, you watch over us, and at the same time you present the best public relations because you are the first person people see and the impression has to be right. You do that in a way that is an example for the rest of the institution.”

Personable Plus

Security supervisor Clarence Fields cited her “friendly demeanor” in nominating Johnson for the award. In addition to keeping the Saratoga Building secure and demonstrating the core value of excellence, Fields said, “Ms. Johnson never fails to greet me individually no matter how many people are in the lobby. She always has a warm smile and a greeting to start my day off on the right foot. Ms. Johnson contributes to increased morale on campus with her encouraging smile and heartfelt love for her job.”

Indeed, Johnson appears to know everyone on a first name basis, wishing them well as they come and go. She sees such friendliness as part of her job. “Yes, I think security is part of customer service so I think you need to have a good rapport with the people you are working with, the people who you are protecting.”

Many important visitors pass through the Saratoga Building, which houses the Office of the President. But Johnson said they get no preferential treatment. “No, we just basically treat everybody the same,” Johnson said. “We maintain our professionalism and offer service with a smile.”

In addition to Johnson receiving a plaque, Perman told her there would be another \$250 in her next check, eliciting another shriek from the appreciative Johnson.

Thankful to Serve

“I’m surprised and happy,” said Johnson, still beaming 15 minutes after the award ceremony. “It’s good to know they appreciate what I do. I just want to thank all my co-workers, every one of them, and the people who nominated me.”

Antonio Williams, MS, associate vice president for public safety and chief of the UMB Police Force, said it was a proud moment for his team, especially the 80 security officers and supervisors at UMB.

“I’m grateful to Security Officer Keare Johnson for the great service she provides UMB,” Williams said. “She is professional, conscientious, and kind. She sets an example for others to follow. I am proud of her recognition as Employee of the Month.”

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Rachel McKelvey



For those at the University who grapple with technology, people like Rachel McKelvey are a godsend.

McKelvey, academic coordinator in the office of the academic deans at the School of Nursing (SON), was named UMB's July Employee of the Month for pioneering many guidelines and practices to better facilitate the new systems and processes put into place as the school transitions from paper to electronic documentation.

"What I've tried to do is communicate with students, faculty, and other staff people to make the process a little easier for everyone," said McKelvey, who has been at the SON for 2 ½ years after six months of temporary work at the School of Pharmacy. "Because it is an electronic uploading to a website I think a lot of people have trepidations and fears about that and it is a technical process. So I've become proficient at it to the point I can really walk someone through the steps."

In addition to expediting the student turnaround time for documents uploaded into the compliance vendor, Castle Branch, from 72 hours to "less than an hour and a half," McKelvey has enhanced communications and collaboration, says her supervisor Angie Hines, who attended the Employee of the Month presentation with a half-dozen others Aug. 3.

"Rachel has been instrumental in opening up communication lines and breaking down barriers students previously encountered," Hines said. "Which not only helps our office, but also it's a humongous resource for students trying to get into their clinical sites and practicums."

University President Jay A. Perman, MD, was impressed with Hines' story that brought McKelvey to the Saratoga Building — she was to participate in a group that would be giving awards to faculty across campus — as well as her accomplishments.

"I understand you've done a great deal within the nursing school in terms of efficiencies, particularly trying to convert so many things from paper to electronics. You know, I could use your help over here with my files," Perman said with a smile. "The other thing people wrote about you is that you're a great team player. And I particularly value 'team.' So keep up the great work!"

McKelvey, who received a plaque and \$250 for the award, was most grateful.

"I'm in a little bit of shock right now but I'm thrilled," said McKelvey, who thanked Hines and cited faculty members Meg Johantgen, PhD, RN, Shannon Reedy Idzik, DNP, CRNP, FAANP, and Gail Schoen Lemaire, PhD, PMHCNS, BC, CNL, for their support. "While I'm overwhelmed to be recognized by the University and President Perman, what I value the most is that my everyday colleagues have taken it upon themselves to show their appreciation of my efforts. It means an awful lot. My parents are going to be very proud."

— Chris Zang

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Dave Lowing



An industrious man whose work ethic dates back to 14-hour days as a youth on the *QE2* sailing out of his beloved England, Dave Lowing usually takes professional challenges in stride. But he could feel his blood pressure going up in advance of a meeting in the president's conference room on Aug. 17.

His supervisor in the School of Nursing's (SON) Learning Technology Office, Matt Rietschel, would only say it was a "positive" meeting. And then President Jay A. Perman, MD, walked in the room and said: "You know what this is all about, Dave? You're the UMB Employee of the Month!"

Lowing's jaw dropped as Rietschel and a half-dozen others applauded. The personable Brit whose good humor and technical expertise have been keeping spirits light at the SON for 28 years was getting his due.

"Your longtime service is appreciated," Perman said. "I also understand you have unselfishly handled all aspects of video editing for the faculty, students, and staff. You come in early in the morning and you don't go home until the job is done. Total dedication."

Beginnings in IT

Lowing began working with the IT department at the SON in 1988, offering desktop computer support and audiovisual assistance for 22 years. Back surgery in 2010 necessitated a transfer to the team of Rietschel, assistant dean for information and learning technologies. This reignited a creative flame in Lowing, who in the 1980s had done TV production for a former employer at Towson University. "Being in the studio kind of brought everything back to me," said Lowing.

In the past year Lowing did about 700 recordings, spanning lecture captures, webcasts, voiceovers, and teleprompter work. Of the videos, about 80 percent are academic, 10 percent are special events, and 10 percent are for grants/contracts.

Asked his favorite type of project, Lowing spoke of just doing four lecture videos. “Sadistic as it might be, I enjoy doing multiple lectures at the same time. It’s a challenge to get everything lined up and executed in a specific order.” And the turnaround time? “Oh, within hours of the event,” he says, fitting for a high-volume area that Rietschel said had almost 16,000 hours of viewed content last year.

A new tool in Lowing’s video toolbox is Green Screen, the technology weathercasters use to superimpose images on a blank screen. It’s allowed him to replace bland backgrounds like books in a bookcase with specific location shots while retaining the sound serenity of the studio.

“I just did one for Shannon Idzik [associate dean] and Michelle Gonzalez, a nurse anesthetist. As a backdrop we put an OR, operating table, anesthesia machine, and just dropped that in post-production.”

‘Bob’s Your Uncle’

Taking something complicated and making it seem easy is one of Lowing’s strengths, says Joanne Pinna, MS, senior instructional technologist who co-crafted the nomination with Rietschel.

“Dave consistently makes difficult tasks of video editing appear easy because of his outlook on work,” she said. “He is always approachable, professional, and consistently demonstrates outstanding interpersonal skills.” Rietschel agrees Lowing makes clients “feel comfortable in his studio despite the inherent angst involved.”

Lowing said it’s a piece of cake (or “Bob’s your Uncle,” one of his pet British phrases) after working for months at a time over six years on the ocean liner *Queen Elizabeth 2*.

“My first job was as a bellboy,” Lowing recalled with a smile. “I had just turned 17. Just dumb luck that I got on the *QE2*. I could have gotten on a tanker or a freighter.”

When he moved up to waiter there was another stroke of good fortune. He met his wife, Nancy. “She was on a cruise with eight of her cousins,” Lowing said. “I was their waiter.” Now married for 37 years, their courtship was, in a word, complicated.

“The last year and a half after I met my wife, I used to go back to England, get off the ship, ride home on a motorbike to see my parents, and then go to a travel agent, get a ticket, fly back to the States to meet with her. Then I’d fly back and catch the ship. I was a lot younger then!”

So what’s a bigger deal, being named UMB Employee of the Month for August or traveling on the *QE2*?

“Oh, UMB Employee of the Month is far better,” he said with a chuckle before turning serious. “It’s the culmination of these last 28 years. When I started at the school I never imagined how far this would go. I had been laid off at my last job after eight years, but everyone here has been wonderfully supportive, I’ve been blessed to have a great crew and have Matt as a boss. He’s been fantastic. I know if I have an issue or a problem and I don’t know what to do, I know I can go talk to Matt.”

Then the smile returned and Lowing added, “Matt will push me out the door first, but then he’ll tell me to come back.”

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Frances Jones



Whether it's students, faculty, or staff at the School of Social Work (SSW), security officer Frances Jones, who patrols the front desk from 3:15 to 11:45 p.m., gives them the full benefit of her attention and vast experience.

For this and a whole lot more, Jones was named UMB's September Employee of the Month.

As part of his presentation, UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, read a letter from her nomination form.

"The social work student said, 'Tonight after class I was feeling sick and not really fit to drive. I have epilepsy and I had experienced some warning signs that I might have a seizure. I decided to take my medicine and call my partner to come pick me up instead of attempting to get behind the wheel. Frances at the front desk was so incredibly kind to me. I told her what was going on and she let me stay in the building where she could keep an eye on me. She stayed at her post and still fulfilled all of her duties, but she also made sure that I was within her eyesight in case I needed any assistance. She was kind and caring and exactly what I needed. I truly appreciated it.'"

Role Model

Of the letter, Perman said, "This really touched me, Officer Jones. I don't know what else could be said to better describe you. The dean and others said you exemplify the core values of UMB, specifically those of civility, diversity, excellence, and knowledge. You're a daily example of professionalism and courtesy. Congratulations on your award."

Earlier Perman gave Jones a plaque and said an extra \$250 would be in her next paycheck.

SSW Dean Richard P. Barth, PhD, MSW, gave testimony to how important Jones is to him and how she helps make sure that he conducts himself properly. "There are times when I get too busy and I don't say good night and she's like 'Errrr,'" Barth said, growling to the delight of a group in the President's Conference Room on Sept. 30. "And Frances reminds me I need to slow down a little bit and at least say 'hi' and 'goodbye.'"

Part of SSW Family

A member of the UMB Police Force for 31 years, Jones teared up when Barth spoke about her being “part of my family as well as the School family.”

Perman lightened the mood by adding, “Rick, I’m going to call her when I need help with you.”

After the ceremony, and the banter with Barth, friends and co-workers rushed to greet the guest of honor. Following a long hug, Julie Gilliam, instructional technology specialist at SSW, spoke of why Jones is so special. “She cares about people,” Gilliam said. “She and Rodney [Jamison, dayshift security] both are amazing. They make you feel safe. They know who comes in and out of the building. It makes for a safe work environment.”

And going above and beyond, like with the student showing signs of a seizure, that’s part of the job, too, Jones says. “To be there and just look the other way — no that’s not what your job is about,” she said. “Compassion, caring, all that is included, too. I’m like a mommy,” said Jones, a mother of four, grandmother of seven, and great-grandmom of four.

Travel Talk

She says there are fringe benefits, too, of being at SSW for over 30 years. “You get to meet so many different people from so many different countries. I just love it,” Jones said. “Even though I’ve never traveled with anybody I feel as though I have because they’ll share the stories with me.”

And she was overwhelmed to be UMB Employee of the Month. “I’m at a loss for words,” she said. “I’m just really touched by this. I wish I could thank everybody. You wouldn’t have enough room in the story to name them all.”

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Jacqueline Milani



Jacqueline Milani, MS, MBA, CPP, director of [Pharmaceutical Research Computing](#) (PRC) in the [School of Pharmacy](#), thought she was attending a meeting about a new project on Oct. 5. Instead, President Jay A. Perman, MD, walked into the Saratoga Building conference room and surprised her with a special honor: UMB's Employee of the Month Award.

Perman gave Milani a framed certificate and thanked her for being a great leader and being a wonderful team member — one of the qualities that earned her the award. “The word team is very important to me,” Perman said. “It’s what I want to see throughout the University. People who work to create a feeling of team are very important to me.”

Milani, who also received \$250 as the Employee of the Month for October, is described by Eberechukwu Onukwugha, MS, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research and executive director of PRC, as an accountable employee. “When one intermediate project deliverable was projected to be delayed, she provided early feedback to the client, allowing them sufficient time to adjust to the updated timeline. She is solution-oriented and this attitude is critical.”

In addition, Milani is described as the ideal manager: caring, driven, respectful, a cheerleader and staff advocate, and committed to excellence. While she never runs out of ideas, she is open to suggestions and contributions from others and happily welcomes idea from the staff.

As director, Milani has impacted PRC from soup to nuts in less than one year. The computing center provides world-class support for impactful, inspired health services research at the school, University, and Veterans Affairs Medical Center and beyond. She has streamlined the process for how project estimates were tracked to how PRC closes out funded projects.

“Those who know Jacqueline will agree that she gets things done. She brings a refreshing energy, excitement, and eternally optimistic ‘can-do’ attitude to all aspects of her work,” Onukwugha said.

Grateful for her award and for her teammates, Milani said, “Thank you so much. I honestly don’t know what to say or how to react. This group makes it easy to work together as a team. Their commitment overflows.”

— Sarah Reback

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Patricia Fanning



The roles were reversed on Nov. 17 at an Employee of the Month event, and UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, was loving it.

“Who’s flashing?” he asked as photos were being taken. “Me, sorry,” Alex Likowski, director of media relations, said apologetically before a room of Communications and Public Affairs (CPA) staff.

“No, keep doing it,” Perman responded with a smile, “because that’s what she does to me.”

“She” is Patricia Fanning, who as senior media relations specialist in CPA does a lot more than take Perman’s picture at events. UMB’s November Employee of the Month “is the hardest and longest working, most dedicated, and most caring employee any of us in CPA knows,” Likowski said in his nomination.

He spoke of the yeoman effort Fanning made in placing a series of stories involving the Renaissance Academy (RA) and student Khalil Bridges. RA sits in one of the city’s poorest, most violent neighborhoods. Before June, the headlines it earned were roundly tragic. Three of Renaissance’s students were killed during the last year — one of them stabbed in biology class. But RA also is a Promise Heights school, which means members of the School of Social Work (SSW) are in the school every day, lifting graduation rates and spirits.

Fanning’s years of work behind the scenes paid off last summer. *The Sun* ran “Renaissance Academy High grieves after three killings, still sees hope for future” and then a follow-up story about the aspirations of RA graduates. *The Washington Post* followed with “Coming of age in a city coming apart,” which also referenced Promise Heights and the SSW. Still not finished, Fanning helped SSW colleagues write letters to the editor that appeared in *The Sun* and *The Post*, continuing the momentum.

Then, on June 23, *The Post* ran “Soar Khalil Soar.” The story, about how Bridges graduated from RA last spring against heartbreaking odds, touched heartstrings and purse strings. Within a week, donations to a college fund set up for Khalil outstripped the \$30,000 goal.

Fanning, who worked for *The Sun* for 23 years before coming to UMB in 2009, said she surmounted various obstacles in placing the RA stories.

“I remember coaxing Khalil, who just days before had turned 18, to speak to a TV crew awaiting an interview. That required impromptu media training, with encouragement from the SSW’s Community Schools coordinator, on a rowhouse stoop across the street from his school. Separately, I persuaded Khalil to retool his letter to Baltimore City Public Schools officials as a letter to the editor, which I placed in *The Sun* to raise his and UMB’s public profile.”

But doing what’s in her job description isn’t the only thing that makes Fanning stand out to her colleagues. It’s things like at 6:30 p.m. Friday, most of her co-workers long gone, getting ready to transport food that had been refrigerated after a University event earlier in the day to an extended family living nearby. What’s more, it’s her having helped three children in that family enroll in A Bridge to Academic Excellence, a tutoring program based at the School of Pharmacy (SOP). And it’s doing outreach for her Howard County neighbors as well as the West Baltimore neighbors she works with at UMB.

As Laura Kozak, MA, associate vice president in CPA, pointed out at the Employee of the Month ceremony, Fanning works with icepacks on her jaw right after dental surgery and staves off Lyme disease to finish assignments related to SSW and the School of Nursing (her previous beats) and to current duties of UMB community engagement, SOP, and the School of Dentistry.

So sure enough, after the Renaissance Academy series of stories had abated and the TV crews had left, Fanning went a step further. “I have continued to keep up with Khalil,” she says. “I went to Jo-Ann Fabric and made a scrapbook for his mom. Later I found one of my son’s childhood friends in Khalil’s chosen field who is now serving as a mentor.”

As Perman said at the ceremony, where Fanning received a plaque and \$250 in her next paycheck, “Your colleagues nominated you because they see that when you do something, you’re all in. It means a lot to them and it means a lot to me because when you do something all in, you’re projecting how wonderful this institution is. You’ve done that over and over again.”

What does the award mean to Fanning?

“It’s a validation of the teamwork and relationships required to accomplish either personal or institutional goals,” she says. “The 2016 Promise Heights coverage actually began in 2014 with *The Sun*’s ‘Collateral Damage’ series that involved my connecting former colleagues at the paper with people at SSW and with West Baltimore residents whom I had come to know through Promise Heights.”

And she’s not done contributing, be it at UMB or in Howard County, where she chairs outreach for her church, helps the homeless, assists Habitat for Humanity-related projects, and volunteers with the Parks Department at GreenFest.

She says it’s her way of saying thanks.

“Years ago after a horrific car accident, my life was spared by first responders and trauma surgeons. I’ve felt compelled to make good use of that gift ever since.”

— Chris Zang

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Human Resource Services

Gallery of Winners

Jackie Ball



Jackie Ball, Human Resource Services (HRS) Center supervisor, was in a staff meeting with 30 HRS colleagues on Dec. 14. But her thoughts were elsewhere. She was focused on the new hires she had to process, and the pay and position changes that awaited her after the meeting.

Then an unannounced visitor entered the conference room: UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD. And when he told the group he was there to name Ball as UMB's December Employee of the Month, she was completely caught off guard, and shed a few tears.

"Leave it to me to spoil the party," said Perman, touched by her reaction.

Ball, who has worked at UMB for almost 14 years, all in HR, has managed the HR Service Center since January 2008 and is a key partner with the Payroll Office and Center for Information Technology Services (CITS) to ensure employees are paid timely and accurately. During her tenure, she has had a lead role in some of HRS's largest projects, including the recent Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) reclassification.

"When we look for an Employee of the Month, we always ask to what extent that person represents the core values of the University," Perman said. "What was especially noteworthy about you, Jackie, was your collaborative nature. People say you're always open to new ideas, you enjoy interacting with clients. Something else I noticed: I'm told you're one of our University experts on hiring international employees, addressing their concerns, making them feel welcome. So for all those things, congratulations on your award!"

Ball, her composure restored, thanked the group. "I'm at a loss for words. I'm sitting there thinking I have all this work to do and now this, thank you! And it wasn't just me. It's not just what I do. I go to Ayanna [Thompson], Patti [Hoffman], Emily [Runser], Dave [Kloc], and Michelle [Graham] — it's everybody. It's everybody who helps me do my job and I'm hoping I'm helping you as well."

Matt Lasecki, SPHR, associate vice president for HRS, added: "Jackie, you do your job with humility and you do it with excellence. You really embody what we're trying to do in Human Resources and the recognition is very well-deserved."

A few days after the ceremony, Ball still couldn't believe it.

"We were processing the last payroll cycle for the year and I was still backed up from FLSA so I went to Juliet [Dickerson, HRS director of staffing and career services] and said 'Can I not go to this?' She said, 'No, Matt wants everybody there.' And when Dr. Perman walked in, I thought, 'Oh my. What is going on?'"

The FLSA work was particularly grueling. Ball worked on the federal reclassification for six weeks to meet the Nov. 27 implementation date. Then on Wednesday, Nov. 23, when many employees were home preparing their Thanksgiving feasts, HRS learned all FLSA actions across the state were being halted due to a federal injunction. Ball, the HRS leadership team, and their counterparts in CITS conducted conference calls from home to determine how best to undo the actions. Starting on the Monday after Thanksgiving, Ball began undoing all of the work. Some 600 records were touched and retouched, with 100 percent accuracy.

"Excited" to be Employee of the Month, and grateful for the extra \$250 in her paycheck, Ball calls the award "a blessing."

Those she works with consider her the same, especially the international employees whom she helps in various ways. It could be paperwork from the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Customs, or helping them apply for a Social Security card, or letting them know deadlines to renew their work authorization are approaching.

"I feel good about helping them," Ball says. "Sometimes they are right off the plane. They come here the next day and they are a little lost. So I put together a little packet for them with step-by-step instructions on things they need to do."

As Dickerson said in Ball's nomination form, "Jackie is committed to accountability and her knowledge regarding her areas of responsibility is unprecedented."

Ball says the award was the perfect Christmas gift. "I mean who wouldn't want an extra \$250 close to the holiday?" she says with a smile. "But it's not just that. It's being recognized not only by your peers, but by your supervisor and other people you have a working relationship with. It made that whole difficult FLSA process worthwhile."

— Chris Zang

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