

# MEET OUR 2021 NATIONAL HEROES

## 1Q National Heroes

**Paula Candler, CNA**  
*Assistive Care of the Triad, NC (ACT)*



When Clinical Manager **Lisa Boland** thinks of Paula, she is reminded of the words “special purpose” from The BAYADA Way. She explains, “Paula has the unique ability to truly meet her clients where they are, on their terms, and knows exactly how to engage with them on their level. She provides ongoing care for the duration, until end of life or until the case ends.”

Paula, who started her BAYADA journey in 2011, earned a perfect 10/10 score on her last three client satisfaction surveys, and she receives many accolades about the level of comfort she instills with her presence and skill level. However, the care she recently provided for a man with quadriplegia speaks particularly well to Lisa’s assessment. The client relocated from his own home back to his father’s, where he was set up with special accommodations for his privacy and comfort. Due to the client’s high expectations, many aides were not asked back after their first visit—but Paula was. Lisa recalls that one of the most important skills for a CNA on this case was the ability to navigate the remote for the client’s large TV with surround sound. Though Paula did not consider herself tech savvy, she somehow made it work, and a bond soon formed between the two.

Paula found it refreshing to have a client who voiced his preferences. She took it upon herself to learn all the little things that he appreciated, such as how much mayo and onions he liked on his burgers, how to massage his hands, and scratch his head. They talked a lot, mostly about all the crazy things they did when they were younger, and they competed against each other when they watched game shows. Paula regularly picked up lunch after a discussion about what they had a taste for, and they would eat together. Paula even took an interest in attending church services with the father and son pair on Sundays. She streamed services by connecting the client’s laptop to his TV. The client’s father noted, “Not everyone would go to church with us

the way Paula did. She is sweet, friendly, loving, and the hardest working lady my son has ever seen.”

As years passed, the frequency of hospitalizations increased for this client as his body succumbed to his quadriplegia. Paula was asked to continue visiting, even while he was hospitalized. Most recently, the client was preparing for a hospital discharge when his circumstances suddenly turned, and his family was called. At one point, everyone had left the room but Paula. She remained as a confidante and friend, listening to her client’s fears, and providing comfort with the touch of her hand until he passed peacefully. For that client on that day, Paula’s special purpose was fulfilled.

**Dawn Veasey, LPN**  
*Washington Township, NJ Pediatrics (WTP)*



Dawn began her journey with BAYADA in 2000, clocking over 14,000 hours since then within her Snapdragon Division (SNA). The respect for Dawn’s work runs deep

as a result of the many lives she touched, the neighborhoods she served, and the results she achieved. Director **Paul Broderick** comments, “No matter what the situation, I have watched Dawn handle it with such class, compassion, professionalism, and always with a smile on her face.”

Prior to the pandemic, Dawn filled random shifts for her current primary client, a boy who has a tracheostomy and uses a ventilator. When restrictions began, the family decided to cut back on services and have one day nurse remain. Dawn now provides 40 hours of care per week, and the child’s mom can hardly contain herself about the pairing. She frequently calls or texts the office with photos of Dawn and her son wearing the same shirts or sharing stories that promise to make his client services manager’s day.

Although her client is nonverbal, Dawn talks often during her shifts to engage him. He does sign to communicate, but his speech therapist encourages the use of his talker. Dawn participates in his lessons and takes each new target to heart. Then, she very naturally and dynamically carries over what is taught

into her routine. Speech Therapist **Kristy Davies** said, “Dawn is like no other nurse I have worked with. She is not only great for all the important personal and medical things, but she is spot on with what is important for her client’s growth all around.” When the client signs instead of using his talker, Dawn very naturally responds, “I don’t have my glasses on today and cannot see very well. What did you say?”

Excellence is said to be the hallmark of Dawn’s care, and her success is not the result of chance. Dawn cared for a former client during school hours who was nonverbal and had muscle weakness that prevented her from holding her head independently or interacting with her environment. Dawn observed that the child could communicate via eye gaze and incorporated choice into the child’s life for the first time. The child is now said to enjoy online shopping and choosing music videos through her eye gaze computer.

The mother of Dawn’s current client sums it up with, “Dawn really stands out as a shining example of what people mean when they refer to ‘health care heroes.’ She is my son’s best friend, with the added benefit of being a well-trained and qualified nurse who is more than capable of caring for his set of needs. She has become a member of our family and honestly is the ideal image of what you always hope home nursing would be.”

**Kelly Lee, LPN**  
*Hickory, NC Pediatrics (HIP)*



Whether it’s because of her love of tacos, her sense of humor, or her bubbly personality, everyone who comes in contact with Kelly instantly connects and falls in love with her.

She joined BAYADA in 2012 as a nurse who primarily cared for adults with tracheostomies who required ventilator care. For about the past five years, however, Kelly has cared primarily for a little girl with a very complex diagnosis, which is manifested by many different kinds of seizures.

To be at her best, Kelly knew she required a deep understanding of her client’s diagnosis. She independently

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reached out to the client's neurology team to identify the exact kinds of seizures that the client experienced, how they would present themselves, and where they originated in the brain. Dialogue with family members filled in the gaps to paint a holistic, realistic portrait of the client's condition, which Kelly now shares with new nurses who are oriented to provide care.

Clinical Manager **Jacqueline Clark** recalls, "Kelly compiled all her research and shared it with the office clinical team, so we were able to make a specialized training tool." Every new nurse now has extra seizure training specific to this client's various presentations.

Passionate about excellence, Kelly has even offered to create and teach in-services for BAYADA staff. She was also one of the first in line to get fit tested proactively for her N95 respirator. The thought of being unavailable when her client might need her most was simply not an option.

Kelly's nature is to fill a need wherever one exists. Her notes of gratitude to client services managers, accommodations of schedule changes, and handmade g-tube button covers and belts for her client are just a few ways that Kelly regularly goes above and beyond. Kelly's fun-loving spirit adds a lot of entertainment value to her shifts. The client's mom notes, "Kelly takes time to read and play with my daughter, even if it means being a 'human horsey' or 'jungle gym'—after all the nurse things are done, of course. Kelly's actions prove that this work is more than just a job to her. She actually cares and loves what she does." Another client's mother offered, "Kelly had the knowledge to become a nurse, but she is our Hero because of who she is in her heart."

**Susan Thomas, RN**  
*Raleigh, NC Adult Nursing (RAN)*



Having joined the RAN office in 2019, Susan quickly revealed her true colors. Director **Amanda Therrington** recalls, "Susan immediately started on one of the most

challenging, must-cover, 24/7 cases that our office has ever had. The client had both a tracheostomy and a ventilator

following a tragic workers compensation accident. Susan was an anchor on that team and is one of the biggest reasons we were successful."

Susan has also proven resourceful, finding solutions for challenging situations. While caring for a client who had just moved into a home in an underserved community, Susan noted that the family had little furniture. After obtaining permission with the family, she was able to have a donated bookshelf delivered to provide the family with more organization and storage. Amanda believes, "Susan is just a compassionate person and the epitome of what a nurse should be. She truly leads with her heart, not only by providing exceptional care to her clients, but by helping families manage their stress as they navigate the daily challenges that being a caregiver can bring."

Currently, Susan cares for one client who lost several close family members in the past year due to COVID-19. Susan's dedication has been unmatched, and she has been an emotional support through it all. Susan even worked 12-hour shifts when the client's daughter had knee surgery and required extra help. The client shared, "Susan is a very strong woman. When I am sad, she comforts me. When she works with me, I feel so safe with her. She gives me love and care. Susan is doing stuff for me nonstop. I love her so much. She is a sweetheart with a good heart." The client's daughter could not agree more, adding, "We love her a lot. I feel good because I know Mom is safe with Susan." Susan's clients are so moved with gratitude for her care, and hardly a week goes by without a "thank you" call being made to the office on her behalf.

**PT Gary Yagoda**  
*Fairfax, VA Senior Living (FFF) home health*



Gary joined BAYADA a little more than a year ago with experience in outpatient rehabilitation and senior care. Director **Megan Pickard** recalls, "Gary has

always been a natural with the clients. He builds deep relationships, establishes trust, and delivers." Repetition and perseverance, however, proved key to conquering Home Care Home Base and the use of his tablet.

The focus of Gary's services has been on the residents of one senior living facility in particular. RN **Lauren Close** shares what she has witnessed there. "As I've been doing more starts of care and evaluations, I am noticing a trend: these people LOVE Gary. When I mention I work for the same company, the residents rave about how wonderful he is, and it is never a simple, quick comment. They have stories to tell about his impact in the community."

Facility staff have also commented on Gary's ability to cultivate relationships, winning the hearts and respect of all. According to Program Manager I **Leah Pitts**, the male residents tend to congregate in the gym, "pretending it is like their very own community barber shop, where they can sit and talk Gary's ear off."

Gary's clinical results further underscore the impact of his craft. He has earned more shout outs from families and community staff than any other clinician in his office. One woman remarked how her friend's posture had significantly improved as a result of Gary's care. Another family wrote that Gary deserved an Oscar for his performance, helping to make marked improvement in their mother's physical and emotional well-being.

Megan indicates that although Gary demonstrates "great client care and strong clinical quality," he is always looking to improve and seeks support when needed. Gary's approachable nature encourages ongoing updates on progress from residents, even long after they have finished receiving his care. Megan concludes, "To know Gary is to love Gary. He always gives his best effort with even the most challenging of clients, and never gives up."

**Doris Voiselle, RN**  
*Gastonia, NC Pediatrics (GP)*



Doris has been a mainstay of the GP office since 2014 and is valued for her experience, clinical expertise, and can-do spirit. Client Services Manager **Foster Krebs**

explains that Doris trains new nurses on the care of her current client at the mother's request. "She is exceptionally

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thorough, making sure they are ready to work and isn't going to sign off on an unprepared nurse." The client's mother adds that Doris "is always on top of things" and "lets me know when she sees something out of place or has concerns" about her son's care. Perhaps most importantly, is the fact that all the children in the family simply adore her.

Area Director **Timothy Peterkin** knows Doris as a team player who is calm and focused. When problems arise, Doris unreservedly reaches out to brainstorm solutions. For example, when one case was losing nurses, Doris offered to provide new nurses the training they needed, and then followed up with office staff to provide feedback.

Doris fills in on open shifts to allow teammates a day off; her reliability is exceptional. She has been known to forgo vacations to ensure continuity of care. Foster says there is an "aura" about Doris, which suggests she really cares about people as individuals and is compassionate about their circumstances.

A former client's mother agrees. Her daughter's complex care consisted of help with clinical needs, but also support of her physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. Doris was "exemplary" in filling the bill on all fronts. The 23-year-old client was born with spina bifida and had cerebral palsy as a result of a brain stem surgery at 10 days old, which left her with limited use of the left side of her body and dependent on a wheelchair. Doris, along with five other clinicians, navigated through daily tube feedings, suctioning, incontinence, learning difficulties, and multiple therapies, while employing card games, and other stimulating activities to achieve and maintain levels of success. The client's mom recalls, "Life was very difficult for my daughter, but this team gave her a sense of acceptance and love, which made her try her best in all she did." Sadly, the family experienced a devastating loss when the client passed away. Nearly two years later, Doris has not stopped showing she cares, as she continues to check in with the mom and offer her support.

Foster concludes, "Doris is willing to be flexible to make sure her clients' needs are met. She helps when things come up and is always sweet and humble in the

process. I don't think she realizes how much of a Hero she truly is."

## 2Q National Heroes

**Carson Aldridge, CNA**  
*Greenville, NC Adults (GRA) adult nursing*



Carson became a certified nursing assistant (CNA) not long after she joined the GRA office about two years ago. While her soft demeanor and kind spirit help place

clients at ease, Carson's confidence, initiative, and advocacy ensure that the right quality and quantity of services are delivered to those in her care.

After gaining experience with individuals who had dementia, Carson was asked to care for an elderly woman living in a retirement community. This client had forgotten how to do simple tasks such as ordering food and hanging up her phone, which would prevent her family from contacting her. Carson and her roommate, a fellow BAYADA employee, combined forces to cover all of the client's scheduled hours. One would come in the mornings to help her get ready for her day, order meals, and take her to appointments. And then the other would go in the evenings to assist with dinner and getting ready for bed.

As this client's dementia progressed, she would be found wandering the halls at night, not knowing where she was. The client's daughter then contacted BAYADA to request round-the-clock care, which came at a very challenging time—right in the middle of the pandemic. Although the client's residence did not allow visitors, our aides were able to continue working because they complied with the necessary precautions. GRA Client Services Manager **Kerri Albertine** recalls, "Instead of running away, Carson ran toward the challenge and agreed to pick up more hours." Carson simply knew how much this family needed our help.

Since the client and her family couldn't see each other during the pandemic, Carson went above and beyond to FaceTime her client's family so they could visit virtually. Doing so provided

a sense of normalcy because the client was unable to understand the situation. Carson also set up virtual doctor appointments during her shifts and then relayed the doctor's orders to the family. Once residents were required to stay in their rooms full time, with meals delivered and extracurricular activities stopped, Carson created fun activities to keep her client's mind occupied, which included watching every season of Grey's Anatomy. The two passed the time talking about health care, a mutual passion.

When most of the residents became vaccinated and the retirement community lifted restrictions, Carson took her client to visit friends, get her hair done, and dine in the dining hall. Carson even took her to visit the home she still owned, which has been very therapeutic, bringing back long-forgotten memories. After Carson learned about her client's life, family, and interests, Kerri shared, "Carson would create her daily activities centered around what she learned, so it would keep her client's attention." She also accompanies her client to in-person doctor appointments and continues to act as liaison between the doctor and family.

The client's daughter summed it up: "Carson formed a special bond with my mom during a time when my mom was unable to see family and friends. Her caregiving reflects a commitment to excellence, as she has gone above and beyond to care for my mom—not as a client, but as a person. Carson takes everything to the next level. She not only provides for my mom's physical needs; she supports her emotionally and stimulates her intellectually. She continues to be a bright and shining hero in my mom's eyes, and in our family's eyes, too."

**Slantaye Holder, LPN**  
*Hickory, NC Pediatrics (HIP)*



Although Slantaye joined the HIP office only little more than a year ago, you'd never know it by the way she has embraced her work and the culture. HIP Client Services

Manager **Kara Smallman** attests that Slantaye "is on top of it and models The

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BAYADA Way perfectly, both inside and outside of work."

The mother of a client who receives Slantaye's care as-needed agrees, adding, "She's got a huge heart, and she loves what she does. From the things that are seen to the tiniest detail, Slantaye puts 100% of herself into it. She always lights up the room, even if she isn't trying to. Slantaye is a beautiful nurse with a beautiful soul."

Consistently working more than 50 hours per week, Slantaye primarily cares for twin girls who are six years old and on-the-go. It's a schedule that has many intricacies, which Slantaye helped create. Kara explains, "It's a congregate care case, meaning Slantaye cares for two clients at one time. Each of the girls has differing schedules because of therapies, school, etc. It can be a lot to keep up with! You have to be interactive, and the girls do not mesh with every nurse. It takes a particular kind of nurse to work well with them, and Slantaye is that nurse!"

Despite the challenges, HIP Clinical Manager **Olivia Falco** has seen that Slantaye is undeterred from providing the best care possible. Olivia says, "She demonstrates excellent care and kindness with her gentle but stern 'mom' personality." Moreover, Olivia feels Slantaye's results have been "amazing."

One of the twins, in particular, has made great strides in her vocabulary and has also been able to have her feeding tube removed, while continuing to gain weight appropriately. The clients' mother is able to maintain a full-time job because of Slantaye's reliability, and says, "My family is very thankful for her and all that she does. Our girls love her!"

All agree that Slantaye is a caregiver at heart whose infectious positivity and enthusiastic attitude can be felt in everything from the smallest personal interaction to her sharing of HIP's Facebook posts. Simply put, Kara says, "She loves what she does."

## **Donna Moretz, RN** *Hickory, NC Pediatrics (HIP)*



After having worked for nine offices and cared for more than 50 pediatric and adult clients over the span of 20 years, Donna is valued as a 'staple' in the HIP office and

someone who will ultimately be known as a "legacy nurse." HIP Clinical Manager **Jessica Price** shares, "Donna has been my go-to nurse for so many clients. She is one of the nurses who I would reach out and plea with to help us open cases, train nurses, or cover a last-minute callout. I could always depend on Donna to help if she could make it happen, and I always knew 'I'll do it' meant she would do it, and do it well."

Jessica first learned of Donna from an adult client who received tracheostomy and ventilator care from her when she was a field nurse. Donna initially provided care during the day, but switched to the night shift, which is when the client wanted to be active and get out of her house because she heard that people have more of a chance of dying at night. Jessica believes, "Donna helped her client make so many memories, which took a lot of work. All that mattered to Donna is that her efforts meant the world to her client."

Donna cared for a pediatric client who required complicated tracheostomy and ventilator care for four years until her passing. When the client's condition declined, the time came during Donna's shift for the client to be removed from her ventilator. Donna respectfully honored the family's wishes to have the beloved, long-term day nurse present, and to have the day nurse remove the client from her ventilator. Jessica recalls, "Donna handled the situation with love," and welcomed the support of the team during such a difficult time for all."

In addition to Donna's humility, excellent nursing skills, and amazing 99% reliability rating, HIP Clinical Manager **Olivia Falco** knows her as "a true dog whisperer." One client's dog would "bark like crazy" when his case first opened, but Donna somehow always managed to get the canine under control when Olivia arrived. As expected, the client himself also "enjoys hanging out

with Donna until the early morning hours," says Olivia, "and smiles any time I ask him how Donna is doing. Donna is one of those employees who you know loves what she does."

HIP Client Services Manager **Maddison Puckett** concurs. "Donna is always kind and compassionate. She can make you feel as if you have known each other for years. She is guaranteed to greet you with a warm and welcoming smile. Donna is truly as good as they come, and we are so lucky to have her as a part of our team."

## **Catherine Briggs, MSW** *Burlington, NJ East Home Health (BEV)*



Catherine from the BEV office has always gone above and beyond expectations since her start in 2011. However, with numerous challenging situations over the past several

months—coupled with limited resources related to COVID-19—her helpful actions stood out more than ever.

BEV Rehabilitation Manager **Deana Weiser** says, "Catherine rolled up her sleeves and provided assistance for personal care, medication reminders, and meal preparation." Her efforts have been impactful among her colleagues in the field, as well, because she creatively works to connect clients with whatever resources are available.

BEV OT **Gloria Boldberg** adds, "In her calm way, Catherine can take chaos and turn it into a plan." BEV LPN **Christine Dallas** further notes, "Catherine has helped with our food drive, Christmas drive, clients' transportation, benefits for Veterans, housing, and numerous other client needs. No job is too big or small."

One male client with encephalopathy who lived alone especially benefitted from Catherine's diligent follow-through. A change in the client's mental status was suspected, but he masked his symptoms with his lighthearted, jovial personality. BEV PT **Melissa Kirkpatrick** recalled, "A phone call was plotted for the next day to check on him to see if there were any significant changes." When the phone call was not answered, and the police did not provide an update on a requested wellness check, Catherine

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selflessly volunteered to check on the client herself. After finding him confused and on the floor from an apparent fall, emergency response services were called, and the client received the care he needed. Melissa concluded, "Catherine worked hard to find this client a beautiful assisted living facility, where he thrived. She constantly chooses to go the extra mile. Catherine makes everyone around her better and motivated to do more."

As the unofficial leader of all the MSWs in the division, Catherine schedules meetings with her peers to discuss obstacles and opportunities and share knowledge. She also co-led complex case huddles for clients at high risk of rehospitalization. If that wasn't enough, at the height of the pandemic, Catherine co-led a support group for field staff throughout the division. BEV RN **Kristy Godfrey** reflects, "Catherine is the wearer of many hats, but mostly, she's human. She's real and she's armed with enough ammunition to take on any social work battle she encounters. Catherine doesn't fail. If home care had glue, Catherine Briggs would be it. She holds it all together and mends the lives of those whose lives seem to be falling apart."

## 3Q National Heroes

### Jasmina Coira, HHA

*Essex, NJ (ESS) assistive care state programs*



Jasmina demonstrates The BAYADA Way of compassion, excellence, and reliability in all that she does. When she first came on board with BAYADA, she was a brand-new aide.

Jasmina was a star right from the start. She was assigned to her first client and stayed with him for almost three years!

Jasmina's dedication and compassion were obvious right away. She continued to work with a few other clients, and then in February 2021, she started working with one very special client. This client is one of our own amazing home health aides who had a very sudden and tragic medical event. She suffered an aneurysm in November 2020 and was hospitalized for a few months. She had trouble speaking and walking, and she needed extensive assistance

with all of her daily activities. Our client had been an amazing home health aide, and this was devastating for her. She absolutely loved coming to work every day, and her clients spoke very highly of her. The office staff, her clients, and her colleagues were all so concerned. She was going to need a lot of assistance with her recovery when she finally returned home.

This is where Jasmina came in. We knew we needed an aide with a super positive attitude, lots of patience, an encouraging personality, and a very creative side to help the client recover and be the best she could be. Jasmina was the one!

Right from the start, Jasmina figured out what her interests were. She found out that, above all, her new client LOVED being a home health aide. After she came home from the hospital, she was still getting up in the morning and putting on her uniform to go to work. Jasmina's compassion and skill helped her understand that at this time she needed to help herself.

Our new client had a significant stutter in her speech when she came home. So, they started working on that by reading the Bible daily (which our client loves). Of course, they worked on activities of daily living, but Jasmina went above and beyond, and they started doing puzzles and writing. She also took it upon herself to start a little indoor garden, showing her client to care for it. Jasmina even went as far as to prepare all meals in advance when she was going on vacation. She individually marked all of them with how to heat them and what was for which day.

Our client has improved greatly by having Jasmina there by her side supporting her both physically and emotionally. We are so thankful for all the hard work Jasmina has done for the ESS office, but we are especially grateful for the work she has done to help in the recovery of one of our own BAYADA family members. She truly represents *The BAYADA Way* in EVERY way, and we are so proud and grateful for her!

### Kathleen Oldfield, LPN

*Wilkes-Barre/Scranton, PA (WBS) adult nursing*



Kathy is a quiet Hero. She doesn't call out, and she works hard. I did not want this to go unnoticed. Someone at BAYADA once said, "Sometimes your best nurses are the ones you don't hear from much."

Not only does she keep everything running smoothly, but Kathy provides excellent care and socialization for a client who has been primarily at home due to her medical fragility, especially after the pandemic started. When I transferred to the WBS office two years ago, Kathy's client happened to be transferring from the pediatric office, and her pediatric clinical manager was out on leave. Because of Kathy's kind acceptance of me as her client's new clinical manager, the transition went so smoothly. Kathy was able to provide me a very complete picture of her client's health history and her care. She collaborated with me to create the care plan and reviewed all the medications with me. She is truly the eyes and the ears in the home for a clinical manager.

Her client's mother recently expressed gratitude for Kathy, saying, "The day I became the parent of my special needs daughter, my life changed in so many ways. There were so many fears. The one fear that was the strongest was who was going to care for my daughter when I had to work. My mom was her caregiver for the first few years of her life, but when she started to require more medical care, we turned to BAYADA. We then met Nurse Kathy."

"To say that she provides the care my daughter needs is an understatement. The two of them bonded immediately. Kathy not only cares for my daughter, but also gives me the assurance that I need in order to do things daily in my life. There have been many challenges as the years have gone by, medically and otherwise, but one consistent thing is Kathy's dedication to my daughter and our family. My daughter has needed spine surgery, developed diabetes, and has been put on a feeding tube, to name a few. Kathy has always showed professionalism in mastering the care and

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knowledge that went along with each change.”

“In 2013, we relocated 45 minutes away from where we lived. Kathy didn’t even think twice about traveling every day to care for my daughter. Bad weather, road construction, and dark morning and night drives home didn’t stop Kathy.”

“Someone recently asked me how long Kathy has been our nurse. I said, without thinking, ‘25 years.’ I think I shocked myself when I said that out loud. What kind of person stays at a job where each day is unknown? What kind of person gives 1000% every single day to a person who is not even family? Who gives so much of themselves and initiates further educating themselves when a crisis occurs? Kathy Oldfield is the answer to all of these questions. I honestly don’t know how my daughter and I could have ever gotten through our journey so far without her. We are forever grateful that we made the call to BAYADA and are blessed with a nurse who has become our family.”

**Mary Williams, RN**  
*Gastonia, NC (GAS) adult nursing*



Mary Jane started with the company in 2010. She drives more than 45 minutes one way to care for her clients who live in Gastonia and Belmont. Not only is Mary Jane’s reliability

impeccable, but she brings a sense of compassion and warmth to each family she touches.

Mary Jane is a night nurse. In most cases, that would mean the client may see her for a few minutes before bed and then drift off to sleep. In Mary Jane’s case, however, the three clients she cares for are all night owls, which means Mary Jane has to get creative with what she does with them. She works hard to learn her clients’ interests and incorporates them into their daily care.

Mary Jane has one client who is very special to her. This client will be 27 years old this year. Despite their difference in age, they have become the best of friends. Her client relies on a tracheostomy and ventilator and has a diagnosis of muscular dystrophy. She is an avid scrapbook maker who loves arts and crafts. However, since contracting

COVID-19, her client’s condition has deteriorated, and she now has very little use of her hands. That hasn’t stopped Mary Jane from coming prepared every night with activities that her client can participate in. Mary Jane searches all over the internet looking for crafts that would pique her interest. She then works to adapt them so that her client can participate in their construction.

Every other week when Mary Jane stops by the office to pick up her N95s, she pulls out her phone and shows me all the adorable items they have made together. Mary Jane works hard to use materials that they have lying around the house. They have made gnomes at Christmas time, various sunflowers (even some made out of bottle caps), and quite a few painted items

Mary Jane is so patient and lets her client do as much as she can before finishing it for her. Her client had the following words of appreciation for Mary Jane, “We all love Mary Jane. She is one of the best nurses I’ve ever had. She hardly ever calls out. She goes above and beyond on everything she does. She has helped us so much. My parents and I are so thankful that she came into our lives. I have so much fun with Mary Jane, doing all sorts of crafts. We really appreciate everything Mary Jane has done for us.”

**Kimberly Denbleyker, LPN**  
*Willow Grove, PA Pediatrics (WGP)*



Kim has been with BAYADA for many years, and she continues to exemplify The BAYADA Way every day. She is very compassionate towards her clients and their

families and provides excellent, above-and-beyond care to them. Kim has a very warm personality and always has a smile on her face when we see her in the home or office. She is such a pleasure to work with.

Kim will always look out for her clients and their families first. She makes sure to schedule everything around the days she works, and if she does need a day off, she will make sure everyone is aware many months in advance. For a client services manager, she is really the ideal nurse.

Kim is loved so much by every client she

visits. She is truly one of our best and most reliable nurses. Kim builds bonds very easily with each of her clients. Every new child she meets ends up loving her. Her clients feel as though she is family. Kim goes out of her way to make a connection with them. She will bake cupcakes, garden, and take her current client to parks. She has even created a children’s book with a previous client. Kim always puts her clients’ needs above all else. She is a like a member of their family and a huge influence in their day-to-day lives.

Kim has such a big heart, and it shows every day! Kim works more than 30 hours each week for her clients, with greater than 99% reliability. Families know they can count on her for her scheduled shifts and help covering callouts and other nurses’ vacations. Kim will stay late when needed and even goes in at 5:00 am! She is always our first call when the clients need help, as we know she will make it work.

The mother of Kim’s client praised Kim, saying, “There are no words to describe how grateful we are to have you in our lives. You exemplify what a real-life Hero is, and we would not feel the comfort we do if it weren’t for such a caring, thoughtful, and kind person. You go above and beyond your job duties to

make sure my son has an amazing day. Since the first day you started, I felt at ease knowing my son was in the best care. I am grateful that I can trust in your capabilities and leave my son in your care, knowing he is safe and loved. I am so appreciative to have you be a part of our lives and helping us through these challenges. There are a lot of unknowns ahead, but I know that we can get through this with you by our side.”

**Ingrid Mejellano, PT**  
*Baltimore, MD Southwest Senior Living (BSF) home health*



Ingrid has been a PT at BAYADA for the past three years. BAYADA was her first home health role, and she was eager to learn and grow.

What I loved about Ingrid early on was that she always asked questions,

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listened, and knew her limitations. She had courageous conversations with the office leadership team early on to ensure that she was successful in her new role. Ingrid is quiet, kind, compassionate, reliable, and exudes excellence in all that she does

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, two senior living communities in which Ingrid works were hit hard. Their corporation made the decision to not allow outside providers into their building, including our therapy team. This had a major financial impact on Ingrid. Ingrid was open to helping our team wherever we needed support, and boy, did we need support. All our communities were moving toward only allowing one person per discipline into their building. Now more than ever, we had to be creative, flexible, and determined.

Ingrid accepted a new PT role at another senior living building, and they quickly fell in love with her. In her new building, Ingrid was one of our first clinicians to treat a COVID-positive client. Never once did she consider turning down this task and jumped in to support these seniors.

As the pandemic continued, Ingrid's original buildings realized their clients were declining quickly and they needed their BAYADA Therapists back in the building. One building wanted Ingrid as their PT, and she returned to support them and their clients.

To say Ingrid is one of the most hard-working, compassionate clinicians I have had the pleasure to work with would be an understatement, for sure. Ingrid consistently puts the needs of her clients and her team members ahead of hers. She never shies away from jumping in with a client to help with their physical therapy needs. Ingrid consistently goes out of her way to ensure that her clients receive amazing care. Ingrid exemplifies excellence every day in her work with BAYADA. She delivers high-quality care to all of her clients and is committed to her craft. She always lives The BAYADA Way with integrity and flexibility. When the pandemic hit and some of her buildings closed their doors to outsiders, she rolled with the punches and focused her attention on other facilities that were in need. Ingrid is always adaptable to change.

Ingrid shows passion in her work through her documentation, which is

always above and beyond the standards. She has excellent communication with clients, their families, and her BAYADA team. She listens and takes action when needed, always thinking ahead!

Ingrid has proven to be a valuable team member through her education of new PTs that join BAYADA. She shows them how to stay positive, work hard, and help create a united team atmosphere. BSF is a better team thanks to Ingrid and her contributions.

## 4Q National Heroes

**Lourdes Garcia de Fernandez, HHA**  
*Camden, NJ Adults (CAM) assistive care state programs*



Lourdes has been with BAYADA since 2013 and has worked in the CAM office for almost five years. Since day one, she has shown remarkable dedication to each client she cares

for. Lourdes's clients do not hesitate to call the office and express their gratitude for having Lourdes in their lives to care for them.

While Lourdes is primarily Spanish-speaking, it has not gotten in the way of caring for her English-speaking client for the past four and a half years. Lourdes has found a way to communicate with her client using Google Translate. Even though she does not consider herself to be tech savvy, she impressively uses this technology to communicate with him and understand his needs. She has become part of his family.

Much of what Lourdes helps her clients with is personal care and daily household activities, but her compassion and caring nature is what helps her to build a relationship of trust with them. Her clients trust her not only with their physical care but also with their emotional well-being. Lourdes cares for a client who is legally blind, and when he first came to BAYADA, his schedule was constantly changing. Lourdes was flexible and reliable, and her client has said, "I like that she is supportive of my needs, helps me with my problems, and is attentive and dependable."

Lourdes also cares for a client with

depression. Lourdes's propensity for empathy allows her to care for this client in a way that makes him feel loved and cared for when he is going through a difficult time. He has called Lourdes his "second mom" and goes on to say, "I love the way she cooks and how dedicated she is when it comes to making meals from my home country. She knows how happy that makes me, so she makes sure to ask me what I want to eat every day. She not only takes care of the house, but also takes some time to talk to me and ask me about my dreams, my friends, and my hobbies." Lourdes has made a positive impact on the lives of her clients with her natural ability to care for the whole person.

**Artis Baker, HHA**  
*Delaware Assistive Care State Programs (DSP)*



Artis has given 30 years of service to BAYADA and has cared for her client for just as long. She has watched her client grow from a child into an adult. This has meant the world to her

client and the family. Her client is not able to verbalize how she feels, but it shows when she is in Artis's presence.

Artis's client was eight years old when she first started caring for her. At this time, the client lived with her grandmother and great grandmother, who were her primary caregivers. She was homebound and was not able to communicate, feed herself, or even walk. Her caregivers were overwhelmed and exhausted. When Artis entered their lives, she used her experience, training, and compassion to help improve her client's quality of life. She not only took care of her client, but taught her family how to care for her as well. She provided this family with safety, stability, and care. Thanks to Artis's reliability and consistent care, her client has been able to remain in her home with her family—and she just recently celebrated her 38th birthday!

Artis cares for her client seven days a week and rarely takes a day off. She has become part of the family. Over the years, Artis has taught her client how to feed herself and how to communicate her needs. They enjoy getting outside for fresh air when the weather is nice.

Artis is an advocate for her client

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and her family. Her dedication and commitment to them has helped them face the many challenges of raising a child with developmental disabilities into adulthood. Over the years, she has helped her client and her family access care when they needed help or services. Not only has she taught her client life skills, but her family members have learned from Artis, as well.

Artis always represents BAYADA with professionalism while out in the community. She takes pride in her work and in BAYADA. Artis is a true role model and the perfect example of living and working in accordance with *The BAYADA Way*.

## **Sarah Schiedel, LPN**

*Pediatrics of Winston-Salem, NC (PWS)*



Sarah has been with BAYADA for the past nine years and demonstrates *The BAYADA Way* with every client and family for which she cares. Her clients and families

know that she is someone they can count on as a caregiver and advocate. Sarah recently joined BAYADA's Hearts for Home Care advocacy group to try and fight for client funding in North Carolina's state budget. She is a passionate advocate for all clients receiving home care.

As testament to Sarah's commitment, the mother of one client said, "Sarah has been a very important part of our lives for the past nine years as she has cared for our son. We are so grateful for her commitment and compassion each and every time she comes to our home. It is refreshing to have someone in our life we can trust with our son's care at home or at school, who also understands the unique challenges we face as a family with a medically fragile child. Sarah is more than a nurse to us—she is part of our family!"

Recently, one of Sarah's primary clients needed to have a tracheostomy placed to help with her breathing. The need for increased skill level meant many nurses would need training with this client to keep her day shift staffed. Keeping the shift staffed is very important to Sarah, because it allows her client to be cared for and for her client's parents to be able to go to work every day. As soon as her

client was discharged from the hospital, Sarah did everything she could to get as many nurses trained as possible. This is just one example of Sarah's commitment to her clients and their families.

Her client's mother had this to say, "Sarah was one of the very first nurses to ever care for my daughter. Any anxiety or worry that could have been there that first day was instantly gone, simply because of Sarah. Sarah is amazing! She has been with us going on two years and has become a part of our family. Sarah is reliable, professional, caring, and devoted to both my daughter and our family. She has been instrumental in my daughter's ability to thrive outside of a hospital setting. We are so thankful for Sarah!"

## **Mechel Phillpotts, RN**

*Philadelphia, PA North Home Health (PNV)*



Mechel has been with BAYADA just over five years and embodies *The BAYADA Way* not only in her work, but in her daily life as well. She is an advocate, a professional, and

shows empathy and compassion to all who are in her care.

When a client was asked about Mechel, she shared, "Mechel is great! I love her! Mechel called in to get me a new leg bag to replace my old one that I had for five years, and I didn't even know she did it until Theresa called me. I was surprised that she did that and was very happy. I am so glad my doctor recommended me to BAYADA and that I have Mechel caring for me."

This year, Mechel applied for and was awarded a BAYADA Presidential Scholarship. She is committed to learning and continuously improving her skills to be able to provide the highest quality care possible to her clients. She is truly invested in learning, voluntarily attending Zoom meetings and participating in clinical discussions. Mechel is dedicated to her craft and her clients.

Mechel shows dedication and compassion in her personal life as well. Outside of her time spent caring for clients at BAYADA, she travels to Africa each year with her church. She visits with women who have lost their husbands and provides medical

screenings and wellness checks, as well as bringing supplies that may not be available to the population. She is selfless, compassionate, and has such a giving soul. Her work is so important and meaningful to her as well as those she serves.

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, Mechel has never skipped a beat, showing true dedication to her clients and her team. Mechel exudes reliability. She is always willing to be flexible and is often the first one to offer to take a client when a need arises. She works tirelessly to get the job done, all with a smile and an empathetic heart.

## **Harold Orbillos, RN**

*Delaware Nursing Adult (DNA) adult nursing*



Harold has been with BAYADA for a little more than two years, and in that short time, he has shown great commitment to providing quality care to his clients. He always

goes the extra mile because he knows that, in the end, his clients will benefit.

Shortly after Harold was hired at BAYADA, he had to go on leave to be a full-time caregiver to his parents. It was a difficult decision to resign from a job he had only just begun, but it was a decision that he needed to make. As promised, he came back to us on a part-time basis as soon as he could. It was at this time that Harold completed tracheostomy and ventilator training and was able to care for our clients requiring high-tech care. He saw a need and did what was needed to fulfill it.

Over time, Harold worked the requisite hours with multiple clients with tracheostomies to achieve trach coding. He now works regularly with three clients, including two complex trach clients, and typically works full-time hours each week. The father of Harold's client shared, "Harold not only cares for my son's medical needs, but his social needs as well. There are no words I am able to use to describe our thanks. Harold loves his work, and we treat each other like family, not like client/caregiver. Our day is much better when Harold is here. He brings great joy to our household, and the dogs like him too. We love him very much."

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Harold is so selfless and always rises to the occasion. In addition to Harold's full-time schedule with BAYADA and working another job, he still finds time to help with extra shifts from time to time. Harold also spends a great deal of time caring for his sick father. Despite Harold's commitments to his family and his father's health, we have no doubts that we can count on him to be there for his clients.

## **Michele Puzio, PT**

*Delaware Pediatric Home Health (DPV)*



Since her start with BAYADA in January 2003, Michele has been providing care with *compassion, excellence, and reliability*—all of which she brought with her

on day one. Michele truly exemplifies The BAYADA Way in all that she does, not only at work, but at home and in the community as well.

It is impossible to share one best example of how Michele has demonstrated *The BAYADA Way* over the past 18+ years. It isn't one day or one client or one situation that is special; it is Michele who is special. Michele has even written a children's book, entitled *The Mighty Doves*, to describe the special clients and the great work that is done in pediatric home care here at BAYADA.

Each day, Michele shows up with a smile on her face, love in her heart, and a passion and a commitment to help others. No matter how difficult it may be or how challenging it may get, Michele is truly present in the moment for each and every experience that comes her way. Michele is there to give it her all, to make a real difference in the lives of those around her.

Michele has greatly impacted the lives of so many clients and families over the years. There are many stories to share. One client, who was told that he would lose his leg after being hit by a train, was later able to keep his leg and walk on his own again, thanks to Michele. One client, who was never supposed to walk, proved everyone wrong, thanks to Michele. One client was taught to walk at childcare using a harness support system, thanks to Michele.

Michele's compassion has also greatly

impacted her colleagues and peers. Michele is the first to offer to help when needed. Whether it is filling in for another clinician or picking up a challenging case, Michele is always willing to help. Michele is greatly interested in sharing her experience and knowledge with students, entry-level clinicians, and peers. She is committed to sharing her talents with new employees to allow them the opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge. Many of our new clinicians will shadow Michele during her home visits as part of their orientation. You can also find Michele in the office demonstrating skills or treatment techniques to new clinicians. Michele will regularly take phone calls and answers emails from other clinicians. She is highly respected by her peers.