

MEET OUR 2022 NATIONAL HEROES

1Q National Heroes

Carolyn Agbotse, CHHA
Newton, MA (NWT) assistive care



Carolyn's client services manager (CSM), NWT CSM **Shubhana Tomar**, describes Carolyn as the most selfless, caring, dedicated, and compassionate home health aide (HHA) she

knows. In Carolyn's own words, she treats all her clients the way she would treat her own mother. Shubhana says, "Carolyn is the most reliable caregiver I know. When she is scheduled, she will be there. If I had superpowers, I would clone Carolyn; that is how much she embodies *The BAYADA Way*."

With more than 40 years of experience, Carolyn has knowledge of many things that are beyond the scope of her job description. She is always eager to learn more, whether it be by researching her clients' diagnoses, completing in-services ahead of time, or taking many of the courses that her clinical managers may offer.

Carolyn is incredibly devoted to her clients and has developed relationships of trust and mutual respect with her clients and their families. The daughter of one of her former clients wrote in to say, "Carolyn is an extremely special person. She was an inspired and especially warm and loving person who treated my mother with dignity and the utmost care. Although often grumpy in my presence, my mother's eyes would light up the minute Carolyn walked into her bedroom. Despite all the misery my mother endured due to her complex medical issues, Carolyn would manage to lift her spirits. Carolyn's amazing charisma came along with fascinating, interesting, and funny stories, which entertained my mother to no end. My mother felt so comforted in Carolyn's care. Most importantly for me, she was my support, letting me cry on her shoulder so I could express my despair, or talk about my mother's grumpiness and helplessness. I had a very special relationship with Carolyn that I will never forget and will always cherish. My deepest heartfelt gratitude to Carolyn for everything she did to support my mother and our family through our darkest days. Even now, two years after my mother's death, I keep Carolyn close to my heart. She is a true angel."

If you ask any family member of Carolyn's former clients, they will tell you that the trust she builds lasts a lifetime. The son of another former client described her relationship with his parents saying, "Carolyn was more of a friend than an aide. Carolyn gave me peace of mind that my parents were safe and comfortable. I have very fond memories of the social interaction between my parents and Carolyn. Rather than quietly watch TV, the three would spend the day in lively conversations, full of laughter, opinions, and stories. Those conversations gave my parents what they most wanted: to feel healthy, happy, and many years younger. I will be forever grateful that Carolyn was part of my parents' life."

Brandy Henson, LPN
Towanda, PA Pediatrics (TWP)



In the 14 years that Brandy has worked with BAYADA, she has cared for 54 different children. The impact she was able to have on every client whom she has cared for is worth so much to the families that needed her.

Brandy is friendly; her smile is always seen and felt. She is respectful of clients, families, coworkers, and other staff she works with every day. Brandy shows faith, hope, and love in all that she does. Clients love her and look forward to seeing her. She makes a lasting impression and invests in relationships that last for years, even with former clients who no longer require our services. She provides impeccable care to our clients, and families trust her.

The mother of one of Brandy's current clients had this to say about her, "No parent ever imagines themselves having a child diagnosed with a serious, lifelong, life-threatening illness that needs 24/7 management. It upends your world. Disrupts your routine. Changes your life in so many ways. And while our son is TOTALLY worth every bit of it, the changes definitely make life a bit more challenging. Our biggest fear when our son was first diagnosed at 11 months old was obviously how to manage his diagnosis and keep him alive and healthy from day to day, hour to hour, and even minute to minute. Our next biggest fear

was how we are going to continue to work and maintain our livelihoods—keep our jobs, our home, and our busy lifestyles—all of it. Our son needed to be monitored 24/7 to avoid another hospital visit, a coma, or even death. Our priorities had changed overnight. How on earth would we manage this unrelenting disease and our lives not change drastically?

"In stepped BAYADA and eventually, Brandy. Brandy has been such a wonderful fit for our little guy and for our family over the last few years. Our son absolutely adores her! She's fun, silly, a great nurse, reliable, and most importantly, she truly cares about him. This isn't just a job for her. Brandy always cares about doing what is best for our child and is willing to learn with us as we've transitioned from MDI (shots) to an insulin pump, adjusted his blood sugar ranges, learned to pre-bolus, and so on. She really cares about how he is doing and how she can help, and she is always open and willing to learn new ways of improving his care to affect both his short-term and long-term health. Brandy cares so much that she even messages us to check in on him after hours and on her days off. The two of them have a special bond, and it's heart-warming.

"Brandy has been great. She is a gem, and being a nurse isn't easy, but she rocks it! She makes our crazy lives a little less crazy. Our little hero loves his hero "Bwandy," and we feel so blessed to have her! Brandy is a Hero because she has helped our lives feel more "normal" throughout all the changes and adjustments we've had to make over the last several years. We are super thankful for her and all that she does for us."

Terry Woods, LPN
Erie, PA (ERI) pediatrics



Terry is the perfect model for what great looks like and a prime example of living up to *The BAYADA Way*. Terry has been with BAYADA since 2014 and has worked

with many different clients in the ERI office, but he impacted one client's life immensely.

MEET OUR 2022 NATIONAL HEROES

Terry began working with this client in 2018 when the client was 14 years old. His client was removed from his biological family at a young age by the Office of Children and Youth and spent the majority of his childhood living in a shelter for children. Terry's client has Type 1 diabetes, and due to the environment of his upbringing, also has severe behavioral issues. Due to these complexities, he has seen a turnover of dozens of nurses over the six-plus years as a BAYADA client. His life has been marked with short-term relationships and the constant feeling of abandonment.

In 2018, Terry entered his life and was the only person who became a constant for him up until his transition last month. It would be an understatement to explain their relationship as anything other than being full of unconditional love, respect, and trust. Terry spent four years dedicated to making sure his client not only had the best nursing care possible, but also had a friend. Terry was 100 percent committed to his client and would do anything he could to make sure he was cared for.

In January, after months of planning, Terry's client finally got the opportunity to move to the new facility. Without hesitation, Terry volunteered to take the trip, traveling by plane from Erie, PA to Atlanta, GA to help with the transition. He spent time at the new facility to give a full, detailed report to the staff and also enjoy his last moments with his client. Terry's commitment and dedication to his client are truly admirable.

Terry's ability to continue to provide the best nursing care and show empathy for his client despite the immense challenges he faced is a testament to his compassion. At times, his client would show aggression towards Terry; having the ability to put himself in the client's shoes was incredibly difficult, but that is what Terry did. Terry is a nurse with very high standards for the level of care he provides. He demonstrated this by taking the additional time to give a full, in-depth, and detailed report to the receiving agency to make the transition seamless for his client and the agency. He takes a great amount of pride in his work.

Terry's client was able to depend on him when most other people in his life left.

For four years, Terry was there when he was needed and frequently picked up additional time when available. I can't think of someone who demonstrates this quality any better than Terry. ERI Director **Daniel Continenza** says, "I am proud to have people like Terry working in the ERI office! It takes a very special person to do what Terry did, and he may not even understand the full impact he has had on his client's life."

Mary Fenyus, RN
Downingtown, PA Adult Nursing (DAN)



Mary has dedicated well over ten years of service to BAYADA, caring for numerous clients during this time. She brings many years of critical care experience to her home care practice. Mary blends this high-level, acute care experience with the fine nuances of caring for an individual in their home. She possesses all the attributes of a top-flight nurse: skill, integrity, empathy, master-communicator, even-tempered, and calm in the face of challenges. Mary has the unique ability to be the nurse that is needed that day or that minute for that specific client.

Mary's client sustained a traumatic brain injury while studying abroad during her first year of college. Her client's health was declining for many years. Mary was there navigating the medical complexities while always keeping her client's comfort a top priority. Her client's parents eventually made the very difficult choice to provide hospice care at home. DAN Clinical Manager **Karen Troy** described the care Mary provided on the day that her client passed away, saying, "On her client's last day, Mary was caring for her. I joined her in the home as her client was nearing death. I witnessed a nurse who was strong, kind, and supportive to the family. She did not recoil from the tremendously sad task in front of her, but instead moved forward with a calmness and serenity that comforted everyone at that bedside—all while ensuring her client's last moments were not in pain or fear. Mary knew when to be present for the family and when to allow space for grieving. It was beyond a difficult day for all involved, to say the least. I believe in our nursing careers we are placed just where we are needed,

at just the right time, for just the right person. What I know is that Mary was supposed to be there to assist her client's transition that day. She was there to pick up the family and do the things that they could not in that time. Her exceptional care of her client is just one example of many over the years we have worked together."

The parents of Mary's client shared, "We were so very lucky to have Mary care for our beautiful daughter for several years. Mary brought loving and compassionate care every week. She would start her day by talking quietly to our daughter, who was unable to speak, by her bedside each morning. Mary would tell her about the day's therapies, highlights of Mary's week, her dogs, and anything she thought might interest her. Mary treated our daughter as an adult, with dignity and respect. While Mary was always professional, her love for our daughter was obvious in the many little ways she tried to make her life better, from doing puzzles and therapy to bringing her out in the sunshine when she could. We know how difficult it is to care for a person who is unable to care for themselves, but Mary made it look easy. Having Mary on our care team made our daughter's life and our lives better, and we are so thankful to have had her."

Sandra Norton, RN
Hickory, NC Pediatrics (HIP)



HIP Clinical Manager **Jackie Clark** says, "Sandra demonstrates excellence in EVERYTHING she does! She ensures her client has the care she needs each and every day, and they have a bond that is evident from the first time you meet them. Sandra is always prepared for the next step in her day and is prepared for the unexpected, as well. I have never entered her client's home without observing emergency equipment prepared, ready, and accessible, and Sandra knows her client's care, moods, patterns, and medical needs as well as her own family does. Sandra always communicates all changes in her client's status, even the small changes that she has learned mean a larger change is coming soon. Sandra's notes are always thorough and on time, leaving no questions about the care provided or the status of her client's

Continued on next page

MEET OUR 2022 NATIONAL HEROES

health at the end of each shift. She has also started assisting with completing clinical reassessments to help the office team. Sandra's reassessments are always complete, current, and on time, providing a perfect clinical picture of her client's health and wellness. Sandra is always willing to help out, ask questions, and do things correctly the first time!"

HIP CSM **Caroline Pierce** said about the exceptional care that Sandra provided her client, who recently passed away, "Over the last 11 years, it's clear that Sandra has gone above and beyond standard expectations of nursing to ensure that her client received the absolute best care possible. Sandra continued to show this passion for caring for others until the very end of her client's life. Sandra's client is no longer with us, but Sandra continues to show grace in all that she does. She continues to be a support for the family and even for office staff here at BAYADA during this difficult time. Although suffering this devastating loss, Sandra's passion for nursing has not faltered. She continues to radiate compassion and excellence in all that she does. BAYADA is blessed to have Sandra continue her career with us. I am thankful for nurses like Sandra who truly love what they do."

Sandra was the only nurse to care for her client. "She was her client's sidekick, advocate, friend, hairdresser, and physical therapist—not just her nurse," according to HIP Clinical Manager **Jessica Price**. Her client was being raised by her grandparents who thought of Sandra as a part of the family. Sandra is such an advocate for her client and her family, no matter the reason. There were many ups and downs through the years with her client's health, and Sandra was always there to help in any way possible, easing her grandparents' minds. When asked how she felt about Sandra, her client's grandmother shared, "Mrs. Sandra is a wonderful person. She had so much care and compassion when taking care of my granddaughter. She always comes to work with a smile. All the extra little things she says and does show me how far above and beyond she goes. It means a lot to me and as far as I'm concerned, she is the best! We all love her!"

Katherine Martin, MSW *Vermont Hospice (VTH)*



According to Katie's immediate supervisor, "Katie has been a social worker with BAYADA Hospice for almost seven years. In the five years I have known her, I have watched her grow significantly in her practice and her confidence. I recently joined her for a visit with our patient who seemed to be declining. The patient's nurse was in the home as well; no family members were present, but we were aware that our patient's daughter had questions about whether or not her decline was related to medication she had been given the day before. As a result of this, the daughter had some reservations about the nurse's judgment and expressed some anger as well. Katie visited with the patient who clearly recognized Katie and was able to say she felt 'old and tired.' Katie confirmed with our patient that she was aware she was dying and was able to voice that she had no concerns with what was to come. After the visit, Katie spent time privately supporting the nurse around the difficult interactions with the daughter. Katie then offered to call the daughter to make her aware of the patient's change in condition, recognizing that the call may not be well accepted if it came from the nurse. Katie spent time listening to the daughter's questions around the decline being related to the medication that had been administered the day before, and gently introduced the idea that this decline could be representing disease progression rather than being related to medications. She then introduced that the patient may have days to a week left to live, and that the daughter may want to reach out to family to make them aware. Towards the end of the call, the daughter was able to express that she loved her mother but recognized that she was struggling with minimal quality of life, and that it would be a relief when she passed and was no longer suffering. Katie was able to use patience and compassion with the daughter who, in the end, was able to recognize that her mother was dying, shared this with family, and spent the last three days of her mother's life with her."

VTH Associate **Nancy DuMont** notes, "Katie's compassion for her patients shines through in all of her visit notes. In one visit note, Katie fixed her patient's breakfast, then fed it to him because his tremors made this difficult for him to accomplish on his own. She engaged the patient in conversation about fond memories from his childhood, played his favorite Johnny Cash tunes, and offered to help him arrange transportation to church. This is just one example of this remarkable attribute that she so naturally brings to her work."

"Katie is a valued member of the team," VTH Director **Jeanette Leavitt** shared. "Katie is a wonderfully calm, thoughtful social worker. One of the things that I know about Katie is that she is reliable to BAYADA and her patients. If she doesn't know an answer to their questions, she will call the office and ask."

Katie's overall excellence is valued by the office, including her clinical manager who notes that "Katie suits up and shows up. She holds her caseload well. She follows up on notes and emails from other team members and makes calls to the family to follow up when she notices that things have changed, even if she didn't have a visit scheduled. Katie does this with all of the nurses and home health aides that she shares on different cases. She has always made me personally feel valued. Katie checks in with me, especially on our more challenging cases."

2Q National Heroes

Toni Marie Meyette, HHA *Erie, PA (ERI) pediatrics*



In the three years that Toni has been with BAYADA, she has cared for several clients, but it is the incredibly positive impact she has had on her most recent client that is the most shining example of how Toni exhibits *The BAYADA Way*.

Toni went out of her way to meet the client and family on New Year's Eve, and they hit it off immediately. Her new client's mom contacted the office right away to say that Toni was the perfect fit for their family.

Continued on next page

MEET OUR 2022 NATIONAL HEROES

Toni goes above and beyond the expectations of a home health aide. She invests a great deal of time and effort into helping her client develop as a young learner. She helps him with his letters and numbers and has a big interest in his speech and physical therapy. Toni's commitment to her client's development has given his parents the ability to go to work and not worry that he'll fall behind in his learning.

Her client's mother sent a letter to her office praising Toni. She said, "In the last seven weeks since Toni has started working with our son, he has improved so tremendously that it made my husband and I question if we were doing enough before Toni. My son is talking and producing words on his own. This is something that not even speech therapy could get him to do in a year, and that credit belongs to Toni. It's incredibly obvious how much she works with him on songs, letters, numbers, and books. There is no one, not even my own mother, who would be a better fit to care for our child when we are working. When he waves goodbye in the morning instead of crying, it not only makes me want to cry, but makes me smile at the same time because he sincerely loves her. Many times, we have said that we should have applied for a home health sooner, however we may have not ended up with Toni, so everything happens for a reason. I can't thank her enough. I can barely put into words how much we appreciate her love for our son. We TRUST her. I remember being so nervous to have a stranger watch him, but she showed us we didn't need to be."

The impact that Toni has had on her client and his family has improved their lives. ERI Clinical Manager **Jessie Spencer** says, "Not only is Toni reliable and caring, she has helped her client progress physically, emotionally, and academically as he learns colors, shapes, and the alphabet with Toni's encouragement. His parents were apprehensive about having a stranger care for their son as they were new to home care, but Toni has definitely changed their mind, and I'm happy she has found the best fit with her client."

Amy Kovalcik, LPN *Pittsburgh, PA Pediatrics (PIP)*



Amy has been caring for her client since early 2011, attending a specialized school with her client due to her being deaf. She has worked with her client for so many years and

she has become a staple in her school life. The PIP team always receives great feedback from the employees at the school, and Amy has become part of the school team as well.

Amy has taken the initiative to become fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) in order to communicate effectively with her client. With Amy learning ASL, she has had a greater ability to help her client efficiently learn in school. Amy has also been able to blend in well with the school staff with her increased knowledge.

Per PIP Director **Matt Lavan**, many members of the school staff have stated that Amy is a great asset at the school, and they appreciate her willingness to jump in and help with so many activities. If her client did not have her nurse present, she would be unable to attend school, causing a gap in her education.

When her client is not in school during the summer months, Amy supports the office by picking up shifts with other clients. Because she is very devoted to her client, Amy always makes sure she is available to her once she returns to school in the fall.

In April of this year, Amy volunteered—on her own time and after working a full day with another client—to accompany her client to her prom so she could experience that memorable event. This is just one example of the way Amy exemplifies BAYADA's core value of compassion.

Amy's dedication to her client has made a tremendously positive impact on her and her family. Because of Amy, her client has been able to live up to her fullest potential. Amy's consistent reliability to her client over the past eleven years has allowed her client to attend school, gain an education, create memories from the experiences she

was able to have. Her client is enrolled in her last year of high school until she graduates, thanks in part to Amy.

Eugene Soboleski, RN *Vermont Hospice (VTH)*



Gene's calming reassurance helps his patients and their families peacefully navigate a time that may be uncomfortable and even scary to some. The daughter of

one of Gene's patients describes Gene as "compassionate, using humor to lighten the discussion of difficult topics; excellent, providing clear and understandable explanations and instructions; and reliable, always there when we needed him if at all possible."

She went on to say, "Gene was a very calming and reassuring presence for both my mother and me as he guided us through the last months of her life. His gentle nature put her at ease. She had always said that she wanted to "just wake up dead" one day, but she endured several months of struggling against her limitations. There were many times when she appeared ready for the end, only to suddenly ask for a meal and to resume her attempts to do what her body was no longer able to do.

The last time she opened her eyes was to look into Gene's face as he was helping the LNA get her into a comfortable position after a bed bath. She was at peace and left us a very short time after Gene departed. He returned right away and helped me make the necessary calls and waited with my family for the arrival of the funeral home staff. While we waited, Gene helped me to dress her in the outfit that she had wanted to wear when she left the house for the last time. He spoke gently and reassuringly, which I found very comforting. Then we joined the rest of the family, most of whom were not able to talk so directly about the loss just then. Gene was a very calming and affirming presence for all of us as we waited and finally watched her leave home for the last time."

The VTH office knows that they can always count on Gene. VTH Client Services Manager **Heather Huntly** describes Gene's reliability by saying,

MEET OUR 2022 NATIONAL HEROES

"Gene ALWAYS says "yes." He leads with "yes" and then helps to triage his schedule or move things around to be able to make "yes" happen. With no ego or personal agenda, Gene leads with what is best for his patients. He is humble, kind, and soft-spoken, and patients and their families look forward to their visits with him and feel well held by him. Gene answers their questions in a soft, clear, meaningful manner so that each family member can understand. He is able to vary his techniques to individualize care. Patient families have nothing but praise for Gene."

The daughter of another patient had this to say: "The first time he walked into my parents' house, my family loved him. My mom found comfort and trust in Gene, and a great friendship evolved. It was like my family had known him forever. He just fit right in, and we all found comfort in that. We knew we could count on him. When my dad needed equipment or supplies, he got it there quickly. When we had questions, he answered them honestly in a professional manner, and with caring and kindness.

"My dad had a very hard time communicating, but he always found a way to let Gene know that he was thankful for him. My dad would shake Gene's hand, smile, and say thank you. Gene would come every day and check on dad and towards the end, he would stay a few extra minutes and just hold dad's hand and talk to him. Dad couldn't answer him, but holding his hand was answer enough. Gene always helped comfort our fears, tears, and questions. He always had time for us and was always telling us how wonderful and kind Dad was, that he enjoyed coming to see him, and that he could tell how much Dad loved his family. Gene was so kind, caring, and gentle with my dad. It made the process a little more bearable, knowing the person caring for him truly cared about him."

Erin Ward, ST

Baltimore, MD Southwest Senior Living (BSF) home health



Erin is a true example of a clinician who exemplifies *The BAYADA Way*. Her compassion, excellence, and reliability are seen on a daily basis. Not

only does Erin extend her compassion to her clients, she also extends it to all who know her. Erin is sincere, and when you speak to her, you know that she is listening and genuinely cares about you.

Erin is admired and respected by all her team members, as she regularly reaches out to her coworkers to check in and see how they are doing. She seems to sense when people need a kind word or a cup of coffee. She has a gift for listening and for being kind. BSF Director **Missy Epps** said, "Erin shows exceptional care and kindness to others. During the height of the COVID pandemic, Erin would take the time to check on me to see if I was okay. She also took the time on many occasions to encourage me as a leader." Colleague and Occupational Therapy Assistant **Anita Martin** said, "Ever since I started, it has always been a relief and a sign of comfort to see her familiar face out in the field."

Erin's compassion shines through in all her interactions with clients and their families, coworkers, and facility staff. She treats her clients with respect and dignity, adjusting her schedule to ensure each is treated when, where, and how they need to be treated to maximize their ability to participate and improve toward their goals. If someone needs her help, she works tirelessly to see that it is done. She always prioritizes the needs of her clients and does not rest until those needs are met.

Erin is an extremely professional and knowledgeable clinician. Whether it is providing swallow tests, speech assessments, cognitive assessments, and subsequent treatments, Erin's scope of ability is only matched by her thoroughness and client outcomes. She routinely advises physicians, nurse practitioners, and resident care directors on care for residents. They not only appreciate this, but routinely seek out Erin for her medical expertise with the plan of care for their patients. Erin has been an identifier for not only speech but every other discipline in countless communities. Erin has conducted numerous in-services, educational trainings, and made herself available to each and every staff member as well as family members alike.

Just as importantly, Erin's clients love her. They see the value in her ability to improve their condition with

professionalism and compassion. Coworker and RN **Cynthia Haynie** said, "Erin is a special person. She is always friendly and warm to our residents, and she is always compassionate. I can always count on her to respond to my concerns and answer me, even after hours on a Friday! When I moved to a new building, she was open to help me with anything I needed. She is very knowledgeable, and I never doubt any care she is giving for our patients. She is always open to other disciplines and works well with all of us."