

# MEET OUR 2020 NATIONAL HEROES

## 1Q National Heroes

**Erin Bufford, HHA**  
*Allentown, PA (ALL) pediatrics*



In all, Erin has dedicated more than 16,000 hours of work with compassion, excellence, and reliability to her clients since 2011. For the past seven of nine years, she

has been a full-time force who has come to know the needs of her current client—a boy who has nonverbal autism and learning challenges—like the back of her hand.

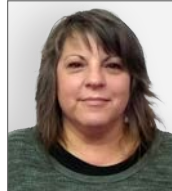
In Erin's "professional, kind, and compassionate" manner, her client's abilities are maximized using verbal praise and ongoing reminders about what's happening next in his routine to keep any frustration or unwanted behaviors at bay.

Clinical Manager **Lori Cooper** and Client Services Manager **Linda Moffitt** believe Erin has mastered her client's moods, expressions, and nonverbal cues that indicate happiness, pleasure, anger, and grumpiness. When she senses the least bit of frustration, Erin capably redirects her client before any undesirable escalation occurs. Erin is proactive in trying to find new things for him to do, all while letting his unique personality shine. She embraces his love for walks and allows him to break out into a run, keeping pace alongside.

Whether she's leading projects, crafts, or even homework on her client's tablet, Erin always ensures he is engaged meaningfully. During the past year, the client's middle school scheduled a performance of "Frozen" with a part developed specifically for him. There was no speaking part, but Erin's client was required to participate in the dances and chorales of the play, which were adapted for him. Erin played a vital role in his success and was required to attend rehearsals and guide her client through his dancing and singing parts on stage. She even had her own set of costume changes during the play's multiple, live performances. Erin's perfect attendance record since 2015 remained intact throughout this life-enriching experience—the show went on without a hitch!

The client's parents have said, "Erin has helped our family find peace that we did not have before. Our son may not be able to speak the words to tell her that she is his Hero, but the smile on his face will tell you otherwise. Love needs no words!"

**Shellie Horan, HABT**  
*Habilitation Pittsburgh, PA (HPI)*



Shellie has been an integral part of the HPI team for just over two years, as well as an integral part of her current client's team for just over one year, having contributed to

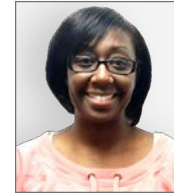
marked improvement almost immediately after they were introduced. For seven months prior, the client's family searched for just the right person to assume the split-schedule needed to help the client prepare for a day program each morning, settle in at home in the evening, and engage in weekend activities. Shellie gladly covered them all!

Almost immediately, others noticed the positive impact of Shellie's work. The client's parents acknowledged their daughter's notably happier disposition. She was more engaged in activities and being treated like a friend. The client's brother explained, "My sister had a subarachnoid hemorrhage at birth and has gone to specialized schools and programs her entire life—all of them aimed at improving her cognitive skills. Out of every caretaker we've ever had, only Shellie's work provided stark improvement." The brother attributes this change to Shellie treating his sister as an equal, an adult person with her own wants and needs.

Shellie continually offers choices and options, gently encouraging her client to have a voice, rather than simply being the recipient of care. She also seeks out knowledge and incorporates it to improve her client's well-being. Shellie volunteered to visit her client's daycare and meet with therapists to learn her exercises and treatments. The physical therapist offered that Shellie has the right combination of comfort and tough love to ensure that the client's exercises get done, even the challenging ones that the client does not prefer. Shellie even introduced classical music on a daily basis when the client's mom touted its benefits in stimulating the brain.

While team members have witnessed Shellie's passion for helping her client engage and enjoy new activities, the client's aunt noted, "The love, respect, and patience that Shellie gives from her heart is beyond words. She gives my niece the respect and dignity of an adult. I cannot express what a difference this has made. My niece has finally found her BFF!"

**Corkisha "Kisha" Pittman, LPN**  
*Delaware County, PA Pediatrics (DCP)*



Kisha from the DCP office is regarded as a selfless nurse who "steps in and steps up" to accommodate special requests and sudden schedule changes. Since her start

in 2015, she has logged over 10,000 hours and established a reliability rating of 99%.

Client Services Manager **Thea Dziubczynski** explains, "Yes, Kisha has a regular set of clients on set days, but by the middle of the week, things always seem to change. Maybe she's part of a five-way switch to help cover a last minute callout, extending an already long 10-hour shift because her relief is having car trouble, or extending her work week into the weekend because one of her clients was just released from a hospital stay."

Kisha's efforts saved the day for one young client who was hoping to attend a long-anticipated school outing. That morning, the client's mom called in to report that the scheduled nurse did not show up. After a backup plan was arranged for her scheduled client, Kisha agreed to reroute mid-commute that morning, and navigate through rush hour traffic to the boy's school. She made it with minutes to spare before the bus was destined to leave, with or without the client. Thea recalls, "The shift ended with a very thankful parent, a very happy client, and office staff who were incredibly grateful."

Many families have become familiar with Kisha's care and offer positive responses when she manages to save their day! However, reliability is not the only quality that she delivers. The mother of one client who received Kisha's care for years recounted an example of her at her finest. "We came home and walked into

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our kitchen to find our son attempting to dance and sing with his favorite music blasting. Kisha was singing and dancing right along, clueless to our presence. This is love. This is caring. This is fun. This brings a smile to our son's face bigger than ever, and this melts our hearts."

Clinical Manager **Sarah Koury** describes what she believes to be Kisha's secret sauce. "Kisha has the type of personality that puts you at ease and makes you feel like you've known her forever. She is trustworthy, which is huge when new families are transitioning into home care. Kisha cares for every client as if they were her own family member with so much love and personal attention."

## **Cynthia Elliott, RN**

*Willow Grove, PA Pediatrics (WGP)*



Cyndi has made her mark on the WGP office since her start in 2008. With over 25,000 hours to her credit, she has proven to be an asset in coordinating care on

very complex cases. Currently, Cyndi works over 40 hours per week, caring for four different clients with severe disabilities who require tracheostomy and ventilator care.

Cyndi truly answers the call of duty whenever special needs arise. For example, when a client was struggling medically at the end of her shift, Cyndi decided to stay and wait for the doctor to phone so that she could then write up the orders for the nurse that followed. The client's mother touts, "Cyndi is very dedicated to my son and a great team player!"

The father of another boy professes that Cyndi is a "calm and steady force" in their household—one that makes them extremely grateful. He shares, "Cyndi is one of the most careful and efficient nurses we've ever had, and I'm always confident that everything will be done exactly according to doctors' orders and our request."

Cyndi also finds personal ways to connect with her clients by pinpointing common interests. "She finds cool music and smart television shows to stimulate my son's mind," continues Dad. Cyndi even engages her client in outdoor activities to tap into their common love

of nature. The mother of another client says Cyndi is "a professional, courteous, kind, exceptionally talented person," and a "role model to follow."

## **Karen Leatherman, RN**

*Gastonia, NC (GAS) adult nursing*

Karen has been a nursing staple in the



GAS office since her start six years and roughly 10,000 hours ago. She is very simply known as a "take charge" nurse who rises to take on the leadership role within

each and every team she serves. Karen precepts other nurses to her cases, and "personably and confidently" engages family caregivers in their roles, as well.

The wife of a client diagnosed with ALS, who returned home after five weeks in the hospital with a new tracheostomy and feeding tube, accounts how Karen led the client's daughter and son in organizing the feeding and nursing supplies in the dining "stock" room. The wife said that Karen explained the rationale for having each of the supplies, making the processes more meaningful and "less intimidating" to the family. "Karen also spent time with me and my husband, explaining everything as she set up all the information and ongoing recordkeeping as required per BAYADA protocol. Her initial setup was invaluable for the family to resolve issues with doctors, suppliers, and the insurance provider," explained the client's wife.

Beyond her structured approach, Karen brings a softer, compassionate side of nursing to her clients, as well. For the past six years, she served as the rock in another client's life. As the client experienced a slow physical decline as a result of her Parkinson's disease, Karen ensured that the same was not the case with her quality of life. Every birthday and holiday were celebrated, and every day was filled with love. Client Services Manager Jillian Fernald attests, "Karen is a true advocate for her clients in every way. She goes above and beyond in doing the little things such as painting her client's nails, doing her hair, giving massages, and even foot rubs." With all of Karen's demonstrated TLC, she makes her clients feel special and beautiful.

One client's wife sums up, "On a personal note, Karen is extraordinary.

She is compassionate and practical, with a great sense of dry humor. We have the utmost confidence and trust that she will provide the exceptional nursing care my spouse's life depends on. She always keeps a client's comfort and peace of mind in the forefront and shares valuable perspectives gained through her years of one-on-one care."

## **Wendi Mulligan, OT**

*Charlotte, NC Home Health (CV)*



Wendi from the CV office consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty for her clients. Coworker and PT **Melissa Hughes** felt compelled to bring some recent examples to light.

On Saturday, a client's caregiver notified Wendi that he was being admitted to the hospital, which meant Wendi's client, considered to be extremely fragile with a history of many hospitalizations, would be left home alone. Wendi was able to visit and assess the client in a timely manner, and ultimately determine that the client herself was in distress and required hospitalization. Wendi followed through by ensuring that the client was safely transported and would be appropriately monitored by hospital staff, who were fully debriefed on her situation.

Another client who had a recent cancer diagnosis was feeling overwhelmed and anxious. Melissa detailed, "The client lives in a backyard shed without TV, radio, or any real contact with the outside world. He and his wife are quite secluded." When Wendi learned that the client's favorite pastime was listening to Eagles music, she downloaded some of the band's songs, along with a meditation exercise, and brought the client an MP3 player to listen to them. "The client and his wife were so excited and touched" by Wendi's initiative, recalls Melissa.

Another client had pain control from arthritis identified as a need, which had previously been addressed with jacuzzi treatments. The client's more recent cancer diagnosis made it difficult for him to climb in and out of his backyard spa. Clinical Manager **Rebecca Sing** noted that when she arrived for her visit, "Wendi went above and beyond to have the client meet his specific goals.

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The client was dressed in a bathing suit when she arrived. Then, she taught him and his spouse how to safely enter and exit their jacuzzi. Wendi patiently waited for the client to relax for 20 minutes, and then change back into dry clothes. She demonstrates compassion and thinks outside the box to meet her clients' needs."

Whether it's with field or office colleagues, Wendi somehow turns out to be part of the "best functioning, most consistent teams we have," adds Client Services Manager **Lauren Keys**. When Lauren found herself out of work after surgery, Wendi and a couple of coworkers surprised her with a huge box of homemade food, along with a sweet card and a balloon. Going above and beyond in this way just seems to come naturally to Wendi and "speaks to the kind of person she is," says Lauren.

## 2Q National Heroes

### NA Gwendolyn Michelle Michael

*Shelby, NC (SHE) assistive care state programs*



Michelle is a tenured, sixteen-year CNA. As such, Client Services Manager **Taylor Edwards** finds that one of her most noteworthy qualities is her loyalty. While directors and other

office staff have come and gone, Michelle has been a true constant.

Arguably, with nine Talent Scout referrals to her credit, Michelle could be considered the office's first recruiting manager—and a good one at that! Many of her recruits quickly earned their stripes by consistently working full schedules and being honored with Employee of the Month titles.

It seemed only natural, then, for Michelle to accompany the office director and recruiting manager earlier this year on a trip to visit the CNA class at the local community college. After working the overnight shift until 8:30 am, she arrived as scheduled to speak to the class at 9:00 am. Taylor shares, "Full of energy, humor, and with a loud, inviting laugh, Michelle repeated how much she loved BAYADA and loved working with our office specifically. A natural leader, Michelle made every future CNA in the class feel like they were having a one-on-one conversation with just her about the job

that she loves so much." The team was proud of her ability to inspire the students and help them envision a brighter future at BAYADA.

Michelle's commitment to our company is paralleled by her commitment to her client. Most of her 23,000 hours have been spent caring for one client, a gentleman who required care for a traumatic brain injury and other catastrophic ailments after a work-related accident. After a couple years of BAYADA service, worker's compensation complications necessitated the client's transition to another agency. It was Michelle's commitment to her client and to BAYADA that eventually resulted in the client's return to our care, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Michelle's motto is, "If it's worth doing, it is worth doing right." That philosophy manifests itself in everything from the quality care she provides, to her top-notch Cell Trak documentation, and her 98.9% reliability rating. While Michelle's client knows her as his "buddy," the client's daughter knows her as someone who is very passionate about her work and compassionate when it comes to her care. The daughter explains that Michelle is able to get her dad to do things that most people can't—getting up, for example, simply by explaining it in a kind, but firm way. Clinical Manager **Vicki Deyton** adds, "Michelle takes control in a situation that requires it. She has also been a great mentor and team member."

### LPN Susan Manka

*Downingtown, PA Adult Nursing (DAN)*



Since her start in 2016, Susan has been an essential part of the DAN office and the care of a young woman with a severe seizure disorder and intellectual disability living in a community

setting. Clinical Manager **Karen Troy** indicates, "Susan strives to ensure that effective communication occurs between the group home staff and BAYADA to provide the highest level of care. She works diligently to ensure her client's health and safety and identifies even the slightest changes in her client's condition, allowing for quick and early interventions."

Susan's client benefits from her care five nights per week and has become keenly

aware of their night shift routine. Karen is confident that Susan delivers the best care possible—a gentle approach in getting her client to drink fluids, eat snacks, or brush her teeth; her patience while the client arranges her bed with all her stuffed animals; how "beyond flexible" she is with her time.

The client's mother confirms, "Susan has such a gift of gracing others with her nurturing interaction, gentle, loving approach, and contagious laughter. She is someone you want to be around. Susan is the equivalent of a female Santa Claus. I say this because when we think about Santa Claus, it gives us such a warm and good feeling."

Client Services Manager **Chloe Smith** acknowledges that Susan is also a terrific team player. She explains, "There are so many examples of Susan covering for her coworkers. A perfect example of her kindness is when she picked up two months of overnight shifts for a nurse on her team whose mother had passed, ensuring that the nurse's spot would be there when the nurse was ready to return." In sum, Chloe asserts, "Susan always leads with her heart."

### RN Pamela Mann

*Garden City, NY Skilled (GCS) adult nursing*



Director Justin Booker clearly respects Pam's longevity and passion for the nursing profession. "Pam is an old-school nurse who looks at nursing as a calling. She has been

doing this longer than most of us have been around."

When the pandemic surfaced, the GCS office soon learned of five clients who were symptomatic, including Pam's. Justin reveals that Pam was part of only 15 percent of GCS field staff willing to work with COVID-positive clients, a true testament to her character. There was no way Pam was going to let her client of over fourteen years down. "Pam silently walked into the office with a gentle smile and awaited fit testing instruction" for personal protective equipment (PPE), Justin recalled.

Pam is known to rise to a challenge. Client Services Manager Lindsay Majewski indicates, "At one point, Pam's client had been hospitalized due to complications. Unfortunately, he had to receive a

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feeding tube and a new tracheostomy. Pam didn't think twice about reading our tracheostomy materials for adult clients, testing, and passing her initial competency so she could assure that her client could come home safely." Despite her lack of experience in this area, Pam committed herself to becoming an expert, and earned special approval as a new learner to train other nurses. Soon, she became her client's lead nurse.

As circumstances would have it, Pam was faced with another emergent situation when she was on her way to the office for a subsequent annual tracheostomy competency. Her husband, who was bleeding badly after a fall, was transported to the hospital. Pam insisted on following through with her testing, rather than having it rescheduled and delayed, before she caught up with her husband. Lindsay comments, "Her commitment to excellence again rang true, and she showed that her client's well-being was a priority for her."

When the client's health recently began to decline, his family opted to keep him at home to be comfortable and feel loved. "Without fail," recalls Lindsay, "Pam stayed with him until the moment he passed away. She was able to make sure that he was safe, secure, and supported." Justin adds, "Pam is one of the many unsung heroes who silently step forward every day when called upon. She moves in silence, but shines in crisis."

## **RN Lenora McIntyre** *Gastonia, NC (GAS) adult nursing*



Lenora was said to be "the missing piece to the BAYADA puzzle" when she joined her GAS team in March 2019. Client Services Manager **Kenya Tuft** recalls, "She fit in so perfectly."

Soon after her start, Lenora joined the team who cares for one of the office's most challenging clients, and they have been inseparable ever since. The client just had major surgery and came home to the shock of needing in-home nursing care every single day. He recalls, "It made me realize that my life was altered in ways I could barely comprehend, filled with new difficulties that would take more courage and strength than I possessed. My nursing team has become the bedrock of my existence, supporting me along

this difficult journey, keeping me moving forward. Lenora is the cornerstone of that foundation."

As a true client advocate, Lenora ensures supplies are ordered on time, and that proper care is provided, whether or not she is present. Perhaps her most significant impact has been her ability to elevate her client's spirits. He admits, "Sometimes, we have such raucous laughter between us that I have to wipe away tears; sometimes, she holds my hand while I wipe away tears of bitterness over my plight. Despite being so down on myself and feeling so utterly helpless, Lenora never once passed judgement. She has been a bulwark of stability and support through the most difficult time of my life. Unreservedly, Lenora is one of the most important people in my life right now. She is an amazing nurse, a wonderful human being, and dare I say, a friend."

Lenora brings the right insight to any difficult situation and makes it better. When healthier foods needed to be introduced to her client's diet, she found a smoothie recipe that made kale and other healthy add-ins more palatable. When the client had a fall at his doctor's office, Lenora offered the right combination of comfort and attention to his physical needs to protect his self-esteem.

Clinical Manager **Kimberly Giordano-Gabaree** says, "Lenora's gentle nature brings calm to situations that others have found difficult to navigate. In a time of stress, you will find her giving a foot or back rub for as long as it takes to smooth out the wrinkles of the day. Lenora knows whether the answer needs comforting words or no words at all. When no words will help, she will be right there with a gentle hug." Kenya concludes, "Nursing is truly Lenora's calling, and she does it with so much dignity."

## **PT William Hemmerich** *Wilmington, DE Senior Living (WIF) home health*



William is a seven-year veteran who has established one of the most socioeconomically diverse service areas in his office. It stretches from the most challenged areas of Delaware to the most privileged. Director **Patrick Gray** notes, "Bill continues to assess, treat, and case manage a unique population, but one

would never know this, as he has treated every client identically."

Perhaps most notable to Patrick, however, has been Bill's ability to capitalize on all of the new opportunities the pandemic offers. Rather than react with panic and anxiety, he has really stepped up and set a precedent for others. Despite believing that technology is his weakness, for example, Bill stepped out of his comfort zone and began training to conduct telehealth visits. He also stepped up to treat a client who was released from a COVID-related hospital stay.

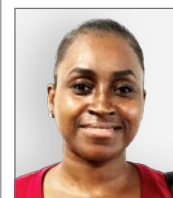
Bill's results-oriented approach and his creativity in adapting to his clients' needs ensures each one is at their best physical condition before discharge. His calm, even-keeled demeanor, however, is what helps guarantee successful outcomes with the most anxious clients. One former client actually insisted on Bill's care after a hospitalization. "I would only work with Bill, who made me feel comfortable and treated me with respect," she said. This woman recalled that Bill even visited on his day off to ensure that her care began in a timely manner—something that was not an isolated incident. Coworker and RN **Loretta Civarelli** attests, "Through the years, all of Bill's clients request him back and love him. Many of them have said, 'That guy knows what he's doing,' and I agree."

Another of Bill's colleagues, Sycamore, PA Senior Living (SCL) Associate Director **Regina Teasdale**, is impressed with his adaptability. "He knows how to approach each family, client, and community with respect, dignity and creativity."

In all, the WIF team believes Bill devotes himself 100 percent to his clientele, and demonstrates himself again and again as a home health care Hero.

## **3Q National Heroes**

### **HHA Janeé Bush** *PCA, PA (PCA) assistive care state programs*



Home Health Aide **Janeé Bush** has been a staple at her PCA, PA (PCA) assistive care state programs office since 2008, and in her client's life since 2010. Janeé provided just the right fit for the elderly gentleman's needs after

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several aides before her fell short. Despite having arthritis, Janeé's client was not only ambulatory, he had the personality to dance around his home and sing. He even prepared his own meals. It wasn't long before Janeé learned that her client was somewhat of a talented, local celebrity who performed in lounges throughout the city of Philadelphia and a beloved member of his community. As her client's arthritis worsened, Janeé was determined to manage symptoms and keep him active so that he would not lose his passion for singing and dancing. Sadly, in 2014, the client had a stroke which left him less verbal and in need of a wheelchair, requiring increased assistance with activities of daily living. Janeé embraced the challenges of providing more complex, hands-on care, and accommodated more frequent visits. Janeé now anticipates her client's every need; their partnership is a well-oiled machine. Client Services Manager **Kelly Ruffini** attests that when Janeé arrives for her shift, "comfort, relief, and gratitude wash over her client, because he knows she is there to care for him." Janeé has become like family to her client, taking pride in his history on the music scene and fondly pointing out the pictures of him performing when visitors come to his home. Janeé felt that any existing family should be aware of her client's setback. When she learned that he had a daughter who he had not seen in fifty years, Janeé began an internet search which resulted in a few dead ends, but eventually culminated in the family's reconnection. As it turned out, the daughter had also been searching for her father. Soon, Janeé's client welcomed his daughter back into his life and met his grandchildren for the first time. Kelly adds, "Janeé was even there when her client discovered his daughter was gifted with a beautiful singing voice, just like his. She continues to go above and beyond for her client and treats him like a father. Janeé has selflessly not missed a day of work since the COVID pandemic began because she knows how much her client needs her and relies on her assistance."

## LPN Sherri Gates

Charlotte, NC Pediatrics South (CPS)



**Sherri Gates**, Licensed Practical Nurse from the Charlotte, NC Pediatrics South (CPS) office, has been a BAYADA Nurse for over 21 years, consistently caring for three different clients

from two different offices for most of them. Clinical Manager **Ingrid Steffens** believes that Sherri's experience has contributed to her "impeccable nursing skill set". Having served both pediatric and adult populations, including those who require tracheostomy and ventilator care, Sherri has earned trust in her clinical judgment. Ingrid asserts that Sherri is the "ace of nursing skills" who demonstrates them with ease and confidence. Integral to her success, however, is the fact that she is kind and people just generally love to be in her presence. One client's mother indicates that the word "family" articulates the fondness that is felt for Sherri. "Sherri is an important part of the family," she says. "I feel so incredibly blessed to have her as my daughter's nurse, but more blessed to have her as a friend and confidant." Sherri becomes part of her clients' families with the rapport she builds and extends to families by fostering relationships with the office team. Sherri brought a client to an office Halloween party, and Client Services Manager **Courtney McLeod** noted that of their manner of interaction made it evident that the pair was close. Courtney said, "She was not just his nurse, but his friend." Ingrid adds, "To be a nurse for this client, you need to be a bit carefree and a lot of fun, and that is exactly what Sherri is. Her smile and energy are contagious, which is a dynamic trait." Ingrid sums, "Sherri does it all! She is also a wonderful preceptor who we can trust to train new nurses and offer honest feedback. She is a woman of integrity, hard work, and reliability—and she is really fun!"

## RN Rey Delos Reyes

Philadelphia, PA Home Health (PV)



**Rey Delos Reyes**, RN from the Philadelphia, PA Home Health (PV) office began a literal and figurative journey to BAYADA in 2013 when he was recruited by former Iris Division

Director Marion Fiero during a visit to the Philippines. Ever since, Rey has had a dedication to BAYADA and his clients that knows no bounds. Upon his arrival to the United States, Rey traveled by bicycle to his cases. When it was stolen, the office team purchased a scooter for him, which carried him through until winter set in. By then, he was able to purchase a car to ensure his clients still received care. Rey has not looked back since. He approaches

his work with empathy and humility which is endearing to his clients. PV Director **William Sepich** is also quick to acknowledge Rey's clinical expertise. "He takes on the care of our most challenging clinical cases. His skill with wound care, client education, drains, IVs, trachs, and care planning put him at the top of his field." Rey advocates for clients' needs with excellent documentation and follow-up to maintain communications among all team members. Clinical Manager **Lisa Cliggett** adds, "He never complains, his clients know he'll show up for them, and he takes extra steps to help everyone." Rey's resilience, along with his calm and collected response to adversity, speaks to his strength of character. Even after a terrifying home invasion this year, and after his car was damaged in an accident, Rey managed to maintain his commitment to BAYADA's core value of reliability and get to work. After years without a vacation, Rey finally scheduled a week off. His absence resulted in growing admiration of his work. A colleague who filled in shared, "I don't know how Rey does it! That was the hardest wound care case I've ever seen, and I need some tips from him. He's excellent and does such a great job with managing the wound and emotions of this family. Rey is phenomenal". The entire PV team loves Rey and finds him a joy to work with.

## OT Kellie Tysor

Baltimore, MD Southwest Senior Living (BSF) home health



Baltimore Southwest Senior Living (BSF) home health Occupational Therapist **Kellie Tysor** is an OT by title, but she is so much more to the clients in the facilities she serves and her

BAYADA team. Having to navigate through the ever-changing requirements and restrictions during the COVID pandemic, BSF Director **Missy Epps** has been grateful for Kellie's eyes and ears. Missy said, "She kept me updated on the goings on, allowing me to continue managing my communities successfully, and keep our client census from dropping." Kellie embraced an all hands on deck mentality, attending any event that was requested, filling any void in training of new staff—even outside of business hours—and meeting just about any other need that became evident. Missy adds, "Kellie thought outside of the

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box to ensure her clients received the care they need and deserve." Clients connected with family members who were no longer allowed to visit through FaceTime calls Kellie coordinated. When she realized the residents' hair had not been done because the beauty salon in the facility had been closed, Kellie tracked down the keys, opened it up, and washed her client's hair. A line soon formed once everyone realized hair was being washed. "So, of course," Missy shares, "Kellie washed a lot of hair that day. What a great kindness to take the time to make these folks feel human again." Kellie is also a resource to the communities she serves for recommending and obtaining needed equipment. Colleague and Speech Therapist **Erin Ward** says Kellie's "skill, knowledge, and positive attitude" are contagious, and they "reflect in her fantastic work." Whether it's Kellie's kind, uplifting, and reassuring demeanor, the humor she uses to brighten any situation, or the fact that she is known to clean and decorate clients' wheelchairs, Kellie's energy and compassion shines through. Missy concludes, "Kellie is by far the most reliable person on my team and is my go-to girl for pretty much anything. She's a Hero every day to her clients."

## 4Q National Heroes

### Denita Perry, CNA

Greenville, NC Adults (GRA) adult nursing



Denita joined the GRA office in 2015. From day one, her effervescence and apparent skills set the stage for her remarkable future with BAYADA.

Denita's impact began early, as she cared for an elderly woman whose health was declining and ultimately required 24/7 care. Denita worked with the entire team of aides to support not only the client through her increasing physical needs, but also her son through his own mental health needs as the stress of his situation mounted. When financial limitations eventually necessitated the client's transition to a nursing home, Denita helped arrange a surprise send-off dinner, where she and the team presented the client with a gift of new pajamas and other items she could take along with her to her new home.

Client Services Manager **Kerri Albertine** says that a key to Denitra's success is her positivity, which brightens everyone's day. She goes above and beyond with little things, like picking up a meal for clients before she arrives, or attending a funeral to show her support to a grieving family. Kerri says, "Denita takes extra time to get to know her clients and becomes part of their family. She allows her clients to be as independent as possible, while making sure they are still safe. If her clients say they can't do something, Denita cheers them on to not give up. She constantly works on building their confidence and tells them that she believes in them and that they can do it."

Clients concur and have commented that Denita is a joy to have around. Denita cares for a couple, who happen to be retired nurses, who attest, "If we could have had several assistants of Denita's quality, work would have been a whole lot easier. She is attentive and frequently anticipates needs." Not to be overlooked are Denita's culinary skills, as her meals are said to be "terrific!"

Denita's narrative does not begin and end within the confines of her workday. On top of the demands of the pandemic and the cultural events of 2020, Denita was challenged to support her father through his declining health and her daughter through a pregnancy and a return back home. Denita made the difficult decision to leave a second full-time job but remained committed to BAYADA. A role model of resilience, Denita has stayed on course to graduate with an associate's degree in May, and plans to continue on for a bachelor's degree in health care and business administration.

### Shari Pearson, HHA

Lehigh Valley, PA Adult (LVA) assistive care state programs



Director **Megan Saraceno** shares that the color purple is a symbol of royalty, compassion, inspiration, imagination, and calmness. For manifesting all of these

qualities, and now, for the new vibrant hue of her hair, the LVA team associates Shari with the color purple. Having known her since she joined BAYADA in 2016, Megan says, "Shari is such a kind-hearted, loving individual. She loves what she does, and it shows."

Megan adds, "Shari consistently goes above and beyond, just to have her clients smile a little more often, learn a little more about life, or just simply have fun!" For example, when one long-time client had a dream of taking an independent vacation, Shari focused on the life-enriching opportunity for her client rather than the challenge. After a brainstorming session, Shari and the client decided to go camping, and Shari's determination turned her client's dream into reality. The client's experience included cooking over campfires, eating s'mores at night, and going on long hikes. The client reveals what may have been the best part of all, "We even got lost on a hike once, but Shari found our way back."

Shari's impact extends far beyond the campground, as her client explains. "My family doesn't have to worry now that I might not be happy because Shari always seems make me so. On my bad days, or if something happens to upset me, she can always calm me down and make me smile. I trust her with my well-being and happiness."

Shari's excellence is apparent in the skills she is called to use with the clients she serves. For example, Shari has been needed to operate a ceiling lift and provide catheter and colostomy care. A client attests, "From the moment Shari enters, her life stops and you are her focus. She is very skilled in all parts of my care. She does not forget anything and does everything with a sense of humor, which makes her care fun! She loves what she does, and it shows!"

When Shari is not spreading joy at work or sharing her purple shampoo with clients, she lovingly cares for two girls whom she fostered then adopted.

### Jennifer Wall, LPN

Hickory, NC Pediatrics (HIP)



Jennifer has been a staple of the HIP office since 2004 and has established a reputation as someone who treats others with the utmost respect and kindness.

Clinical Manager **Jessica Price** explains, "She has strong bonds and maintains such great relationships with clients and their families. Jen is kind, loving, uplifting, compassionate, and just amazing."

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Jen's clients have contributed to the consensus. One client's mother agrees, adding that the quality she values most in a nurse is "the willingness to be the assistant to the boss herself (the client)." The client's mother further explained, "I can teach someone any piece of equipment and how to perform certain aspects of my daughter's care, but I cannot teach how to bond with or love my girl." Jen walked into this client's life about ten years ago and took an active approach to engaging her with activities that were "crazy and fun"—no easy task for a client who was deaf and unable to speak due to a tracheostomy. By transitioning from building puzzles to playing Barbies or Legos all before 9:00 am, Jen became the nurse who made her client's eyes light up and dance in anticipation of her arrival, and the nurse who could not leave until she won the game of finding her keys that her client would hide.

Jen follows through with thoughtful gestures to let others know they're valued and special. For example, Jessica recalls that, while attending another nurse's Hero ceremony, Jen brought her and a client services manager flowers and a note of thanks for all they do. Jen also focuses on the value and opportunities her clients add, rather than the challenges they create. She has spoken about how she was introduced to FaceTime and Facebook, and how she learned sign language through her client experiences. Director Lillie Greenhill sums, "Jen is just a true gem. Home care nursing is her calling, as her sweet spirit and kind heart are such a comfort to these children and their families. She's one of the nurses I can't imagine not having on our team."

## Patricia Longworth, RN Hickory, NC Pediatrics (HIP)



Pat has been the epitome of reliability in the HIP office since her start in 2013. She remarkably maintained a 99.8% reliability rating over nearly 20,000 hours of service. Pat

cared for one client during her tenure and worked very hard with his extended team of family members, therapists, doctors, and other clinical staff to help him reach his full potential.

Clinical Manager **Jessica Price** comments, "Pat didn't just go to work. She showed

up every day to show him love, help him learn, and push him even when he played opossum." Pat was the total package, assessing and adjusting goals, implementing exercise regimens, bringing "sweet treats to make tummies happy," and putting a smile on weary faces. When this client very suddenly and unexpectedly passed away about a year ago, Pat's shock and heartache were deeply felt. She often was mistaken as a grandparent to this child, whose mother shared that Pat provided the kind of care that parents dream for when they are away at work. The client's actual grandmother shared, "It was easy to share my 'little angel' with Pat, because I knew how much she loved him." That love was evident in the experiences they shared—dance parties with the Chipmunks and Taylor Swift, and dolphin watching in the wee hours of the morning at the beach. More recently, Pat's impact has extended to new clients, and their families have been just as impressed. One mother said, "Your care has been above and beyond anything we could have asked or hoped for. Our son is healthier and stronger, and he's made huge developmental progress because of your tireless investment in him."

As Pat reached the end of her career and prepared for retirement, Director Lillie Greenhill reflected, "Pat has touched more lives than she'll ever know. We're grateful that she's cared for our clients as if they were her own and has shown new nurses the right way to provide compassionate, excellent care."

## Michele Puzio, PT

Delaware Pediatric Home Health (DPV)



Michele of the DPV office has been caring for BAYADA clients since 2003. Her veteran status combined with her unique combination of talent, knowledge, and compassionate

demeanor have made her the go-to therapist for many challenging assignments.

Client Services Manager **Joanne Berni** recalls, "The mother of one of our new clients seemed very removed and distant. Her child had been in a horrific accident, and it seemed as though she was in some form of shock. I knew this child and family needed an exceptional therapist, someone with stellar skills, someone who was a

strong advocate, and someone who has the power to give hope and support. Of course, that someone is Michele." The family's devastation, sadness, and uncertainty were replaced with encouragement and hope through Michele's hard work and advocacy. Before long, the family rejoiced in the client's accomplishment of new goals. There was no more hesitancy in taking first steps—the child was reaching the top of the stairs!

Of course, when a therapist continually rises to a challenge, accolades abound. Michele's ability to quickly adapt during the pandemic was also celebrated in BAYADA's #This is BAYADA social media campaign. Michele was recognized in Facebook comments for embracing the switch from in-person to telehealth services, and for her creativity in engaging her clients. "Whether it is the Easter Bunny hopping on screen or a Howdy Partner whooping it up, Michele is just bananas for therapy!"

Clinical Manager **Tykisha Church-Brown** similarly recalled how Michele made a burn victim's therapy more fun by teaching him how to tap dance. She said, "Now, 12 years later, that love of dance that Michele instilled in him has brought him to play five different instruments, star in four different musicals, and attend a theater summer camp."

Just this month, a client's PCP office offered an unsolicited commendation of Michele's work. The nurse wrote, "Michele has helped identify barriers to care, kept the PCP office in the loop about changes in condition and concerning regression of skills, and helped provide clinical findings that the medical providers had not had an opportunity to assess. Michele's active involvement has assured that other members of her client's care team are able to address these findings and make recommendations for further care." Michele instills hope and replaces clients' thoughts of "I can't" with affirmations of "I can." And, they do.