



## **Shanice Allen**

### **nominated by Paula Cates**

---

I nominate Shanice Allen for the Heart Award for the amazing work and effort she displays on a daily basis. Shanice not only cares for the residents and the program in which she works, but she also cares for staff in a manner that is genuinely heartfelt. Shanice has gone above and beyond to ensure that everyone she meets is well taken care of.

Even on the longest and trying of days, Shanice shows up to work with a smile. She is a very dedicated and committed person to the individuals we serve and she is very compassionate and caring, and it shows in her work efforts and her endeavors. Recently, there was a family emergency that occurred in my life where I was in a bind and needed a listening ear. Shanice was there to offer advice and compassion in a time where it was so desperately needed. Shanice performs her job with not only amazing and admirable work ethic, but she does it with a smile, a sense of humor, and an abundance of love and compassion. I am so thankful to be working with Shanice Allen while serving in this field. She is a great leader and example of who I would always want as an exemplary role model.

In addition to running and supporting her own program during the pandemic, over the past year, Shanice has helped run and manage an additional program. She has helped figure out staffing, completed the paperwork required to keep the program up and running and has also done all of this with a smile on her face and with copious amounts of patience. She also helps out in other programs to help cover shifts as often as she can.

She has created a successful team of co-workers everywhere she goes. She handles each situation that arises with ease and professionalism. The calm that Shanice brings to any difficult situation is remarkable. There is never a task that Shanice is asked to do that she doesn't take on. She does not shy away from any situation.

For all these reasons and more, Shanice is perfect for the Heart Award!

## **Caitlin Stonesifer** nominated by Patrick Sgro

---



Everyone that knows her would agree that Caitlin is a bright and shining star. Her happy and pleasant demeanor has been such an incredible addition to the team at our program, as well as to the lives of the gentlemen living here.

Without fail, Caitlin goes above and beyond in not just her daily routine, but thinking outside of the box to enhance the lives of everyone here. She is loved and appreciated by the people we support, but also adored and trusted by family members as well! Her genuine and compassionate nature is reflective in how all react to her.

As any supervisor would know, balancing direct care and supervisory duties can be a delicate balance, often being pulled in many directions throughout the day, and without warning. Caitlin is that attentive and self-motivated staff that doesn't need to be asked to lend a hand, she will often have everything done before you even have a chance to ask for assistance. I don't mean just the easy, mundane tasks; she is on the front lines in a crisis as well. Caitlin is not afraid to roll up her sleeves and handle some of the most difficult tasks we have to offer. All with a smile on her face and a positive disposition.

With everything going on in the world, this has been a challenging year. Caitlin has been instrumental in making sure that the gentlemen she supports have remained as safely active in the community as possible. She has taken on numerous duties that are not in her job description: assisting with paperwork, scheduling, adjusting her schedule to assist with open positions, and covering shifts for everyone!

More than once this year she has borrowed a 4WD vehicle to not only make it on time for her shift, but come in early to cover for those who couldn't make it in or needed to leave earlier before the weather got too bad.



## Summer Borden

### nominated by Amanda Connor

---

Summer is a Residential Supervisor who puts her heart and soul into the program she supervises. She joined as a supervisor when there were a lot of changes and transitions happening in that particular program. She took the time to get to know each gentleman and what fulfills each day for them. She strives to make each day fun for the guys, and always comes up with great ideas for the guys to be out of the house, which they love.

Summer goes above and beyond to ensure the house feels warm and inviting. She has a creative side to make things organized and tasteful with the décor. She has done a fabulous job ensuring each of the guys loves their rooms and has everything to meet their needs.

She has been a critical key in building a strong team. There were very few staff members at her program when she started, but she has taken the time to train staff. She takes the time to listen to their questions and concerns, and she uses that as an opportunity to build a stronger program. She leads a collaborative team where if something isn't working, they work together to find what meets the needs of the program. She is sensitive to the needs of the program and will always be one of the first to raise her hand and take initiative to get things done. She strives for excellence and always gives 110%.

Since Summer started at Penn-Mar, I've been able to see her integrity in leading. She is a strong decision maker and reflects the values of Penn-Mar. Whenever she doesn't know something, she is quick to ask in order to have the knowledge for the future. There have been many medical changes with the individuals she supports, and she has taken time to learn what is needed to support each one. She has effective problem-solving skills and has worked through a multitude of situations. In December, there were many staff and individuals who had Covid all at once. It was a tiring time, but she was one of the most encouraging people to be around. She always found the positive and led her team to keep pushing through. She went above and beyond to advocate for the health of the individuals. Summer has such a light about her that she builds positive environments around her. If you're ever blessed to be in her presence, you'll realize that she has one of the best contagious laughs. You're bound to laugh when you're with her.

## **Marcia Denmark** nominated by Sue Thorpe

---



Due to the pandemic and closure of the day program, I was lucky enough to have Marcia reassigned to work in the program I supervise. Marcia came at a time where there were significant issues with one of the ladies supported in the home, who Marcia also supported in the day program. Through these challenges, Marcia never wavered and took each day as a new opportunity to impact the ladies and her team in the best way.

When I would come into the house, I could feel a positive energy from everyone and that was something that had been missing before. Just a few examples of what Marcia would do for the ladies is take long walks in the country, various interactive exercises, and would plan some wonderful, healthy and unique meals for everyone. Like many that are going through the pandemic, motivation to much is hard to find and keep. Marcia's energy was instrumental in getting the ladies up and out. Marcia is self-motivated and spent a lot of time "talking up" exciting plans she had made for the ladies.

She was reassigned to a program specifically due to the energy that she brings wherever she goes. The ladies that reside here had a rough time adjusting to the changes when the day program closed, and some lacked the motivation to stay active. Marcia's energy and positivity helped keep everyone out of that "funk" that is so easy to fall in!

All of this said, what meant a lot to me was that Marcia is not even a full-time employee! Her role with the organization is as a Casual Employee. You would never know this since she worked almost every day of the week and more to ensure the ladies and her team had support.

Marcia is the true embodiment of a hardworking and dedicated direct support professional and is the best candidate for the HEART award.



## **Shari Gent**

### **nominated by Rochelle Daniel**

---

I would like to nominate Shari Gent. Shari has been with Penn-Mar Human Services since July 25, 2005. She has held many titles with Penn-Mar, some officially, and others as needed. No matter which role she is in Shari can be counted on to jump in and lend a hand and heart to anyone that needs it. Shari is a caring, compassionate, understanding, dependable, and always demonstrates Penn-Mar core values.

I have been Shari's supervisor since August 2020. Shari came to our program after a long time in another program. She was looking for a new start and a new challenge. Boy did she find one, our program was struggling like many others. Too many hours and not enough staff, but Shari just rolled up her sleeves and got to work.

We support an individual with an unusual diagnosis; Shari looked for information and attended a seminar to further her knowledge and be able to better support not just the Individual but the staff as well. Shari takes her time to learn about each of the individuals and learn different ways to help better the people we support's lives.

Through the pandemic, Shari has come across plenty obstacles but she remains loyal to her team and individuals. There was a tragic event in both the loss of an individual and my personal life. Shari helped to gather the team together and work tirelessly to support everyone through my absence. As a Supervisor it is so very important to have the support of a good SRA. Shari is the best and I want her to know I see what she does everyday and I truly appreciate her.



## **Barbara Green** nominated by Sara Therit

---



I'd like to nominate Barbara Green, LPN for a Penn-Mar HEART award. Not only is she a great nurse, she is also a fantastic co-worker. Even in times of great stress, Barbara excels at maintaining composure and professionalism.

She advocates for the individuals on her caseload and ensures they receive the medical attention necessary to live their best lives. She does this by always having the interest of the individuals at the forefront when training staff on protocols and care plans, including the individual in decision making when appropriate. She educates team members on nursing procedures and protocol with ease and spends extra time with them to be sure they clearly understand how to properly care for the people they are supporting.

A specific example of why Barbara is deserving of this award when a newly supported individual came into Penn-Mar with what we initially appeared to be standard, run-of-the-mill medical needs. Once in the home, staff and Barbara realized the magnitude of some of his medical concerns, and immediately made sure the proper medical attention was received. Coming from a background of bedside care, she fronted that challenge head on, and utilized her clear judgement and team approach to get a handle on how to manage his situation. She took the time to talk with the individual to get background information about what previous caretakers were doing and made several contacts with physicians to collaborate on a solution.

Also, Barbara works well within a team setting. She is honest and is always willing to lend an ear or give a suggestion to other team members while working through a problem. Her collaboration skills are a great asset to any team she is working with. For example, medication administration training is a huge, and vital part of the nurses' jobs. Students who come from her training events are very prepared to pass medications accurately and confidently. In fact, I have had the chance to observe some students Barbara has taught and have never found an issue with their medication administration. Furthermore, when I am unable to do a medication pass observation due to scheduling, Barbara is willing to jump in and help complete the task without hesitation. She is always lending a helping hand and does so with a smile on her face. Barbara is not only a vital asset to Penn-Mar as a company, but to the individuals we serve, and for these reasons listed above, I feel she is a great candidate for a HEART award.



## Ashley Heyman

### nominated by Patty Trexler

---

Ashley has certainly stepped up and tackled challenges as the supervisor for a residential program. No matter the challenge, Ashley is always willing to do her part to fill the needs of the program. The individuals' mental health and happiness has been her focus throughout COVID-19 as she has sought ways to impact their daily lives positively.

The people who reside at the program have blossomed

with her leadership. Her positive enthusiasm is contagious, and she advocates for their everyday life - every single day.

Since becoming RS in July of 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, she is constantly looking for way to keep the people she supports and the staff engaged. Shortly after accepting the position, she noticed there were not a lot of fresh fruits and veggies available. She took advantage of season options, and they became a weekly staple. In autumn, she organized a trip to a petting farm to get everyone out of the house. She made sure that a Christmas tree was purchased during the holidays. On a weekly basis, she sends out a schedule for daily virtual interactions that she has identified as something the people she supports are interested in attending. She frequently shares photos of how the individuals are spending their days and she is a strong advocate and promoter of everyday living activities. Within the last week, she has mentioned that the guys would like to do a day trip to the beach and asked how to get this accomplished. Every time she grocery shops, she tries to take someone along to participate either by pushing the cart or picking out food, and she is encouraging other staff members to do the same. Team members and individuals alike are making a difference and getting more engaged under Ashley's leadership. She seems to do this all tirelessly because you will find her working many overtime hours to cover staffing needs and support.

I've heard great things from her team, subs in the program, and admin alike. "Ashley is making a difference." Evidence of her commitment to her team and her program is the change that it is making in team dynamics and morale. She connects with her team regularly through 1:1 meetings each week, and encourages positive feedback to one another. As we know, situations can unexpectedly present, but Ashley has gone above and beyond and continues to build this program into a better, more positive place of employment for her team.

## **Beth Ross Kuhn** **nominated by Jennifer Hisey**

---



Time and time again, Beth has risen above the call of duty to ensure that those in her care receive the attention, support, and encouragement they need to reach their goals.

The pandemic has certainly created some challenges however, Beth has taken it in stride, going out of her way to make sure the needs of those she supports are met.

One of the people she supports has started learning to play piano. She introduced him to a keyboard and now he is working on playing songs on his own. Another has gained the courage to do more things independently through Beth's encouragement. This individual stated, "Beth is always there to help me whenever I need her. She helps me to be better." A third family has found Beth's kindness, compassion, and support a welcome respite during a time of great turmoil.

Recently, due to a change in family circumstances for an individual she supports, Beth was willing to adjust her schedule and pick up additional hours to meet their needs. This family endured a life changing event in addition to a loss of additional support, to the point where it was critical for Penn-Mar to provide as much supports possible to this person. Beth truly went above and beyond to support this person as she knew what this family was experiencing, in addition to how important it was that they had the supports needed. She does her job without complaint and goes out of her way to meet our mission. Beth is truly an asset to the Penn-Mar family and I am proud to have her on my team.





## **Matthew Muench**

### **nominated by Jackie Summers**

---

There are many unsung heroes at Penn-Mar who come to work every day prepared to tackle the requirements of the job with quiet dignity and determination. They are the behind-the-scenes warriors without whom so much of what we do would be difficult and limited.

Matthew is a perfect example of someone who goes above and beyond the scope of his job. He exemplifies the core values of Penn-Mar every day and continues to find better ways to build, maintain, and utilize data and information to make us more effective.

He has opened doors to opportunities for grants that have significantly impacted our programs and the people we support. This past year many of those grants were last-minute, urgent, COVID-related applications. None of these grants were within his normal grant "duties," yet he took on the added responsibility for the benefit of Penn-Mar.

Matthew is a tremendous asset to the entire organization, not just the Advancement team. One of his many responsibilities includes delivering concise and timely communications through organization-wide emails. Even prior to COVID, this was a heavy lift. With the added communication needs brought on by the pandemic, Matthew has often worked late into the evening and on weekends to develop and send out urgent communications. He makes the process look far easier than it really is, working behind-the-scenes to navigate complex mailing lists and email designs, schedule numerous correspondences, and meet the needs of multiple departments at once.

Though he is often pulled in simultaneous, equally pressing directions, he handles the demand for his time with kindness and composure. He is valued by all who have the privilege of working with him and Penn-Mar is a stronger organization because of the skills and talents he generously shares. While many of us don't realize just how much Matthew does that goes above and beyond his job description, the reality is that he's integral to our success as an organization. We are grateful for him!

## Jessica Patchel nominated by Lois Duscha

---

Jessica is and always has been an extraordinary, caring, dedicated DSP since day one. She entered my son's life in August of 2018 with a smile and in a confident manner. The fact that she is still with him, speaks volumes. Many times it seemed as though his home was a "revolving door," but she chose not to use it.



My son is non-verbal, lives by rituals, and has some other challenges. That never bothered Jessica. She jumped in with both feet, always treated him with respect, and he responded positively. This in itself is so rare, yet so desirable, that it cannot be over-emphasized. It certainly sets a positive example to other staff as well. As time went on, her effort and work ethics were recognized; she was promoted to SRA, and then to RS.

Non-verbal people can experience many frustrations, due of course to their inability to communicate their wants, needs, desires, feelings, etc. in a 'typical' fashion. Jessica has proven herself capable. She is also often able to prevent challenges prior to them occurring. Jess is always "on-call" to help diffuse situations and to help her team cope. Many times, she has put her personal life "on-hold" to help cover shifts when no one else is willing or available. That is true dedication to my son and to her job. She is very cognizant in her team approach and always leads by example, and I know that she cares for and accepts my son as he is.

Advocacy is extremely important, especially for someone who is non-verbal. Jessica is the textbook definition for being an advocate. Recently, she stood up for my son when he was being treated poorly at a doctor's appointment. In the last week, she contacted his dentist about re-scheduling an appointment due to his delays in routines/rituals. This is going "above and beyond" my expectations, but is greatly appreciated and noticed.

This past year has certainly been a difficult one for all of us and presented many challenges to DSPs. In addition to being a supervisor, she is responsible for implementing and carrying out all mandates for COVID-19. She also has had to remake schedule if team members have been exposed or experienced symptoms. Many times, she has come in herself to cover the hours, giving up her personal time, with no complaints. She does it all in an efficient, caring way. I respectfully request that she be considered for this award, because no one deserves it more.



## Sabrina Pawlus

### nominated by Adam Zayed

---

Sabrina embodies the concepts of person-centered services and her role as a Direct Support Professional. Sabrina consistently goes above and beyond with the connections she makes not only with the people she supports, but their families, and the team members she works with. She demonstrates a compassion and genuine authenticity about her passion for others.

While this is apparent in all aspects of her work, this is most obvious in her relationship with the 1:1 she supports. For over a year now, Sabrina has supported a young man with significant communication barriers. These barriers have often resulted in behaviors that others see as stubborn and difficult. However, Sabrina, like with most aspects of her job, saw them not as barriers but as a puzzle to solve to better support out team.

In high school the individual was provided a communication device to assist with his communication. Like in many cases the individual was reluctant to use it due to the stigma and embarrassment he felt needing it. Despite it being a focused goal for several years, the gentleman had made very little progress in using it and had never used it with his family. Sabrina was persistent, incorporating the devices use throughout his services. Her bond with the individual made him feel safer using his device and he no longer feels as uncomfortable using it front of others. Sabrina's work has carried over to the family as well, who are so excited to be able to communicate with their son with the device for the first time. They routinely talk about the difference this has made for their son and a difference Sabrina's work has made for the whole family.

This is one example, but Sabrina has countless similar situations where she overcomes obstacles by being positive, proactive, and putting the person first in what she does. As a result, Sabrina's whole team benefits from her contributions. She sees barriers as puzzles and is excited to try new and creative solutions that, through small steps, provide great growth and change across or team. Her actions have built team morale, extended the quality of our services, and made the experience for all our partners better and more meaningful. She is a exceptional example of what a team member can be and we are so grateful to have her as part of the Penn-Mar family.

**Pam Richmond**  
**nominated by Jennifer Hisey**

---



Pam is someone who can always be counted on to help out whenever and wherever she can. She brings a positive outlook and always interacts with those around her in a professional and pleasant manner.

She is always on the lookout for ways she can improve and how she can benefit those in her care. During the pandemic, Pam has remained steadfast in her level of support. Her heartfelt compassion is apparent through the care she provides and the concerns she expresses.

One of the families she supports recently endured a lot of life-altering changes, and the loss of additional supports that were much needed. When this happened, Pam expanded her availability, adjusted her hours, and increased the level of care she provides to the individual all in an effort to help the family through this difficult time.

On her off time, Pam routinely checks in with the family to see what they need and how she can help. If she's not able to help, she reaches out to her supervisor or other team members for support. She encourages collaboration with her fellow team members to ensure this individual is getting the care he needs while also helping to alleviate stress on the family.

I am proud to have people like Pam on my team. She is exactly the kind of person Penn-Mar needs during these times.



## **Christen Rystedt**

**nominated by Victoria Minkowski**

---

Christen has gone above and beyond the position of DSP over the last year. She has supported many people in several different roles and teams throughout the pandemic. She was recently promoted to the position of Sr. DSP for the North West team as well.

Recently, Christen has been supporting an individual who struggles with walking. This individual is mostly non-verbal and doesn't always alert others to changes in his condition. Christen noticed a change in his gait and alerted his mom to the change.

Christen was not aware that he had a pre-existing condition in his foot, and upon visiting the doctor, his mother reported that it was progressively getting worse and needed treatment. The family credits Christen with her attention to detail that will allow his treatment to begin ASAP.

This is just one of the many examples I could provide of Christen's excellent attention to detail when working with individuals.

Throughout the pandemic, Christen has worked regularly supporting many different individuals on several teams.

Her flexibility, teamwork and dedication to the individuals we serve set an excellent example for her teammates.



## Nicole Swartz

nominated by Holly Augustine & Stacy Latchaw

---

When we think about Nicole, the first thing we admire is her holistic and person-centered approach that allows her to creatively support people to discover their best selves.



Nicole's official title is a Youth Transition Coordinator, and she is very passionate about preventative strategies to support young people to avoid that "gap" that is often encountered when graduating out of the school system. However, she wears many hats at Penn-Mar and is involved in supporting a wide array of people.

Nicole's belief in people's abilities makes her a strong advocate towards employment first. An example of this was when Nicole came to the employment team and advocated for a virtual support group, now called Discover Your Personal Genius, so that people could have the opportunity to go through discovery so that others could observe their potential. Her dedication to support people to explore different hobbies and interests, conditions for success, and where they find themselves more satisfied in life has generated a lot of positive outcomes to help people towards quality job matches.

Nicole has also used these approaches to support a young woman through the early stages of owning her own business. Nicole has partnered with this woman and her team to create storefront displays, grow her online presence, and most recently take online orders. Nicole has used her passion to teach over 50 students in Penn-Mar's Customized Career Exploration and Employment Planning and Next Steps class, lead virtual discovery groups. She also supports people in residential services during times of increased need.

Nicole embodies the Penn-Mar Mission through her everyday work to transform the lives of the people we support. She connects with each and every individual that she works with, builds trust, and helps them envision a fulfilling life for themselves filled with opportunity and choice. Nicole is an effective teacher and weaves content into fun, interactive, and engaging lessons. While she juggles many aspects of services, she impressively does so in a way where she never appears frazzled. She is inspirational to her team, and external partners. Nicole is a wonderful advocate for both Penn-Mar and the people we support.