



DESTINEE ALSTON

nominated by Beth Greenland

Destinee has consistently demonstrated outstanding professionalism and “can do” attitude in her relationship with our son Andy and the other men at ALU 29.

Throughout the pandemic she has been positive and upbeat, without complaint or negative energy. When Andy was transitioning back she was extremely helpful in getting everything ready for him to have a safe and

better-than-expected transition.

She is committed to the health and well being of the guys she supports. She has taken over as Andy’s one-on-one due to staffing limits and she knows him well, his likes, dislikes, and personality quirks. She is extremely responsive to requests and efficiently takes care of everything Andy needs. This has not been an easy time for anyone and Andy can certainly be very challenging, especially now. Destinee has patience and she holds Andy to a high standard of behavior, which is exactly what he needs. We are very grateful to Destinee and her team for doing everything possible to give Andy the best possible quality of life given the givens.

Destinee is also an effective leader, as evidenced by the lack of turnover since she took over as RS at ALU 29. She seems to have dedicated her life and herself to this role and it gives us great peace of mind and heart that Destinee is the RS at ALU 29.

Destinee's supervisor, Tyler Stackhouse, also adds: "Destinee has been a tremendous positive change for the gentlemen at ALU 29. In one circumstance, she vested a personal stake in an individual who had withdrawn himself socially due to a personal loss and whose health had begun to decline. This person had sequestered himself in his room. Destinee and her staff took it upon themselves to search for ways to get this person to reengage with his friends and his community. There were times that they were not successful in doing this, but their persistence paid off. This person now regularly engages with his friends, community, and has even formed new friendships. While overcoming this challenge was his victory, he had excellent support from Destinee to lean on. Destinee exhibited true compassion for this man and a willingness to step into a difficult situation and help him fight his way out."

HAYLEY ARMOLD

nominated by Amanda Connor



If you know Hayley, you know that she loves a good challenge. She is always willing to help programs in addition to the program she supervises.

I've recently had a program that was going through a lot of change and transition. When brainstorming how to help the program it was suggested by another Program Manager for Hayley to go to this specific program to see if she could assist them. Hayley has willingly assisted at least 4 other programs who needed this similar type of support.

Hayley does anything needed to support programs such as organizing the house, deep cleaning, reviewing files, and advocating during appointments. She strives to ensure these programs are in compliance with regulations in addition to all other responsibilities that a Residential Supervisor holds.

In addition to managing her team which has faced just as many challenges, she has helped these programs set strong expectations with their teams, and has built up individual team members to encourage their own personal growth.

Hayley has not once hesitated to step in these situations. No matter what situation she comes across, she focuses on being positive and trying to find a solution. She listens to the staff's concerns and encourages their collaboration to make a strong program.

Hayley has taken the time to learn each of the individuals' needs and has been encouraging changes which will better support the individuals.

Hayley is in tune with the medical needs of the individuals, and if she sees that an individual would benefit from more medical support she seeks the guidance of medical professionals.

It can be difficult to work in a program that is very short staffed, but Hayley has a gift of being creative to ensure the program runs smoothly. You can tell by Hayley's work that she puts 110% in everything she does.



MARICEL BORDER

nominated by Debi, Rick, & Lara Kopey

Maricel Border was one of the first people we met at the Far Hills Day Program.

When our daughter, Lara, started on her very first day in the Far Hills Day Program, Maricel was kind, attentive, and problem-solving when others doubted they could take care of Lara's needs. Maricel patiently advocated for her needs. She listened, offered ideas, and gave my husband and I confidence in knowing that Lara would be cared for respectfully and her needs met.

If not for Maricel that day, we were unsure of our decision to continue sending Lara to Far Hills Adult Day Program. Maricel was our hero that day and continues to be by caring and advocating for every single individual who attends the Penn-Mar Day Program.

She is outgoing, friendly, loving, funny, confident, very knowledgeable and capable of understanding the individual needs of others whether they are parents or those who attend the Adult Day Program. Maricel is a very hard worker and team member. When she sees a need, Maricel does not hesitate to help without being asked.

We feel many of your staff are deserving of this honor but Maricel stands out as she goes above and beyond for everyone and is deserving of the HEART Award!!

Maricel's supervisor, Ally Cox, adds: "In addition, when the Far Hills Day Program closed in March because of the pandemic, Maricel started to offer virtual supports. Maricel was given little instruction in doing this. Despite the little instruction she was given, Maricel created meaningful experiences virtually with those who previously attended day programs. She spent a lot of time connecting individuals virtually, so they were given the opportunity to talk with their friends. Maricel provided a positive experience for individuals and team members in a challenging time."

MARY CORBIN

nominated by Beth Kuczynski



I would like to nominate Mary Corbin for the HEART award. Mary came to Penn-Mar with little direct care experience and entered a home that was transitioning to a more person-centered model. Despite health issues, the pandemic and numerous obstacles, Mary has persevered and continues to promote an engaging positive attitude towards the individuals and staff every day.

Mary works very hard to model for her staff the expectations of positive and engaging interactions with the individuals. All the while, she successfully completes her supervisor responsibilities. As a supervisor, she brings a positive attitude, and is determined to create an atmosphere that is highly positive, accountable, and truly focused on the well-being of the individuals. These individuals range from being wheelchair-bound to serious behavioral struggles, but no matter the obstacle, she always finds a positive angle and a way to get them out and feeling happy and productive.

For example, after an extreme behavioral outburst which required police involvement and a very dangerous situation, Mary displayed professionalism and remained positive with staff and the housemates to help ensure everyone's safety emotionally and physically. Upon the individual's return, Mary never hesitated in trying to reincorporate the individual with staff, while understanding staff perspectives as well as ensuring the individual was well cared for and had the opportunities to remain engaged during a very stressful transition.

Mary continues to work on these transitions and continues to stay positive and coach all staff. There are numerous occasions where she was exhausted, due to working countless hours, but she always pushes through and continues to inspire those around her.

Mary also exhibits her leadership in a professional and respectful manner with the true desire to improve all relationships in the house. I feel the HEART award will help Mary realize that we see her hard work and perseverance through the difficult times and that we fully support her in her pursuit of our mission.



CHRISTINA DIXON

nominated by Jennifer Mettrick & Kim Lowrie

When I think about Christina, I immediately think of her as having “good character.” She has strong beliefs and ideals and lives by them. Christina demonstrates how to be an ideal team member every day, through being humble, smart, and hungry. Christina goes out of her way to learn from others, takes feedback and turns it into personal growth, and regularly recognizes her teammates for their accomplishments. She constantly is looking for ways to improve the things we do to enhance each team member’s experience.

She believes in the strength and resilience of the people we support and is a true advocate for them. She models for all of us who work with her what it means to provide person-centered supports. She continues to work to further services to be more meaningful and person centered, because she knows it is the right thing to do.

An example of this has been through her ability to keep the people we support at the forefront of our decision-making as a team. She is always first to point out how a decision may impact the people we support and provides us alternative approaches that help people drive their own services and supports, empowers people to make choices, and helps to facilitate growth towards their goals. Christina is not shy to highlight when the people we support are being left out of decisions and helps us to understand the importance of full inclusion.

She is flexible and has stretched that flexibility to accommodate all the program needs during the pandemic. Through COVID, Christina has become an important leader at Westminster and within the Operations team across Penn-Mar. She never backed down from any of the challenges that we've faced through the pandemic and often developed new strategies to tackle some of our most challenging hurdles. Christina has shown adaptability, openness, and creativity, which is helping Penn-Mar learn and grow through this experience and is helping develop our “new normal” of services.

In her role, she takes a front-line seat at the ever-changing requirements of DDA and OHCO and makes sure that those that need to know, understand the impact. She acts proactively. She quietly pushes forth the belief of living life unlimited in the policies she writes, team members she coaches, and doesn't hesitate to ask why or is there a better way.

Thank you Christina for your dedication and leadership at Penn-Mar!

DAWN FINDLEY

nominated by Teresa O'Brien



Dawn is a strong advocate for the people she supports. She has always been instrumental in assisting them with finding their voice. She is one of the few DSPs who have been continuously working in day services at the Westminster site during this challenging time of COVID. Working in the family home can be challenging. Dawn has successfully balanced advocating for the person while respecting the family structure.

Dawn joined the Penn-Mar team after working in the school system as a 1:1 with a person who does not communicate verbally. When this person chose Penn-Mar for day services, Dawn asked to move with him. We were smart to hire her! Dawn worked with him and his family to purchase a device that would support communication programs that were familiar to this gentleman. This support allowed his voice to transition to adult services. Together, Dawn and the gentleman she supports continue to build communication pages. This allows him to communicate with people in different settings. He can ask questions easily to library staff. He can share employment interests. If it wasn't for Dawn's support, this person's voice may have been left behind at school.

Dawn has a great working relationship with the gentleman she supports. They start their day with him using his communication device to layout his schedule. Dawn can sense his mood and offers activities that will match how he might be feeling. She can tell when he needs a change in or needs to get out of the house. Dawn tries to offer activities that can be implemented anywhere, even the local park. Her travel bag includes a plastic tablecloth to provide a smooth service to work if needed. She also carries cleaning supplies to ensure this person's safety.

Not only has Dawn enhanced this gentleman's life, but she supports an older lady as well. For years this woman used her tablet for playing games. She too has some communication differences. Dawn has worked with her to add menu items to her tablet of her favorite restaurants. This has allowed this person to order correctly without any communication barriers. Not only did this give her the independence to order for herself, but the confidence to do so.

Dawn has taught me not to be afraid of using technology. People are more adaptable than you think. Thank you Dawn for all the support you have given us!



EMILY FINNEGAN

nominated by Christine Otto

Emily is the house manager at ALU 20 and consistently puts the needs of the ladies living there above all. She has worked diligently to be sure all shifts are covered and that her staff members have everything they need, especially in this difficult time of COVID-19. She has made sure medical/dental appointments have been kept up-to-date throughout these past months – Zoom or again in-person as necessary/permitted.

Emily gave many hours to see to it that our daughter got a new cellphone (which was very important to our daughter) and spent a good deal of her own time seeking information on how to change the information over from the old phone to the new one. Emily treats the ladies with respect and dignity and makes sure that her staff does this as well. All the staff at ALU 20 work as a team to provide a family, homelike atmosphere (I wish I could nominate the entire staff for the award!) and I believe it is Emily's leadership style that provides the impetus for this amazing teamwork.

One last, but not least, item is that she consistently keeps parents informed and updated on their daughters' situations, accomplishments, or illnesses. She doesn't hesitate to reach out for information that may help her or the staff handle a situation, or to share a goal that has been successfully achieved. Emily truly seeks to make life better and fulfilling for the ladies at her house and for her staff as well. She has a lot of responsibility and she excels at being an example of Penn-Mar's mission and values.

Emily's supervisor, Michelle Delozier, adds, "Finn is a good RS, but what she does even better is be a team player. At a moment's notice she will be there. Once when I was already covering a shift due to an emergency, and we had another callout, I put out an SOS. Finn less than 5 minutes later texted back, 'On my way Boss.' It was 9:45pm, she arrived on shift, Monster in hand by 10:30pm. She came in with a smile and when I thanked her she said, 'We all have to work together; one day it might be me that needs the help and I want people to know I'd be there for them.' As we have all navigated through the pandemic Finn has been a leader. She injects humor in some pretty bleak circumstances. She is a go-to for questions, ideas, answers, and sometimes even a little push in the right direction, not just for her staff but really anyone who has her number. She has a very instinctual way of interacting with the people we support and staff alike. She can de-escalate a tense situation no matter who it is between by really implementing Coach Approach. She asks lots of questions, so she understands the benefit of not always giving the answer, but allowing others to process out loud. She is a leader amongst her peers; she encourages others to openly share their ideas. She will support them to implement ideas even if she may not agree with the plan. She really wants everyone to succeed, and does her best to ensure we all do!"

NADINE GAETANI

nominated by Paul Kuhn



It gives me great pleasure to nominate Nadine for the HEART Award as I believe that she is the perfect candidate.

I am beyond impressed with her work ethic and how she holds herself to high expectations. Her warm and caring heart, and how she treats those we support is award-winning!

She is an excellent role model for her peers and others around her. Nadine is truly in touch with the needs of those we support and has always excelled at providing support needs specific to each person. She routinely helps to train her coworkers, so they are prepared to deliver high quality care and programming.

This year has brought many challenges throughout Penn-Mar. Nadine embraced the changes to the services we provide and excelled in new ways as a result. Although I have worked with and known Nadine for years, I have had the pleasure of working alongside of Nadine since the Maryland Day Learning Center reopened and have gotten to witness her talents of keeping every single person engaged and motivated. She doesn't just talk and teach - she does things right beside them!

For example, each day in the Gym, Nadine has a badminton competition with someone who really loves the sport. Someone else that she supports loves to talk about sports all day, and Nadine takes the time to discuss sports, even though she may not be as big of a fan!

The group of those we support work together to keep the areas they use clean and tidy and Nadine motivates them by making this a fun but also important task.

When there are special days coming up, Nadine comes up with specific activities to teach and create with everyone.

It is important that everyone leave the Day Learning Center each day feeling fulfilled and thankful to be here, and Nadine is an amazing part of the reason that they do.



WENDY GROVE

nominated by Linda Elliott

Wendy comes in to work each day in a positive manner, no matter the situation. She is always open with her team regarding the individuals and the needs of the program.

A few months ago, one of the individuals in Wendy's program had to go into the hospital. During her time there, Wendy went above and beyond each day to make sure both her and her family had everything they needed.

This individual ended up going into emergency surgery. Wendy put her family's mind at ease consistently and helped them through this trying time, all while still successfully managing the rest of the home's needs.

Upon returning back home, Wendy continued to be open with the family regarding their daughter's progress while putting in long hours to provide the best possible care.

It's always easy to see that Wendy is with Penn Mar for all the right reasons. She supports, advocates, and genuinely cares for the well being of not only the ladies that she supports each day, but all across the agency.

She strives each day to ensure the best possible care is given to those that she supports and always expects the same of those around her.

Wendy puts in many hours, without being asked, and is clearly devoted to the overall well-being of the ladies in her program.

Without question, the individuals Wendy support have a huge respect and admiration for her. Thank you for all that you do!

JENNIFER HISEY

nominated by Karen Adams & Rhonda Morano

From Karen: I am nominating Jennifer for the HEART Award. I have never met her, but she, along with Victoria Minkowski [*who was a HEART Award winner last time, and therefore not eligible to win this time*], has worked extremely hard with virtual supports since COVID-19 started.



They have developed a system for online learning that includes planning Zoom meets, researching topics, and coordinating the adults on the computers. I was impressed by their organization, and desire to help individuals with disabilities. They follow up on emails, take responsibility, and are committed to the job during these crazy times!

From Rhonda: Jen hit the ground running when she was asked to suddenly take over Virtual Supports for the Maryland Day Program. She understood the challenges Penn-Mar was facing having to close our Day Programs in both Westminster and Maryland Line. She stepped up, showing dedication, commitment, and creativity when we needed it most.

Despite having practically no time to prepare for this new responsibility, Jen has been instrumental in continuing the Virtual Supports that were previously developed, as well as expanding the program further.

Jen spends the majority of her week hosting, teaching, cooking, and scheduling virtual supports. She then also spends time after hours working on weekly Virtual Supports schedules and developing themed classes to ensure they are new, fresh, and of interest to our individuals. She creates a beautiful, weekly calendar and spends her weekend putting it together to send out each Sunday night.

Along with her colleague, Victoria Minkowski, Jen has gone above and beyond to create meaningful supports for the individuals at Penn-Mar. She embodies our mission and core values.



RUBY JARRETT

nominated by Autumn Cover

Ruby goes above and beyond the expectations of a Residential Supervisor and DSP every day. Ruby is very dedicated to the gentlemen residing in the home focusing on their everyday lives.

The families supported by Heather Drive speak very highly of Ruby and her level of care and commitment to their sons, which truly speaks to her level of compassion and caring.

During the decline of one of the gentlemen that resided in the home, she spent countless hours on the phone with his physicians discussing his medical status during the onset of his seizures, seeking out the appropriate medical appointments, delegating trips to pharmacy for label changes to any medications, and faxing paperwork to physicians.

She has supported and guided her team through the changing needs of all the individuals in the program, primarily one who declined significantly and rapidly due to Alzheimer's Dementia. She also supported her team through his ultimate passing.

Ruby continues to be a pillar of support and guidance to her team as they venture through the loss and grief process for losing someone who was so dear to our hearts. She continues to remain in contact with the family, a true testament to what Penn-Mar is about . . . family.

Ruby is also very attuned with the needs and wants of the gentlemen supported in the program; she is always seeking out ways to make life enjoyable based on their personal interests and desires.

They can be found spending 1:1 time pool side, at the lake watching boats, golfing, going out to eat or to the movies (pre-COVID), baking desserts, or everyone sitting around together at the table playing a rambunctious game of UNO!

HILARY KEYES

nominated by Libby McGarry & Ben Schmidt

Hilary is a DSP who truly loves what she does. She has a knack for quickly learning how to communicate with the people she serves. This is no doubt because she cares deeply about the them; she thinks of them as her family, and treats them as such.



Recently, Hilary began working with a person who, for the longest time, has had a goal about increasing her exercise. Despite staff trying many creative ways to motivate this person to exercise, she often chooses not to work on that goal. Hilary began working with her and immediately changed her approach. Hilary has several therapeutic baby dolls that are made to look and feel like real babies. They are often used during therapy with dementia patients. Hilary thought that this person would enjoy walking if she could do so while holding a baby doll, so she decided to try it. At first, the person walked for a little but then got tired of holding the doll, so Hilary went to the store and purchased a stroller (with her own money) so this person could push the baby around in a stroller. To our surprise, the person loved walking around with the baby doll, and now she not only achieves her exercise goal on a regular basis - she has a blast doing it! To some people this might sound like a small victory, but for this person, her family, and her support team, this is a massive leap forward in her progress on her goals, and it is a clear reflection on how Hilary's mindset encourages people to achieve their goals.

In another example, Hilary supported an individual by co-developing a cooldown routine with him. Some days, this individual would bring frustrations with him to the center. On those days, his morning routine was completely thrown, and he walked around in a foul mood. He expressed his frustrations by yelling at anyone who approached him and avoiding his staff. Hilary noticed this pattern and thought to support him to cope in another way. She then developed a new approach, proposed it to the individual, and the rest is history. Hilary and this individual would go into her personal vehicle and listen to music of his choosing. When he felt ready to get back to his day, he would indicate as much. She and he used this strategy as needed, and he even started communicating his desire to do so when he noticed feelings of frustration.

In addition to Hilary's creative approaches, Hilary possesses tremendous patience, warmth, and respect for everyone she supports. It is evident that the people with whom she works trust her implicitly; they will open up to her about problems at home that might be affecting their mood on a given day, and they also share the positives in their lives because they know Hilary will echo their excitement. The same is true for Hilary's coworkers; we all know that having a conversation with her will brighten up our day because her positive attitude is contagious! Hilary was made to be a DSP, and our agency, our staff, and our individuals are incredibly fortunate that she chose to work with us. Thank you, Hilary!



JOANNA LAMBERT

nominated by Jodi Jones

Although Joanna works in the accounting department, which can be considered a support service to the direct programs, she has shown from her first day of employment that she cares about the people we support.

I have managed Joanna from North Carolina since a month after she was hired. In that time we have had many phone conversations that involve me stopping our dialog with her so that she can engage with the individuals who come in to her office to say hi or tell her about their day.

She could easily close her door and go about doing the tremendous amount of work in her job description, but it is very important to her that she knows all of the people in the building. She often texts me pictures of the people we support to so that I can keep up on how they are doing.

Before COVID, half of our time talking was not about accounting, but the conversations she has had with people in the day program. Not only does Joanna know them personally, but, because she does the billing, she also keeps an eye on their funding streams and communicates with staff when changes have occurred, or funding is about to run out.

She informs Managers and QCs if logs are not filled in correctly, or if she sees a discrepancy in the amount of days or hours each person is supported. This is a tremendous amount of data she keeps stored in her head – and she goes above and beyond her billing responsibilities to make sure Managers are kept in the loop when it comes to funding streams.

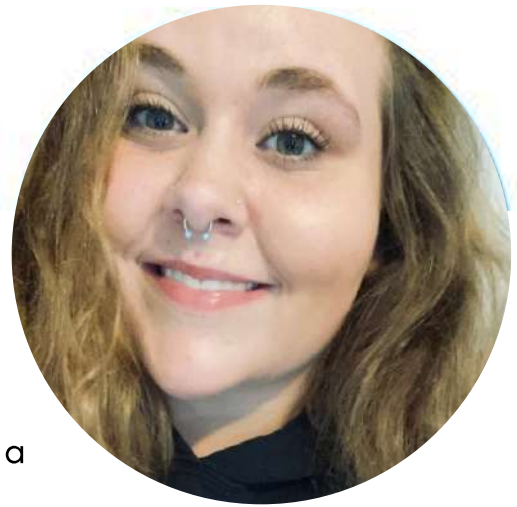
Joanna is an example of a staff member that “lives the mission” of Penn-Mar. We are so grateful to have her on our team.

MEGAN LEWIS

nominated by Soumbouth Seng

Words cannot explain how grateful I am to have met such a wonderful person!

Megan joined Penn-Mar just weeks before the day program closed. She was and is currently supporting a gentleman with unique needs and challenges.



For the longest time, finding the right person to support him in the day program was unsuccessful. Since Megan became a part of his support team, he has created such a bond with her that is remarkable.

Megan has a beautiful soul and personality all-around. She takes true pride in the work she does, not just for this person, but for all of his housemates as well.

Megan didn't really get the chance to learn her role as a day program team member before the closure, but that didn't matter. She hit the ground running on her first day at ALU-10, and it was as if she was always here.

When I have a busy day of appointments and meetings, it is nothing for Megan to ask, "What can I do to help?" She will tag-team tasks with me and her co-workers and it makes me feel at ease that I have her on my team.

Although it makes me sad that Megan will transfer when the person she supports moves to his new apartment, I am cheering her on as I know she will continue to grow with Penn-Mar.

We have gained a wonderful employee who demonstrates all of what HEART stands for.



MARYANN MANN

nominated by Heather Brannock

MaryAnn is the residential supervisor at the group home where I provide support. She has led our team with confidence and honesty that has positively impacted this program to run smoother than I have ever seen before. She does not hesitate to help out anyone in any and every way needed. She has only had the best interest of the residents in her sights and has been creative and open to collaboration with issues that may arise within the home.

Prior to the pandemic, the program was impacted by the sudden move of one of the ladies we support into what was our staff office because of mobility changes. This impacted every one of the ladies in the home as it decreased living space and the ability for this person to have their own space to be independent was shattered. The pandemic only worsened this as it was next-to-impossible to find a place that would be the best fit for this person.

The pandemic has also greatly impacted the way we live and work and has decreased our staffing to bare minimum. MaryAnn has worked any shift that was unable to get coverage, including several that were awake overnight, and would still come back in a few hours later to make mandatory manager meetings or aid in running appointments.

Though she doesn't have to, she checks in with us on her days off to make sure things are going smoothly when she knows one of the residents may be needing a little extra support. She has been able to complete all of her work and has taught us to assist in times when the workload is overwhelming. She comes in every day with a happy greeting to each of the ladies, and always asks them about their day, no matter how much office work she has. Most importantly, no matter how stressful this job becomes, she has never lost sight of the reason she started this career, and has separated outside stressors from the support she provides and the staff she supervises.

MaryAnn has been an invaluable member to the Penn-Mar team and to CLA-16. She shows excellence in all tasks and duties and is met with loyalty, admiration, and honesty from staff. More importantly, she has maintained a happy home for the ladies we support that has greatly boosted their quality of living since she joined the team.

LEAH MYERS

nominated by Chantese Newman & LaDawn Allen

We are very pleased to nominate Leah Myers for the Heart Award. In her role as a DSP at Penn-Mar Leah has come across many challenges and she has been able to deal with them gracefully, respectfully, and in a positive manner.



Leah has gone above and beyond since her first day in Residential.

Leah is never in a bad mood and she appears to genuinely enjoy her job. She provides excellent care and commitment to all of the ladies here at ALU 25 and ALU 26, as well as support to the staff.

Leah's enthusiasm, communication skills, and professional demeanor are what it takes to be a great Direct Support Professional. She constantly demonstrates her ability to be upbeat and remain calm when dealing with complex situations. Leah has been able to calm individuals when they have become frustrated when dealing with the unknown. Leah's ability to multitask has been very effective and we have not had to ask anything of her, she just jumps right in and provides assistance. Her willingness and dedication for her job speaks volumes for her character.

Leah is always there to lend a helping hand to her teammates and the individuals that she supports. She supersedes her role as a DSP. Leah is also confident and she believes in being a part of Penn-Mar's mission. Leah displays excellence at being the very best by teaching and instilling in the ladies that they can achieve anything that they want and set their minds to. She encourages them to believe in themselves and that all things are possible and limitless. Leah makes it her business to assist the ladies that she supports to lead self-directed lives.

Leah has been very transparent in dealing with situations while at work. Leah believes in advocating for the ladies she supports, and has provided valuable insight on complex situations. She has the ability and knows how to remain graceful when dealing with sensitive issues. Leah has exhibited time after time that she has what it takes to be a DSP. Leah is a great asset to Penn-Mar and we are lucky to have her on our team. Leah's commitment to Penn-Mar and the ladies that she supports continues to touch everyone that she comes across and this is the reason why we wanted her to be recognized - so she knows that all of her efforts are very much appreciated and she deserves all the praises that she has been given!



BOB NOBLES

nominated by Kris Froehlich

Bob Nobles is a DSP that is determined to help people live their best life. Bob worked in a center-based day program before COVID-19. When it was safe to begin providing services again, he was thrust into a new way of supporting people outside of a building. All services would be provided in their homes and the community and could happen outside of the typical 9am-3pm window.

Bob embraced this model with a positive “can do” attitude. He was flexible with his time because it was best for the person and their family. With little time to process, he figured out places to go, ways to keep people safe, how to discretely provide personal care, and how to adapt center-based goals to a community setting. All DSPs are faced with these challenges, but Bob has gone above and beyond to not just be in the community, but to be part of a community. There are numerous examples of how Bob gets to know people individually and then adapts the activity or environment so that participation is possible.

One individual he supports had been home with his family for quite some time due to COVID-19. Bob was determined to help this person meet his goals in the community. This individual has a sensory goal, so they go where he can enjoy bright lights, music, manipulative “toys,” and social interactions. One of his favorite places is the store, Five Below. He is now known as a “regular” by the store employees and is affectionately greeted when he enters.

Another favorite is the parks where this person works on goals while watching ducks and dog walkers. Bob looks for friendly faces and initiates conversations while introducing the gentleman he supports. They have met so many people while being out and about in Westminster. Bob understands the importance of friendship and has helped this person develop a friendship.

This individual's mother recently said that having a friend is something she always wanted for her son. She said Bob is the best DSP they have ever known, and she thinks Bob has taught her things about her own son.

Bob takes great pride in his work and is purposeful in his actions. He absolutely stands out in his role as a DSP.

STACY SEYMOUR

nominated by Teresa O'Brien



Stacy has been supporting individuals at Penn-Mar for one year. This is her first position working with people with developmental disabilities. She had her initial interview in the passenger seat of a car while traveling to meet a new individual coming into service! She was hired to work in the day program. Shortly after being hired, we were faced with COVID-19 and had to quickly adapt. Stacy was able to pivot and now supports people in their homes and in the community. She faced this new challenge without hesitation and stayed positive as she navigated the new way of working with people.

Stacy is quiet and soft-spoken in nature. She has been successful with using this trait to support individuals to de-escalate and remain calm as they move through difficult situations. One person she works with likes to touch others in a social friendly way when communicating. This is not always welcomed in the community and certainly not at a time that social distancing is encouraged. Stacy uses her calm demeanor and supports this individual to learn new ways of interacting. She is helping him to learn and respect personal boundaries in his natural setting. She does not have the support of another co-worker to assist when needed. She just makes it work and is committed to him being successful in the community.

Another example is how Stacy supports a group of 3 seniors with varied needs and interests. She showed her creativity and ability to multi-task, so everyone in the group was able to participate in something that was truly meaningful. For example, one individual exercised at Planet Fitness while another found a quiet space and played cards with her. Supporting people with dementia can mean that every day, even hour-to-hour can be different, so being able to adapt in a community environment takes a lot of creativity and multi-tasking. She really excels in this area.

Stacy has a growth mindset and in her short time as a DSP has developed new skills to support a gentleman in finding his dream job. She uses employment strategies in helping him learn about possible jobs. Stacy also takes the time to develop a working relationship with each person. She supports the whole person by helping them to live their best life. Everyone would be so lucky to have a person like Stacy on their team.



PATRICK SGRO

nominated by Jim & Kay Pitts

We have known Patrick Sgro, Supervisor and DSP of ALU 9 since our son Mike was 15 years old (he is now 43). Patrick met Mike's high energy, step for step. This energy sets Patrick apart from others. We are grateful for his dedication as Mike requires 24/7 support, including significant medical support. Patrick has dedicated his life to this work and has been very devoted to not only Mike, but his housemate, Troy. Patrick cares for Mike and

Troy as family would, spending endless hours supporting them and enjoying their company.

After years apart, Mike and Troy were reunited in 2009, when Mike came to live at Penn-Mar. We were thankful that Patrick would again be caring for Mike. We knew that Mike, who is "medically fragile" was in great hands with Patrick on staff. Patrick treats the whole person, not just their medical needs. Mike's quality of life proves this out as he is engaged, happy, and his medical needs are stable. Mike went from multiple hospitalizations at his previous location to only two hospitalizations since 2009.

As highlighted above, Mike's quality of life is a beautiful one. Patrick takes Mike swimming several days a week, taking him on multiple outings in the community, and developed improved communication with Mike's day program (formerly Change). When Change and Penn-Mar merged, Patrick advocated to have Mike's staff members from Westminster work with Mike at ALU9. This collaboration and continuity of care during the pandemic has been good for all team members and Mike. Adhering to COVID guidelines has kept Mike and Troy safe, all the while continuing a fantastic quality of life getting out on van rides and walks in the park. Patrick is collaborative, welcoming feedback and communication from all. He puts Mike's interests first. As his parents, we feel heard, generally having questions answered within 24 hours.

We believe Patrick has gone above and beyond as a Supervisor and DSP. He makes himself available, often adding extra shifts. Patrick supports Mike's needs with dignity, high energy, positivity, and cooperatively with others. This type of dedication to individuals with profound disabilities like our son Mike, coupled with his work ethic, is why he should be awarded the Penn-Mar HEART Award.

Patrick's supervisor, Alyssa Albright, adds: "Patrick is always going way beyond the scope of his position to ensure that the needs of the guys he supports are met. Back in February, one of the individuals he supports was hospitalized for severe pneumonia. Despite not being a necessity, Patrick (and the other staff at ALU 9!) all made it a priority to be there in the hospital with this individual as much as possible, in order to maintain some semblance of normalcy for him, as well as to ensure that he was being advocated for since he is unable to advocate for himself. "

KELLIE SPIES

nominated by Autumn Cover



Kellie is a strong and steady leader. She knows what is expected of her and she does it well. Kellie wants what is best for her team and the people supported in her program and she goes out of her way to make it happen. The gentlemen want to ride a big boat (go on a cruise)? Consider it planned! They want to see Elvis? Guess who's going to Graceland?!

2020 has been a trying year for her and her team, but she has taken it in stride with excellence and patience. Aside from the difficulties presented by COVID-19, Kellie and her team are currently supporting two individuals through end-stage Alzheimer's/dementia. Kellie goes out of her way to make her team feel comfortable and supported during these trying times whether it's a shoulder to cry on, someone to cover a shift because they just need a break, or just an ear to listen.

She understands that while one of the individuals may not understand what is going on around him, he would still like to present himself with dignity and she ensures he is well-groomed and considered a "handsome man" by his standards. Kellie is working diligently with her team to make each of this particular individual's final days count with keeping him comfortable, and ensuring he feels cared for. In his active days, he would frequently bring out his photo albums to show anyone he could, so she posted pictures of favored times on the wall near his bed so that he can look at them and hopefully recall and cherish the fun times he has experienced in his lifetime.

Kellie goes out of her way to ensure routine is maintained so that the gentleman has a sense of consistency to avoid confusion as much as possible. Kellie is figure of stability in the program, having worked 18 years there. The individuals know her and her family, and consider her to be part of their own lives, their "family." She's one of the staff they look forward to seeing every day.

She brings with her a level of enthusiasm for each day, helping the gentlemen to have excitement in their lives despite the stress and changes brought on by the current COVID-19 pandemic. She encourages everyone to be upbeat and positive, to live each day to its fullest. Her strong, caring, and compassionate attitude is one to be admired and one to strive for.



TONYA STONESIFER

nominated by Holly Augustine

Tonya is an example of a true stone cutter in this field. She has selflessly worked, for over 20 years, to empower people to live their best lives. Like a stone cutter, Tonya is persistent. She understands the true mission of her work; knowing that to make a real difference in people's lives, you must dedicate time and energy to each person. She never gives up on a person, no matter how challenging their goals or situation.

Tonya's official title is a Job Developer, a role that directly links to supporting people with their goals to achieve independence and freedom in their lives. Tonya understands that to do this well, she must develop relationships and make people feel supported; she does this not only with the job seeker but with everyone she encounters.

Tonya does not just stop these relationships when someone gets a job, but often goes above and beyond to maintain connections with the person, employers, family members, and team members. She has been recognized by businesses, such as Maryland Print House, over social media for her excellent support, and for connecting them with one of their valued employees.

Another specific example of Tonya's dedication is how she supported so many people during the pandemic. Tonya was a key player on our team to offer exceptional employment supports during a time when the pandemic rocked all our lives. Tonya worked tirelessly to contact all those we support. She worked closely with people to manage being furloughed, helping them access their unemployment benefits, reaching out to benefits counselors to make sure that people would maintain their cash benefits. Most importantly, she supported people by being a strong ally during such a stressful time.

Tonya was also critical in helping our team develop virtual supports, determined not to let COVID interfere with supports people desperately needed. Tonya's perseverance and constant encouragement to our team is one of the main reasons we were able to support 16 people going back to work after being furloughed. She helped people maintain their employment during COVID, and supported three people to obtain new employment opportunities during an overall challenging time for our economy.

Tonya is a strong role model for her team, taking the time to meet one-on-one to teach staff new skills, so they feel comfortable supporting people through employment. This has led to more team members getting involved in employment supports, and encouraging our agency to have an employment-first mindset. In many ways, Tonya holds our mission close to her heart, and works tirelessly towards it.

MARIA SWIFT

nominated by Teresa O'Brien & Donna Kresslin

Maria Swift was nominated by her supervisor and a family member of someone she supports. Both nominations praise Maria for the hard work and dedication she has shown during the pandemic. She learned new ways of supporting people in their homes and in the community. She pays attention to the unique needs of each individual and finds creative ways to help them.



Donna Kresslin reports that since the COVID-19 pandemic, her brother has worked with Maria one-on-one. Maria goes the extra mile to be creative and problem solve. She has found ways to help him do the things he loves even though so many places are closed. If you know Kevin, you can imagine how much he struggles with not being able to swim, bowl, and visit the library. Maria has helped him branch out and find new activities that sparked new interests. Even though Kevin can't bowl right now, he was happy to see that Maria found a place to repair his favorite bowling shoes and can't wait to get back out on the lanes. Maria also recognized the signs of dementia and designed a memory picture board to help him communicate about people and events. Donna said she is thankful for the way Maria helped them use technology to order books online from the library and most recently, fill out an online survey from Penn-Mar. She really made a difference at a time when they felt isolated.

Teresa O'Brien supervises Maria and like Donna, is thankful that she presents solutions when she sees a challenge. She does not shy away from obstacles; she faces them head on. A memorable moment was when Maria made a temporary fix to the agency van and tied up the muffler, so they were not stranded. No task is too great!! She helped someone see the joy in eating out in a restaurant by creating a visual menu beforehand and supported that person in the moment when it almost seemed too stressful. Teresa said, "I feel so blessed to have her on my team. The individuals supported by Penn-Mar have grown in independence and opportunities due to Maria's work."

Maria stands out for her willingness to go above and beyond in these challenging times. She helps people adapt to our changing society and knows she can make a difference in the lives of many.



JESSICA WAGNER

nominated by Donna Higgs-McGuire

Jessica Wagner was nominated by a parent because of the positivity she brought to their lives. This nomination shows the importance of how one person can truly have an impact on the entire family. Donna Higgs reports that Jessica was able to get to know her son on a deeper level and developed a trusting relationship. She expressed how Jessica knows how to motivate others by making non-preferred activities fun and exciting.

When Jessica's schedule changed during COVID-19, she was no longer able to support Woody. She took it upon herself to FaceTime with him every other day just to stay connected. Donna reports that this meant so much to their family because it can be difficult when staff come and go for any reason.

Donna said, "People like Jessica are hard to come by to work with our guys and she is perfect, so I hope she stays for a long time and I know she will always be in Woody's life and that makes me so happy."

Jessica's supervisor reported that she is absolutely an asset to the individuals we support. She goes above and beyond to help people achieve their goals. Over the last year she has been asked to lead a CDS group in the community and grow its impact.

She supports several people in a 1:1 capacity while working through the pandemic. Like many of the amazing staff who have worked during these times, Jessica showed dedication to the individuals by helping them stay connected to their friends and not be isolated in their homes.

She spent hours helping people access exercise points in a safe way and worked hard to help them acclimate to mask wearing and safety protocols. Jess has been instrumental in helping two individuals in meeting their health goals as well.

A well-rounded DSP can accept new responsibilities in a variety of settings and will embrace the changes with a positive attitude. Jessica shows how it is possible to make it happen.