



KIM LOWRIE

nominated by Teresa O'Brien & Jennifer Mettrick

I am not sure Kim knew the heavy lift she would encounter when she was promoted this past summer. Kim has persevered through a very challenging six months in her new role as Administrator of Community Services.

She has supported the Westminster team through the conversion of paper-based reporting to a new web-based data management system (CIMS), the conversion to a new payroll system (Ulti), led the team through transformational changes to how we provide supports in order for us to successfully pass our DDA site visit, filled in as a support team manager for over 8 months, as well as managed all the day-to-day crises that are simply a part of her responsibilities. She has done all of this with a great deal of professionalism, humility, and a positive attitude.

Kim's focus has always been on supporting team members to be successful in these pursuits and doing everything she could to ensure smooth transitions. Kim has been able to manage the challenges of the new role, a merger, and a vacant manager position through her positive attitude, her willingness to pitch in and help the team where they need it, and her partnerships with other team members across the Westminster location. We are so thankful for Kim's "will not be defeated" attitude and the time she has dedicated to all the team members of Westminster! It is through her strength that team members get through challenging days.

REBECCA LEE
nominated by Nadine Gaetani



Becca Lee works in our Maryland Day Program as the Art Activity Instructor. She does an exemplary job of working with the people we support to create incredibly creative art pieces, using everything from oil pastels, to paint, to glue. She is always prepared every day with a new and exciting project for the people she works with to complete. Becca even finds relaxing music to play in the background, which is soothing to everyone, and adds to the unique experience.

Becca goes beyond her job description every single day. She helps the people we support transition to different activities when sees that assistance is needed. She jumps in during lunch time, helping people get to the lunchroom and set up their lunches. Nobody ever has to ask Becca for help – she is so observant of the people we support’s needs and is ready to help at a moment’s notice.

Furthermore, Becca goes out of her way to be inclusive. She helps a fellow in my group, who is Jewish, create a menorah every holiday season. With all the Christmas preparations and many crafts, Becca always makes sure that this gentleman’s heritage is included, too. She has a special connection with the people we support that goes far beyond the beautiful artwork they create together.

Over the summer, when the Maryland Line space was undergoing the remodel, Becca pivoted her role to be out in the community. She found new and creative ways to support people outside of the art room, taking it upon herself to problem solve and think innovatively about how she could make it work. This was no small task, and it made a huge difference for the people we support and for our Day Program team members, whose day-to-day functions were impacted by the remodel.

No matter the situation, Becca is always there for both our team members and the people we support. We’re incredibly lucky to have Becca as a part of our organization!



VICTORIA MINKOWSKI

nominated by Teresa O'Brien & Jennifer Mettrick

Victoria is always sharing her contacts at Special Olympics and other personal relationships in order to connect the people we support to meaningful activities in the community. Thanks to her connections, we have a partnership with Willet Family Farm, where the people we support can earn volunteer hours and build skills. She never hesitates to offer her experience and knowledge of equipment needed to support people with personal care in the community.

Victoria is the glue that holds us all together each day. She is a support team manager, the keeper of knowledge on all things transportation, pool operator, CPR/First Aide Trainer (and guru!), and so much more.

If there is ever a crisis, she is the first person everyone goes to. Victoria has an incredible way of staying very calm in crisis situations and always knowing the best way to handle it.

Not only is she an amazing support to her fellow teammates, but she is the go-to person for any of the people we support when they are in need to talk to someone about something that is bothering them. They know she will always take the time to listen, help them think through solutions, and empower them to take next steps. Victoria exemplifies being person-centered in a way that not only puts the person first but lifts them up to see their full potential.

On a daily basis, Victoria is supportive of ALL people. Everyone benefits from her actions. Thank you, Victoria, for being you!

KATIE SHAW

nominated by Alyssa Albright



Without fail, Katie goes above and beyond to ensure the gentlemen that she serves at ALU 11 are happy, healthy, and thriving. The rapport she has built is commendable. She truly exemplifies Penn-Mar's values of transforming life into living.

When Katie noticed one of the people in the house was not participating in activities, she suggested that perhaps he'd want to move his bedroom upstairs to encourage him to be more engaged. Since then, this person has been significantly more engaged with their house and activities among friends. He has come out of his shell, and enjoys the time with his housemates, and the things they do together each week.

Katie has spent countless hours assisting the gentleman at ALU 11 plan for a cruise vacation this upcoming spring. She helped one person make a budget, including making a graph with him to mark how much money he had saved towards his goal. These extra details and encouragements provided the push this person needed to maintain a summer job – a job he did so well that the owner is already in touch to hire him back in the spring! Katie's ability to inspire the people she supports to achieve their goals is unmatched, and thanks to her planning skills, this person has met all of his financial goals and is looking forward to sailing away on a Jamaica cruise with his housemates! In fact, this trip has inspired the crew at ALU 11 to be planning even more trips for upcoming years, including vacations to Las Vegas and Paris!

Most recently, another person moved into the home which Katie supervises. Throughout the process, Katie remained positive, welcoming the change with open arms. She has demonstrated an ability to adapt to new situations and provide creative solutions to situations as they arise. Despite the potential challenges of adding another person into a well-established house dynamic, Katie has provided opportunities for all of the people, as well as their families, to thrive. She hosted a pizza party with the new person the evening he moved in, helping him to feel more welcome. She also assisted the guys with planning a Christmas dinner party with their families, which was a great social time for everyone involved.

As Katie continues to grow within Penn-Mar, I know she'll continue to be an unbelievable advocate for the people she supports as well as inspiration for positivity, even in difficult circumstances.



HOLLY AUGUSTINE

nominated by Jennifer Tillman & Jennifer Mettrick

original nomination shortened for length

Holly exemplifies all aspects of the HEART Award in her daily life both on the job and off. Holly's first thought is always about the people she supports and ways she can connect them to a pathway towards their dreams.

A specific example of Holly's dedication to the people we support is how she has supported someone to develop their own business. For almost all of Jeanne's adult life, she has been supported by day programs that never tapped into her passion for art and her drive to become a small business owner, including many of us at the Westminster location. It was not until Holly came to work here that Jeanne had the opportunity to follow her dreams. Holly instantly saw Jeanne's potential as an artist and supported her determination to create her own career path. Holly spent many non-work hours helping Jeanne prepare for her first art show because she believed in Jeanne's potential. That first art show earned Jeanne over \$400 in a day and solidified her ambition of becoming the "Famous Artist."

Jeanne is only one of many people Holly has believed in and supported through their employment journey. Holly has also dedicated herself to building youth employment services across Carroll County.

It is through her dedication to students with disabilities that the Westminster location now provides employment services to over 35 Post-Secondary students, connects over 20 students a year to work-based learning experiences, and connects disconnected youth with competitive integrated employment.

These achievements have all come from Holly's dedication, relationship building, and support of the employment specialists providing these vital services. Because of those connections, the Westminster location had the largest number of transitioning youth choose our services over other providers in the area this past year.

Additionally, Holly never settles for any of the people we support to be placed in jobs that are not suited for them and works to build each person up so that they drive their employment process. She helps them to discover their interests so that they do not settle for just any job, but one that will fulfill them. Holly does this directly and indirectly by holding her team to this same standard and giving them the tools to do this with the people we support.

Lastly, Holly demonstrates teamwork as the leader of her team, and as part of the larger team of supports in every person's life. Holly attends all team meetings and works closely with Program Managers daily to figure out the best ways to support a person. For example, a person on Holly's caseload recently lost her mother. Holly was in constant communication with this person's sister, Quality Coordinator, Service Coordinator, Program Manager, and Job Coach. Holly kept everyone updated and figured out how best to support this person.

This person had recently been having issues with dependable staff for personal supports. Holly stepped up and took one of these personal support shifts so that the person could feel supported. Holly helped the person to advocate for what she needed during this time, and even offered support during the funeral. This went above and beyond Holly's title as Employment Manager. It helped to build trust and a stronger relationship with the person and her family.

Holly works tirelessly to ensure that every person has the best support possible, including weekends, holidays, nights, and early mornings if someone needs her. She will be the first to drive people to and from work on days CTS is closed due to holidays or weather so that they won't lose credibility from their employer. Holly empowers her team by always lending an ear and helpful suggestion whenever they encounter a problem.

Holly has built a strong relationship with DORS (Department of Rehabilitation Services) who funds so much of the employment process. She has gained their respect through the amazing work that she and her team have accomplished in employment. We are setting the example around Maryland for what employment services should be. As manager of this team, Holly has been a big component in making this happen.

KRISTEN BROOKSHIRE

nominated by Kelsey Manahan & Emily Malone



Kristen Brookshire has a big HEART for her program. She is a residential supervisor at CLA 10 and is always going above and beyond. Kristen understands the fragile medical needs of the people she is supporting and ensures that everyone on her team exceeds the expectations of providing needed medical attention. A person she supports has been experiencing unique medical issues over the past few months. Kristen communicates professionally with doctors, nurses, and her support team to ensure that the person's health-related issues are addressed in a timely manner. She has been hypervigilant in meeting the person's care needs and has been proactive in providing her with life-saving medical attention. She empowers her team members to do the same and recognizes them as they do so. This recognition has increased the overall performance of the program and increased the quality of care that is provided to the folks at CLA 10.

Kristen has been an active member of the CLA 10 team for many years, but recently started leading the team as the Residential Supervisor. In this short time, she has equipped her team to act in an emergency without hesitation or doubting in their ability to make quick decisions to contact 911. When unexpected situations arise, like an urgent medical need, or a team member calls out, Kristen is on top of it. When we were short an overnight for the house, she picked up a lot of the overnight shifts. Kristen and her team at CLA 10 are assets to the organization and are leaders in recognizing the health and safety needs of the individuals we support.

Kristen also makes everyone feel like they're a part of the house because she treats everyone equally. She has established safe and open communication among her team, and we always know that we can come to Kristen for help. In fact, if Kristen is busy with paperwork and a team member needs help, Kristen stops whatever she is doing to support her team.

The residents at CLA 10 absolutely love Kristen and get excited to see her. She always respects and prioritizes their wants and needs. Kristen's caring, loving, and supportive attitude is apparent to everyone – from the people she supports to her team. For these reasons and many more, Kristen is exactly the kind of team member that Penn-Mar needs. Kristen exemplifies the mission we advocate and our core values and makes Penn-Mar better just by being part of it.



TOM OWENS

nominated by Karen Holstein

Tom's title may be "driver," but he is so much more. Tom embodies friend, family relations specialist, mentor, and personal supports. He greets each person on his route by name, making conversation with everyone because he knows their interests and is invested in their lives. Tom has a rare ability to make every person he encounters feel special, and also makes an effort to greet each family member by name at

pick up and drop off. He even has connected with team members at Westminster to learn about the people he drives, so that he can be part of supporting them in reaching their goals.

Tom personifies the Mandt philosophy of "in this place and with these people, I feel safe," and has made it his business to know if a person we support has anything that triggers them, and how to support them through those moments if needed.

A great example of how Tom is more than just a driver is his relationship with Stephanie. Tom drives Stephanie to work daily, and in this very short period of time, they have formed a strong bond with each other. Tom has helped Stephanie build skills like making eye contact, opening up, and making meaningful conversation. Tom checks in with Stephanie's mom, and asks about touch points to talk to Stephanie about. He will often review Stephanie's goals and discuss how she may be reaching them, and is always looking for new ways to engage Stephanie and to help her build trust and confidence. Tom also supports someone on his route who is non-verbal. This person sometimes becomes frustrated or anxious during transportation. Realizing this, Tom asked this person if they'd like to sit up front with him, giving her confidence, comfort, and a sense of control.

Beyond just his time driving, Tom takes the time to have conversations with all of the team members and people we support at Westminster. When you walk through the halls each morning, you see Tom stopping in the hallways and greeting everyone asking about their days – and genuinely caring about their answers. If he comes across someone who is having a rough time or is agitated, he naturally gravitates toward that person and "listens" to the language that their behavior is communicating. He stays with them until they ride it out and are feeling better.

Perhaps most telling of all, on the rare occasion that Tom takes a shift off, his co-workers jump at the chance to fill in, because it is for Tom. They want a chance to give back all that he gives to them and the people that we support.

LYDIA HURST

nominated by Alexa Wheeler

Lydia cares for each person she supports with an astounding amount of compassion and joy. She always has a smile on her face and is willing to lend a hand to anyone in need. Lydia goes out of her way to make new team members feel part of the family at the Day Program in Far Hills.



She is also innovative and is always thinking of new projects, games, crafts, and activities to do to keep the people we support interested. Furthermore, Lydia is always looking for new places and new ways to be involved in the community and tries to make these experiences as person-centered as possible.

Lydia is outgoing and bubbly, a personality trait perfect for a leader. She leads well and is dependable, is a great friend and mentor, and is always a joy to be around. If you're having a rough day, she's the perfect person to cheer you up.

Additionally, Lydia is a great advocate for the people that we support and her teammates. Every year, she goes above and beyond the scope of her job to organize Penn-Mar's participation in a rally in Harrisburg. Lydia recruits self-advocates and team members, organizes transportation, reaches out to families, and reminds everyone why advocacy is important. She coordinates matching t-shirts, signs, and enlists the help other Day Program team members in creating and designing these materials.

She has been honored by PAR (Pennsylvania Advocacy and Resources for Autism and Intellectual Disability) for her efforts, which gives you an idea of just how significant they are! As Lydia said, "The people I work for were so excited to go [to the rally]. They knew why we were there, because we're the ones who are there to support them, from washing hands to getting a job. We were there supporting each other."

It is this embodiment of teamwork and mutual support that makes Lydia such a standout DSP. From her willingness to take on responsibilities outside of her job description, to her unparalleled people skills, her constant positive attitude, and her incredible passion in ensuring that legislators understand the importance of DSPs, Lydia does it all with HEART.



STACY LATCHAW

nominated by Christina Dixon

Stacy is the type of person who demonstrates unwavering dedication to the people she supports. Even though her role is primarily administrative in nature, she makes it her priority to spend time directly with the people on her caseload. She pays attention to what is important to the person and helps them find ways to access those things.

Using active supports, the person is doing and learning every step of the way.

Most recently, Stacy worked closely with two people, one to pursue his dream of becoming a sportscaster and the other to connect him with his passion of model trains. Derek is working with a local high school team to announce their games and creating his own sports podcast. You might remember his story from a recent newsletter.

Nate is being mentored by a business owner of a model train shop and has connected with a club who builds traveling model train displays.

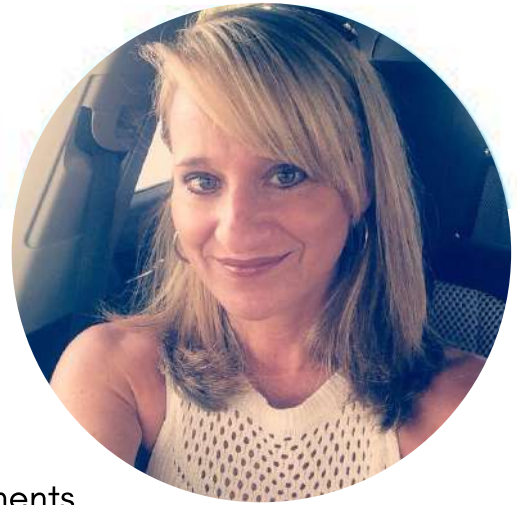
Stacy has worked through some pretty difficult situations with people, too. One person she works with realized they were being discriminated against by their employer because of their disability. Although this set-back directly affected him, it's fair to say Stacy was outraged on his behalf, probably even more so than he was! She supported him to access his union representative and facilitated a conversation with him and his employer to rectify this situation.

Stacy is particularly excellent when working with a person who may, at face value, have limited communication. Stacy always figures out a way to dig deeper with people to figure out alternative communication. Certainly, we can't claim to know how a person in that situation would feel, but I would imagine a rare feeling of importance and understanding by Stacy's actions.

Stacy is also a role model for her team. Recently, a team member of hers showed interest in advancement, so Stacy took time to meet routinely and one-on-one with them so the person could learn and practice skills needed for advancement into that position. Stacy selflessly gives of her own time and will do whatever it takes to help a person achieve their "good life."

KOLLYNE WETZEL

nominated by Jackie Summers



It is often said that “no one is indispensable,” however it could be argued that now and then you find someone who defies that logic and can truly be described as indispensable!

Kollyne Wetzel epitomizes the word, and many departments throughout Penn-Mar could surely echo this sentiment. Our organization is a significantly better place because of her demonstrated work ethic, cheerful and friendly disposition, and her unwavering dedication to Penn-Mar.

She has mastered multi-tasking while juggling multiple responsibilities, often simultaneously, and does so with aplomb and grace. Whether tackling the demands of Black Tie deadlines, arranging for meetings and set-ups for different departments, sending communications, creating and mailing information packets and meeting minutes, physically transporting heavy supplies from building to building, preparing, organizing, following up, and the list goes on.

Over this past year, as Penn-Mar's scope has expanded with the addition of the Westminster location, Kollyne's support of the Leadership Team has also expanded. Never flustered or frustrated, Kollyne has handled the additional responsibilities with her signature poise.

A brilliant ambassador for cross-departmental collaboration, Kollyne embodies the spirit of “One Penn-Mar” and is always willing to go above and beyond to assist a fellow team member, even when her own plate is overfull.

Her now famous tag line when being thanked for her work resonates with all who know her – “My Pleasure.” Actually Kollyne, the pleasure is all ours! Thank you for the kindness and joy you bring with you every single day!



PHIL PASCOE

nominated by Karen Holstein & Kim Lowrie

Phil Pascoe is a DSP who does Personal Supports with a married couple. Phil consistently builds his relationship with this couple outside of his job description. For example, Phil has taken Dave away on retreat, something Dave has always wanted to do. Dave did not have funding hours available to cover this overnight trip, but Phil was unconcerned about getting paid. Phil did it for Dave's peace of mind and well-being. Phil has even offered to Natalie, Dave's wife to work on a holiday. This is a long drive, an hour each way.

Phil regularly changes his schedule to suit the needs of the people that he supports. When Dave was in the hospital recently, Phil was the first one to go up and visit and support Dave. Being in the hospital made Dave nervous, as any health scare does. Phil was right by Dave's side, on his own time. Phil always has a person-centered attitude and will go above and beyond to see Dave and Nat reach their personal goals. Phil is a counselor and a sympathetic ear, will talk through job challenges and life challenges, and even spiritual challenges. Phil embodies the "support" in Direct Support Professional.

Additionally, when Dave experienced the loss of 2 close family members in the space of a short time, Phil again made himself available to fill in with varied needs, including going to church on Sundays where Dave was able to take comfort in his congregation. Phil was able to help Dave with his anxiety and fears, and Phil's consistency and caring nature enabled Dave to begin working through tough emotions and put some coping techniques in place. Dave is comforted and supported to know that he has Phil in his corner.

Phil also connects with the people he supports on their terms. One outstanding example of this easily springs to mind. More than a year ago, someone we supported began to experience failing health. Phil began working with this person just as his health began to decline, where he couldn't do the things he had before. Phil asked this person what was important to him. The person, who had been told that he had limited time left, told Phil he wanted to see his friends and connect with God. Phil began working with him to make rosaries which he then gifted to friends and staff. He got a lot of joy out of being able to give gifts to those he valued, and it served as a way for him to talk about what he was going through. Phil also found a way to get this person into the Westminster location so he could visit with his friends, even though he was relatively housebound. It was joy to see this person in a place he never thought he would be able to visit again. Phil supported him with dignity and love the entire time.

In these and so many other ways, Phil goes above and beyond his job to make sure that everyone feels supported in all that they do.

PAUL MOMBERGER

nominated by Amanda Harris

Several months ago, my family and I started attending a new church in the Shrewsbury area. It wasn't long after that Paul and a gentleman who lives at CLA 13 caught my eye, as they are part of the congregation. Paul faithfully brings this gentleman and several other people he supports to service every Sunday, no matter the conditions.



Just recently, Paul was helping everyone into the van after church on a snowy Sunday morning. He was suddenly greeted by a rather large snowball to the face! One of the people he supports made it up and threw it at Paul. Paul's reaction was the best; he quickly made up a snowball and returned the favor! It was obvious from watching this group interact that fun was being had by everyone. They all had huge smiles on their faces.

Paul could have reacted much differently, but through his humorous response, he brought a light to this person's day! The best part is that Paul had no idea anyone was watching. It's interactions such as this, when you don't know that someone is watching, that makes the difference in lives of the people we serve. Who you are when no one is looking speaks volumes.

The following Monday morning, I came in and told the house's Program Manager about the event that had taken place at church the previous day. She smiled and told me about what a wonderful asset Paul is to Penn-Mar. She shared about his dedication to the house, and each and everyone one of the men who live there.

I now watch every Sunday as Paul helps each person into the pews, gets them situated, and interacts with them and others throughout the morning. It's evident that he carries out our mission by consistently demonstrating our core values, and going above and beyond in not just supporting, but truly building genuine relationships with each person he supports. He will leave a special mark on the heart of each one of the people he serves.



NATALIE WILSON

nominated by Donna McGuire

original nomination shortened for length

My son Woody is a client at Westminster. Woody has been there for several years, and until recently seemed to be happy there. About 7-8 months ago he started to seem bored and unfulfilled. I called Victoria, as she knows Woody better than anyone there. She said, "we have a new program we are going to try; I think Woody would do well in it." We decided to see.

On Tuesday a young lady named Natalie picked him up. At first, I wasn't too sure she was going to be the right fit as she was very shy. Now, to know me is to know I am extremely over-protective of Woody and not the easiest person to get along with when it comes to him. I have to really trust you and like you to let you spend time with him and trust that he is going to be safe. Woody does have medical issues with his heart that makes me even more of a "mama bear" when it comes to him.

But the following few weeks I saw a big change in Woody. He seemed to have a growing bond with Natalie, and over the next few months their bond grew stronger. As we got to know Natalie, we realized that the friendship she had with Woody was genuine and not just because she was getting paid to be with him.

We are with Carroll County Special Olympics and I am a coach, member of the management team, and the Fundraiser Director. I happened to mention to Natalie one day that we had a Horseshoe/Cornhole Tournament coming up the following Saturday that has been held for us for the last 38 years, and that Woody would be playing Cornhole. Well, to Woody's extreme surprise, Natalie showed up to cheer him on and spend time with him and our family! Again, she isn't paid to be there on her days off - she just cares that much. She then mentioned she was with the local Fire Department and they were having an event the following Sunday and she would really like to take Woody. I was very comfortable with this (which is extremely unlike me!) and offered to pay her. She flatly refused any money and said she enjoys spending time with him. Well, they went and had an amazing time!

Now during their weeks out in the community, she has really gotten him out of his "shell," for lack of a better word, when it comes to doing active things. They were hiking, taking pictures at different parks, and every day they walk the mall in town. That is huge for him and really great for his health.

I can't describe their relationship and the effect they have on each other. There have been numerous times that she has volunteered with Woody and our family outside of work. We had a bingo a few weeks ago as a fundraiser and Natalie and a friend of hers volunteered their time and basically spent the whole day helping out. Now, she is volunteering her time with our athletes, and is helping with basketball, and is also going to possibly be our new softball coach.

Natalie also has an excellent sense for how Woody is feeling. There was an incident a week ago where Woody was starting to get sick on a Sunday, I kept him home on Monday to give him meds all day and just rest. Well Tuesday morning he wanted to go, so I told Natalie about his feeling under the weather. About 1:00pm she called me and said something just didn't feel right with him and she was worried, so I had her bring him right home. After all these years and numerous times in the hospital I knew she was right by looking at him. We got him medical attention right away, but if it had not been for Natalie knowing him so well, the outcome could have been very dangerous.

I could go on with story after story about Natalie – how she is practically family, how I have complete trust in her, how she dressed up as the Grinch (whom Woody loves) for an annual holiday party and didn't just wear the costume, but practiced the mannerisms and voice. Since being with Natalie, Woody's speech has gotten better and more expressive. She talks to him constantly, like we do, and suggests things that might help with his speech.

This isn't just a job to her; it is so very much more. She is a joy and asset to everyone at Westminster and I am so grateful for her and Woody's amazing and wonderful connection.

She is a very welcome member of our family and I believe with all my heart that Natalie is a perfect recipient of the Heart Award!

My son is my world, pride, and joy, and this young lady makes his life that much happier!

NATALIE PLACE

nominated by Jenn Hobbs



When you think about a Penn-Mar team member who goes “above and beyond,” no one better embodies all that HEART stands for than Natalie Place. Aside from being an incredible DSP whose dedication to those she supports is obvious to all who meet her, Natalie also is a wonderfully collaborative team member. She has coordinated with other houses to develop friendships between the people she supports and other residents. She regularly jumps into all-team events, like participating in the Alzheimer’s Walk with enthusiasm and passion. She has frequently assisted me in identifying photo opportunities and obtaining video footage for various communications.

But perhaps the best example of Natalie’s dedication to the people at Penn-Mar is her annual Thanksgiving Dinner. Each year, Natalie coordinates a massive Thanksgiving Dinner which is held at one of our buildings (in recent years, Far Hills), and attended by over 50 DSPs and the people they support. Leading up to the event, she promotes it; manages a signup list of the ingredients, paper goods, beverages and other necessary items; and oversees the ever-growing RSVP list. She gives up Thanksgiving Day with her family, choosing instead to spend the day ensuring that every person at Penn-Mar has a place to celebrate.

Natalie recruits and coordinates volunteers, including several Penn-Mar team members who volunteer alongside their families to prep and serve the food, which is an all-day endeavor! None of this is part of her “job description,” it’s simply something Natalie feels is important to do. Along with standout volunteers like Kim Kaltreider, a former nurse at Penn-Mar and her family; Penn-Mar team member Lindsay Shafer; Michelle and Sean Fink, whose brother Jamey resides in a Penn-Mar home; and more, Natalie and company ensure that every person has a special Thanksgiving.

While Natalie’s efforts are impressive in and of themselves, what really drives home what makes her an exceptional team member is her motivation for hosting the dinner. Seven years ago, as a DSP in a Penn-Mar home, she spent Thanksgiving Day with a new gentleman she was supporting. It was just the two of them, and as much as she tried to make the day festive, it didn’t quite have the feel of a special holiday. That experience inspired her to do something about it, because that’s Natalie: she sees a problem and then she finds a solution.

To quote Natalie directly: “My biggest motivation for hosting the Thanksgiving dinner is getting to see everybody sitting and eating together, having fun and laughing. It really speaks to what the day is all about. I often think, if we didn’t host this dinner, where would all these people be on Thanksgiving? I’m determined to make sure the individuals I support have a life like yours and mine.” There really is no better way to sum up what’s at the HEART of Penn-Mar’s mission than Natalie’s own words and example!



ERIC WILLIAMS

nominated by Emily Long

A while ago, there was a major maintenance emergency at one of the residential sites in Maryland. Eric spent the day out at the house investigating possible causes for low water pressure. He discovered that the well had collapsed. He immediately notified the appropriate parties and got to work figuring out what to do to ensure the ladies that live there had what they needed.

This house has 4 ladies and it would have been difficult to relocate them to a hotel as it is outside of their norm and change does not come easy to them. Eric figured out how to hook a water tank up to the house and make it so that there was running water just like normal. There is water for cooking, bathing and drinking.

The drilling of the well is a long process and will take some time. Since the well issue began, Eric has been going out to the house every morning, even on the weekends when he is off, to fill the tank to ensure that the ladies do not run out of water.

Each day Eric provides an update to me as to where we are in this process waiting for the work of the contractors to begin. Without Eric's quick thinking and ever willingness to make sure all of the people we support have what they need, this situation would be much worse than it already is.

Additionally, Eric played a vital role in helping with Fall Fest. He secured many donations, came up with ideas for the event, and made them happen. He was an immense help in set up and clean up as well.

Anytime there is a call, email, or text, sent to Eric, his response is always the same no matter what, "I'm on the way." No request of him goes undone. It is great knowing that he can always be counted on.