



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Maryland's Social Services Agency



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release:

October 9, 2009

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES ACKNOWLEDGES EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

BALTIMORE – Throughout the first full week of October, which was National Customer Service Week, staff within the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) were recognized and acknowledged for the work they perform for the citizens of Maryland.

“Public service is never easy. It is doubly hard when the service you provide may make the difference in someone eating, having a roof over his or her head, or heat during the winter. DHR staff work exceptionally hard to ensure everyone who comes to our door receives help,” said DHR Secretary Brenda Donald. “During this week, we thank staff for the work they do for the citizens of Maryland.”

However, there are always people who are exceptional in the work they do. Each administration at DHR Central and each Local Department of Social Services selected one individual among their staff to receive a 2009 DHR Customer Service Excellence Award. Staff were honored at a luncheon during our 10th Annual Customer Service Awards Ceremony on Monday, October 5th.

Anne Arundel County Office of Child Support- Pamela Stutterheim

Pamela works in the Enforcement Unit customer services division and consistently treats all customers with respect and dignity. Pamela is always willing to go the extra mile. A non-custodial parent earlier this year wrote and thanked Pamela for saving his life because he was homeless, living in a tent, had lost his job and was convinced that suicide was his only option. Pamela worked with him to see his value and worth.

Baltimore City Office of Child Support- Jackie Blanton

Jackie currently serves as the chief trainer for the Baltimore City Office of Child Support. Jackie has been described as a hard worker and professional in every capacity she has served. Jackie remains positive in sometimes-difficult situations and is dedicated to the success of the program. She is a team player and builds relationships well.

Prince George's County Office of Child Support- Sylvia Booth

Sylvia Booth continues her 30-year tradition of reliable, dependable, positive customer service. Her creative methods have resulted in an increase in collections. She began a penny drive to give customers bus fare or taxi fare when they need the resources. She coordinates collections for Thanksgiving dinners, Christmas dinners and gifts for needy families selected by staff. She helped to redesign the Customer Service Center to include a children's play area so that it will be child- friendly as children wait while parents are being served.

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Family Investment Administration- Vesta Kimble

Vesta notices where help is needed and works with local departments to design, develop and implement solutions. Vesta championed the use of “Free Flow”, which is an automated customer applicant tracking system. This process has assisted locals as they have had an increase in customers served. She developed a similar spreadsheet for Baltimore City DSS Call Center to help them bring applications from SAIL and get them ready to work and send them to the district offices.

Social Services Administration- Pamela Miller

Pamela has been key in linking families to resources in their community to assist them with the care of relative children. She is the Kinship Care Policy Analyst and has a passion for the kinship care population. Numerous times, she has gone out of her way to make sure that kin are treated fairly and provided the services they need. Pamela continues to support her co-workers in the Adoption unit. She provided outstanding work on the Kinship Care Resource Center RFP as well as the CWLA Roundtable discussion on Kinship Care.

Office of the Attorney General- Kathy Crosby

Kathy has devoted several hundred hours to update the State’s IV-E plan in order to obtain federal approval of the Plan which involved updating the State’s Out of Home Placement Manual, and revising and updating related regulations and MOU’s. Kathy has a deep commitment to the mission of the agency and this manifests itself in her insistence of high standards for herself and those around her. Kathy’s motto is “get the job done right.”

Communications Office- Tom Nappi

Tom always makes sure that staff get what they need. His answer to questions and requests for changes is usually “yeah, sure-we can do that!” Tom is productive and is conscious of timelines and deadlines. You usually see Tom working at events as the photographer or videographer.

Office of Grants Management- Geraldine Brooks

Despite her role as Fiscal Administrator, Geraldine works across programs and operations, handling management and administrative issues ranging from budget, legislative, personnel and programs. She always goes beyond the call of duty to get a project done. Geri works well with her team members and has taken on a mentoring role for many. She provides calm and often times acts as the voice of reason in what can sometimes be high stressed situations.

Office of the Inspector General-Rashpal (Paul) Chana

Paul Chana has led his unit in identifying over 2 million dollars in overpayments to providers that will be returned to the Department. He has taken the least experienced auditors into his unit and helped them to grow into competent professionals. He encourages his staff and assists colleagues wherever he sees a need. He has taken on unexpected audit requests and other projects without complaining and finds ways to get it done with few resources.

Office of Licensing and Monitoring- Mignon Atkins

Mignon demonstrates enthusiasm and passion in her work and is always courteous and congenial with external and internal customers. She has initiated exclusive monitoring tools for monitoring private providers that offer very specialized services to DHR youth. Her technical assistance ensured customer satisfaction through consistent and special effort in response to customer’s needs. Mignon exemplifies a solid work ethic and good customer service by providing prompt services in a friendly and professional manner.

Office of Technology for Human Services- Jan Simmons

Jan’s daily activities involve directing the work of the Department’s level I help desk. Level One Help Desk performs triage on the reported issue and determines the appropriate route the issue should take to

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resolution. Her staff is the front line of this Department's support network. Jan sets a good example everyday with her friendly, positive, outgoing personality and cheerful greeting for all she meets. She can often be found staying well after hours to complete tasks and catch up on deliverables.

Office of Planning and Performance- Audrey McClendan

No matter the task, she is the first person to volunteer her talent. She eagerly steps up to a challenge and devotes her full attention to the task. She takes pride in delivering quality service and a quality product. She even stepped out of her comfort zone this summer to learn facilitation skills, which she has put to use for both this year's statewide legislative planning session and this fall's PIP planning process. Audrey is commended for her work ethic. The speed at which she works and the commitment she brings to everything she does

HRDT- Denice Clark-Keys

Denice Clark-Keys has been instrumental in helping to make the new classification process as seamless as possible. She has provided input into the forms developed by DBM to insure that they worked properly when being completed by personnel officers/supervisors. She has learned new processes and procedures. She patiently explains the information to others. She has put in extra hours to review Acting Capacity requests and to process reclassification results so that the employee receives compensation in the quickest manner once a decision is received from the Department of Personnel. Denice has also provided numerous sample job descriptions from our files to facilitate DBM analysts' reviews and to promote a favorable outcome to our requests. Additionally, she works independently and tirelessly on updating and reviewing organizational charts and explaining ways to depict correctly the relationships within an organization. If an assignment is given to Denice, you know it will be completed well and on time.

Administrative Operations – Bradley Moody

Bradley rarely misses a day of work. Mr. Moody's work ethic is steady, earnest and energetic. He maintains a pleasant demeanor no matter how stressing the situation because his job requires him to respond to emergencies of all kinds related to maintenance and up keep of a building that is 100 years old. He makes sure that all requests are handled in a timely fashion and takes the extra step when problems arise. Bradley also creates a strong sense of camaraderie among his co-workers.

Budget and Finance- Ellen Kirilova

Ellen is the supervisor in the MD CHESSIE Fiscal unit and this unit receives 37 batches per month at 200 payments per batch (over 7, 00 payments) that must be reviewed and processed with a short turnaround time. Since the implementation of live payments, Ellen has demonstrated dedication to duty by ensuring pay files are processed accurately and timely each month. She schedules her time off and leave around payment batch processing. Ellen always presents with a positive outlook and high energy level. Her dedication has enhanced the Department's success in the transition to MD CHESSIE electronic foster care payment processing.

Allegany County DSS - Charlotte Champ

Charlotte has been innovative in raising funds for staff appreciation functions while still following state policy. Charlotte frequently meets other staff at Wal-Mart to purchase goods to support family preservation efforts. She contracted with a shredding company that provides on-site shredding and coordinated the use of locked disposal bins throughout the building eliminating the need for staff to stand and shred documents. This cleans up work areas and increases staff time for customer service.

Anne Arundel County DSS - Burentta Conyer

Burnetta is responsible for processing and approving payments for purchases caseworkers have made on behalf of customers. Customers will inquire about the status of their payment and Burnetta will track down the answer and return the customers call by the next business day, most often it is the same day. Burnett has often commented that she loves her job.

Baltimore City DSSS - Gail Jackson

Despite the many pressures of working in the executive office, Gail maintains a pleasant and calm temperament without fail. She is quick to volunteer in any way that she can be helpful. She is at work early and often stays late to ensure important tasks are completed accurately and on time. Gail was quick to embrace the philosophy that the client is most important. About a year ago, Gail discovered that hundreds of letters went unanswered from clients and customers and she took it upon herself to begin to review and log them in and make sure that each one were answered and implemented a tracking system for customer letter.

Baltimore County DSS- Vonda Jackson

Vonda Jackson works to assist our training coordinator, Performance officer and the Director's constituent call unit. Vonda is always a step ahead in planning for staff trainings and ensuring that whatever the trainer needs is ready and available. She is very empathetic when dealing with constituents who are often times angry and very demanding. She listens carefully to the customer's concerns. She is professional and courteous always. She implemented a rotation schedule for team members to answer customer calls to allow others on the team to do other assignments. I do not believe that Vonda knows the word "NO."

Calvert County DSS - Dorrine Jones

Dorrine plays a major role in the day-to-day fiscal operations at Calvert County DSS. She worked diligently over the last year with members of the local CHESSIE team from Services and Finance to ensure that payments to vendors and foster care parents were processed timely and accurately. When a new challenge is presented to Dorrine, she works with all internal customers to get a resolution that is best for the external customer. She has a no-nonsense work ethic and a wonderful, calm personality. She has been a constant in the Finance unit even during staff shortages and changes.

Caroline County DSS - Darlene DeShields

Darlene has exhibited a very high degree of reliability, even under difficult circumstances. Her attendance and work habits are exemplary, even under the strain of significantly expanded family investment caseloads. She has been described as the "go to" person for the Food Supplement/Medical Assistance unit due to her knowledge of policy and procedures. She is prompt when returning phone calls and always has a pleasant disposition when returning phone calls or doing face-to-face with customers. She consistently articulates concern for the agency's customers and her concern shows in the quality and volume of work that she produces.

Carroll County DSS - Melissa Nestor

Melissa Nestor is a caseworker in the Foster Care/Adoptions unit and always assesses cases utilizing the "Place Matters" philosophy and acts in accordance to good service delivery. Melissa is constantly available to her clients in many ways and goes beyond the call of duty by coming in early, staying late, and adjusting her schedule to meet her clients' needs. She considers how decisions made today will affect our clients now as well as in the future. She always cares about the well being of her clients and co-workers, fully considers all aspects of potential decisions before they are made and comes to work every day to be the very best that she can be.

Cecil County DSS - Rose Capriotti

Rose Capriotti works as a Family Service caseworker. During a staff shortage, Ms Capriotti assisted approximately 100 customers by herself without complaining once even when the lobby was standing room only. She came to work early and left late every day that week to ensure that customers were serviced. She often stays late and comes in early to complete paperwork and does not ask for overtime. When the lobby has been standing room only, Rose takes the lead to assure customers of their wait time and she always has a comforting smile. During August 2009, Ms Capriotti assisted approximately 40 customers in maintain their housing, processing over \$14,000 in housing and eviction prevention payments.

Charles County DSS - Loretta Graham

Loretta Graham is a child support lead worker and during periods of short staffing has altered her compressed work schedule in order to take and present in court hearings on a voluntary basis. Loretta always goes beyond the call of duty providing excellent customer service by being always the first to step in and assist a customer regardless of how much work is currently on her plate. Her laugh and smile can turn a bad day into a wonderful day.

Dorchester County DSS- Michael Todd

Michael Todd is the face and voice of the intake unit for the Department. Not only does he receive referrals for child and adult protective services, he also handles individuals in crisis. He instills calmness in the clients at the point of entry to the agency when they are most vulnerable. He seeks to find plausible solutions to help those in need. He has exceptional attendance and always volunteers to handle intake during special occasions and has covered intake on days such as Christmas Eve and other holidays. Michael is a fact finder, looking for all possible solutions for customers.

Frederick County DSS -Tamara Bales

Tamara Bales is the lead worker for the clerical staff in the Family investment division and one of her many duties is staffing the Family Investment Call Center. While the Call Center routinely responds to over 4000 inquiries monthly, Tamara alone answers over 1500 calls per month. She seldom has to generate a work order to be processed by a case manager as she can answer over 95% of customer inquiries thoroughly and accurately. This support allows case managers to focus more diligently on their caseloads. She comes to work early nearly every morning to begin her day. She will voluntarily adjust her workday to assure critical activities are completed. Tamara is very knowledgeable of policies and procedures and resources. She also is responsible for managing all mail that comes into the division and often updates CARES with new information.

Garrett County DSS-Tanya Kessell

Tanya Kessell volunteers for special projects and training that helps carry out her duties as a Child Support Specialist. Her customers are given outstanding service that makes their encounter with the agency a good one. She always displays a positive outlook that other workers can see and feel. She is always putting the objectives of the unit first and is available to assist other specialists as needed. Tanya has taken a major role in updating the agency's "Child Support First" concept and offered numerous suggestions that will benefit the customers and the staff in the agency.

Harford County DSS- Tamara Brinkman

The Harford County DSS has had several vacancies over the past year resulting in the need for other staff to fill in the gaps and Tamara Brinkman is one of those persons believing that staff should taken on such responsibility. Ms. Brinkman has assisted all staff in implementation of the salary reduction and furlough days, FMLA and time keeping issues in the absence of a Personnel Officer. Her use of leave and time management are excellent. Ms. Brinkman is able to multi-task in many areas by assisting not only the Director and the Assistant Directors, as well as managing her own staff. Tammy often advocates for her staff and others who may not otherwise be heard. Tammy has coordinated the annual agency book sale that benefits the Maryland Charity Campaign.

Howard County DSS- Andrea Robinson

Andrea Roberson works in the child support division of the Howard County DSS. She has displayed dedication and reliability since her arrival at the Department. She takes pride in her relationships with internal and external customers. Even when ill, she still manages to give and do all that she can to get the job done regardless of how bad she feels. It is reiterated everyday when she is willing to go beyond to assist the customer and attempt to resolve an issue on a case that she would not normally handle. Andrea commits to performing her duties with integrity, urgency and compassion. Her supervisors have observed the support she gives to her co-workers when they need it and the respect for each other that her presence promotes. A

customer wrote about Andrea to say, "I write to thank you for your time and effort to correct the erroneous arrearage indications on my February 2009 statement. You made the visit both positive and productive."

Kent County- Joyanne Foreman

Joyanne (Foreman) has shown herself to be not only an exemplary co-worker, but more importantly, she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the people we serve. Our community and our customers are truly fortunate to have such a special person among us. She is truly a model of compassion, professionalism and dedication to the important work that we do."

Montgomery County Child Welfare Services -Vera Doukmajian

Vera is an outstanding social worker who provides exemplary customer service in Child Welfare Services. There have been times when Ms. Doukmajian has received phone calls from hospitals, police and custodial parents, which sometimes require her to leave her home as late/early as 3 A.M. to pick up a runaway teen who has been found. She works with doctors and hospitals at all hours to get medical treatment for a child or to have a child admitted to the hospital. Colleagues have observed her working with angry individuals who after talking with Vera, willingly participate in a plan that will ensure their children's safety. Ms. Doukmajian is responsible for Voluntary Placements for Montgomery County and a recent case exemplifies her professionalism. She worked with a family who was at their wits end with a teenage girl who had multiple hospitalizations and many service providers working with the family. Vera worked with the family so that everyone had clear goals in the treatment plan.

Prince George's County DSS- Stella Proctor Wood

Stella Wood consistently provides high quality customer service to both internal and external customers at Prince George's County Foster Care Intake unit. The result is continued medical care for children we serve. She works to ensure that the medical needs of our children are met. She is pleasant, knowledgeable, reliable and quick to offer assistance. She responds in a prompt manner to requests and does her best to give information requested or refer the customer to someone who can directly assist them. Stella has taken the initiative to develop a guide for foster parents on how to navigate the medical assistance system. She assisted with an adoption of a special needs child while the child was still in the ICU unit in the hospital assuring the adoptive family that the child would still be covered by medical assistance after the family received information otherwise.

Queen Anne's County DSS- Peggy Landskroener

Peggy Landskroener's role as a Personnel Officer has afforded her the opportunity to continue to build morale among the employees in Queen Anne's County. She has organized many Employee Appreciation events and shows excellence in customer service in all that she does. She is always thoughtful of her customers as she prepares for these events often times baking the items herself. She helps to create a positive outlook for staff.

St. Mary's County DSS-Bonnie Abell

Bonnie Abell maintains vigilance over the flow of customer traffic in the front lobby of each work site and has established procedures to ensure that customers do not have unnecessarily long waiting periods to have their needs met. Bonnie answers customers concerns and is always tactful, calming, reassuring and empathetic to the customer. Her intervention enables staff to continue to provide services to their regular customers with minimal interruption. As Ombudsman, Ms. Abell is in constant communication with customers and public representatives. Part of her personal objective is to make things better for the customer and to enhance operational procedures that will allow smooth delivery of services.

Somerset County DSS - Lori Laird

Lori Laird is a Family Investment Administrative Aide and has many assignments to complete with short turn-around times. She is always flexible with her schedule to ensure deadlines are met. She regularly downloads performance reports and formats them for electronic access, so that workers may keep track of deadlines. She has been an active participant and team leader in accreditation efforts. Lori exhibits a positive "can do"

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attitude that encourages others around her to get involved and support any efforts to improve service to our customers and community partners. During this past year, Lori assisted staff that wanted to increase their computer knowledge with various software skills. Lori also established an agency newsletter this year, which has been a big morale booster for staff.

Talbot County DSS - Kelley Werner

Kelley Werner is an employee whose efforts make a difference at Talbot County. She is the lead staff for compilation of the State Stat report for the Department. In the past year, she has ensured accurate completion and timely submission of the child welfare data to Central. She is referred to by the staff as the “go to person.” She has filled valuable functions on Quality improvement Teams, information technology and data reporting. Her flexibility to respond to changing situations, her proactive response to the department’s needs and her commitment to the agency are an asset to the work environment.

Washington County DSS- Eddie Van Metre

Eddie adds creative problem solving to his role as assessor for intensive family preservation services. He is champion for client-centered, solution-focused work. He is a mentor to staff, an expert on community resources and is able to engage with families. He consistently works beyond including afterhours and weekends. He is a leader in family centered practice concepts and demonstrates this in his work with families. He specializes in those families who suffer from long term effects of substance dependency. He is a mentor to new employees and is viewed by his peers as supportive and easily approachable. Eddie helped develop a focus group with teens that had received services from family preservation in the past and identified the need for an ongoing life skills group, which is to begin soon.

Wicomico County DSS- Arnold Morris

Arnold Morris works in the emergency services intake unit at Wicomico County. Mr. Morris is always willing to do his share of the work and more for his unit. He makes sure that his co-workers have the tools they need to do their job. Arnold will quietly take on additional customers when the waiting rooms get full so customers do not have to wait. Wicomico County is working on a new vision that combines FIA program with other programs so that customers will only have to see one worker. He has embraced that vision often times assisting his co-workers to embrace the vision. He has conducted a drive throughout the agency to collect socks, gloves and other items homeless men need in the winter.

Worcester County DSS- Michael Hill

In the past year, Mike has shown a tremendous amount of dedication to the department with his reliability. He is always available whenever the need arises. He comes in on his days off to complete tasks. Mike will stop what he is doing to get a computer running, a cell phone working or a copy machine up and running while at the same time completing his procurement responsibilities. He moved the child advocacy center and set up computers, ordered equipment and filled in a job that has been vacant for almost a year. He has stepped up to the plate to learn information technology to help the agency get through. Mike is making good decisions and is assisting the agency with saving funds.

<i>Local Office</i>	<i>Employee</i>
Allegany County	Charlotte Champ
Anne Arundel County	Burnetta Conyer
Baltimore City	Gail Jackson
Baltimore County	Vonda Jackson
Calvert County	Dorrine Jones
Caroline County	Darlene DeShields
Carroll County	Melissa Nestor
Cecil County	Rose Capriotti
Charles County	Loretta Graham
Dorchester County	Michael Todd
Frederick County	Tamara Bales
Garrett County	Tanya Kessell
Harford County	Tamara Brinkman
Howard County	Andrea Roberson
Kent County	Joyanne Foreman
Montgomery County	Vera Doukmajian
Prince George's County	Stella Proctor Wood
Queen Anne's County	Peggy Landskroener
Saint Mary's County	Bonnie Abell
Somerset County	Lori Laird
Talbot County	Kelley Werner
Washington County	Eddie Van Metre
Wicomico County	Arnold Morris
Worcester County	Michael Hill