

SPECIAL Report

Employee of the Year Awards Luncheon Honors Area Healthcare Professionals

Collaboration.
Cooperation.
Education.



THE Healthcare Council
An Affiliate of WellLink



On March 19, the 27th Matthew F. McNulty, Jr. Award and 14th Employee of the Year Awards Luncheon took place at Bethesda North Marriott & Conference Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

Healthcare employees from across the region were honored for their outstanding contributions in 2025.

Recognition was based on three key criteria: • Sustainability • Quality • Customer/Patient Satisfaction

Inspiring narratives were shared about each recipient as they received their crystal award and certificate.

The heartfelt tributes clearly illustrated why these exceptional individuals were being honored.

For the first time this year, The Healthcare Council's affiliate, WellLink, was deeply honored to participate in this special event and celebrate these outstanding healthcare professionals.

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Congratulations to our Award Recipients

On the following pages, you will find the narratives about each recipient during the presenting of the Employee of the Year Awards. Each year, we are blown away by the heartfelt sentiments, appreciative remarks and stories shared about these remarkable individuals. The dedication, ingenuity, integrity, passion and exemplary services provided by the 2025 honorees were nothing less than amazing.

Among those honored were physicians, nurses, clinicians, administrators, technicians, program and office managers, communications professionals and many more. Each employee is part of a team and every associate makes a difference. That was apparent at the Awards Luncheon.

This annual awards celebration is about honoring those who have in some way excelled in the work they do. All healthcare workers and associates bring value to their respective fields, and we are honored to recognize the individuals and team members who stood out in a very special way, meeting all the criteria required.

We hope you enjoy reading these narratives and find them to be inspiring.

From WellLink and The Healthcare Council, congratulations to all the recipients and our heartfelt thank you for the commitment, dedication and outstanding services you provide. Your commitment to excellence is appreciated and you are valued.

Matthew F. McNulty, Jr. Award Recipient: Kimberly Russo, MBA, MS

Kimberly D. Russo, MBA, MS, is a forward-looking leader and visionary strategist with an outstanding record of achievement and demonstrated success.

She began her career as a speech-language pathologist in 1995 before joining The George Washington University Hospital (GW Hospital) in 1997 as Manager of the Department of Speech/Language Pathology, marking the start of a long and distinguished tenure.

Over the next 28 years, she took on roles with increasing responsibility, including serving as Associate Administrator, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Executive Officer. In 2021, Kimberly was named Group Vice President of the DC Region by Universal Health Services (UHS). She served as CEO and Group Vice President until leaving in 2025 to serve as Chief Executive Officer, Central Region for OSF HealthCare.

During her time at GW Hospital, Kimberly had many notable accomplishments including obtaining legislative and regulatory support for a rooftop helipad; launching a new transplant program; negotiating and executing a public-private partnership between the District of Columbia Government and UHS/GW Hospital to build and operate the first new hospital in Washington, DC, in 25 years; achieving a Level 1 Trauma verification; and working with GW University to bolster research, resulting in a 240% increase in research studies.

Throughout Russo's career in Washington, DC, she received numerous awards and honors, including being named three times to the Becker's Hospital Review list of 100 Academic Medical CEOs to Know, three-time inclusion on the Washingtonian list of 150 Most Powerful Women, and receiving the UHS Chairman's Council Award.

Kimberly has a Bachelor of Science in speech-language pathology from Illinois State University, a Master of Science in speech-language pathology from Rush University, and an Executive MBS from the University of Nebraska. She has completed coursework for a doctorate from the University of Maryland.



Kimberly Russo, MBA, MS



Linda Valencia

Patient Access Registrar II
Adventist HealthCare, Adventist Medical Group Primary Care

Linda, as Patient Access Registrar II at Adventist Medical Group Primary Care, you go above and beyond to serve patients and community. Your kindness, smile, and gentle spirit touch patients' lives in a meaningful way, as is evident in their glowing feedback. We hear comments like this: "The front desk receptionist, Linda, is exceptional." "She never lets me down." "Her efforts have made a significant impact during a stressful time." "She remembers me." Today we would like to remember you with thanks for your dedication, thoughtfulness, and compassion.

Brittany Keys

Director, Emergency Department
Adventist HealthCare Fort Washington Medical Center

Brittany, as Director of the Emergency Department at Adventist HealthCare Fort Washington Medical Center, quality improvement has been at the forefront of your agenda. You have fostered a culture of customer-centric care by prioritizing communication. Your initiatives, such as the Vertical Care Unit and the Results Pending Area, have streamlined processes, optimized space and resources, allowed for more efficient patient flow, and decreased wait times and door-to-discharge times. We are inspired by your dedication to efficiency and excellence.



Deborah Kim

Clinical Manager
Adventist HealthCare Home Care Services

Debbie, as Clinical Manager for Adventist Home Health, your leadership is grounded in integrity and accountability. Numerous agency initiatives and improvements have benefitted from your attention to detail. Your interdisciplinary team knows that you are both a strong mentor and an active collaborator, and they can count on your commitment to their well-being. Your ability to listen allows you to provide thoughtful guidance to your team and compassion when interacting with patients. We salute your gift for consistently inspiring those around you.

Violeta Resendiz

Supervisor, Customer Service
Adventist HealthCare Imaging

Violeta, as Supervisor of Customer Service at Adventist HealthCare Imaging, you anticipate concerns before they arise by listening carefully, responding thoughtfully, and ensuring that every patient feels seen, heard, and supported. Your gentle communication style helps reduce anxiety and build trust. Your attention to detail is paired with your habit of ensuring that things are done correctly the first time. This welcoming environment models calm and accountability, elevating the entire team's performance. We honor your everyday, extraordinary dedication.



Richard Singer

Physical Therapist
Adventist HealthCare Rehabilitation

Rich, as a Clinical Specialist Physical Therapist at Adventist Rehabilitation, your ability to build trust, deliver compassionate treatment, and create meaningful therapeutic relationships has made you widely respected by colleagues and deeply appreciated by patients. To ensure that care is based on evidence-based guidelines, you spearheaded the initiative to standardize clinical practice across sites and disciplines. Your blend of leadership, patient-centered excellence, and dedication to best practice makes you an outstanding candidate for this award.



Laura Butler
 Director, Care Navigation
 Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center

Laura, as Director of Care Navigation at Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center, your work is rooted in improving the patient experience. As a visionary leader, you routinely generate innovative ideas to improve how care is delivered. For instance, you championed the addition of a Community Health Worker in the Emergency Department, providing critical support to patients facing behavioral health challenges. We applaud your collaborative efforts, which have strengthened relationships and created a culture of shared accountability.

Rose Ayres
 Nurse Manager
 Adventist HealthCare White Oak Medical Center

Rose, you demonstrated exceptional leadership by assuming management responsibility for both the Short Stay Unit and Post-Anesthesia Care Unit at Adventist HealthCare White Oak Medical Center. You have partnered closely with your teams to enhance the patient experience, leading efforts to streamline discharge instructions and implement cross-training strategies. Your introduction of a personalized thank you letter for each patient illustrates the personal touch, warmth, and sparkle that you bring to patient care, team support, and meaningful change.



Rebecca Peacock
 Director of Crisis Response
 Affiliated Santé Group

Rebecca, as Director of Crisis Response for Affiliated Sante Group, you have taken over the mobile crisis response program in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Your collaboration efforts, attendance at community events, and advocacy with legislators has helped stabilize the program, resulting in significant growth in the number of people in crisis being served. Your relentless support and advocacy for your staff has brought consistency. In a short time, you have turned a program on the brink of disaster into one that is thriving and growing.



Sierra Smith
 Activities Assistant
 Asbury Methodist Village-Kindley Assisted Living

As Activities Assistant at Asbury Methodist Village, you are always coming up with creative activities that make a real difference in the daily experience of the residents. It might be fun, meaningful, or completely outside the box, but you find a way to keep people engaged and feeling connected. You are mindful of using resources efficiently while still delivering a great experience. Best of all, you make everyone around you feel welcome and cared for. Your positive energy sets the tone for residents and team members alike, and we celebrate your spirit.



Catherine Hungerford
 Infection Preventionist
 Asbury Methodist Village - Wilson Health Care Center

Catherine, as Infection Preventionist at Asbury Methodist Village, you have transformed the way residents engage with their own health by creating a culture of transparency, trust, and empowerment. The clear, accessible, and timely information you provide has helped residents feel heard, supported, and included. Further, your collaboration and process improvements—such as screenings and infection-control practices—have prevented costly outbreaks. Today we honor your exceptional dedication to communication, education, and resident well-being.





Melissa Dunkle
Registered Nurse
BAYADA Home Health Care

Melissa, as a Registered Nurse for BAYADA Home Health, you visit many of the Assisted Living facilities in both Frederick and Washington Counties. Even though this is a vast territory, your clients can count on you to see them in a timely manner and know they can contact you any time with questions or concerns. Your careful communication with staff and families ensures that patients can live their best quality of life. Your expertise in wound care is invaluable in improving healing outcomes, but even more valuable are the empathy, reassurance, and comfort you offer.

Mekiya Surur
RN Intensive Care
Bridgepoint Capitol Hill

Mekiya, you started 2025 as a Medical-Surgical Nurse at Bridgepoint Hospital Capitol Hill. Because of your clinical expertise and commitment to customer and patient satisfaction, you were promoted to a position as an Intensive Care Nurse, with the endorsement of the entire clinical team. In addition, you also started to function as a house supervisor, responding to all clinical emergencies and interfacing with internal and external stakeholders. We are in awe of all you accomplished in 2025 and join your clinical team in recognizing you as a precious asset.



Andrea Campbel
Certified Nursing Assistant
BridgePoint Capitol Hill (Stanton Park Health & Rehabilitation)

Andrea, as a Certified Nursing Assistant at BridgePoint Capitol Hill, Stanton Park Health & Rehabilitation, you are committed to helping with the care of residents. One of your special skills is the way you show support to their families as well. If there is a need for assistance on other floors, you go beyond the call of duty by helping out. In addition, whenever there is a shortage of staff, you are always readily available to pick up shifts. You are a quiet healthcare hero, and we appreciate your diligence, dedication, and remarkable willingness to be of service.



Courtney Sylvester
Environmental Service Team Lead
Bridgepoint National Harborside Courtney

You fully understand the critical role your team plays in patient safety, infection prevention, and patient satisfaction, and you execute your duties with precision and care. Approaching every task with professionalism, you maintain a positive attitude, even in demanding circumstances. Your role in mentoring staff is pivotal, ensuring they are properly trained in protocols, safety standards, and expectations. We are proud to offer this tribute to your dedication to excellence.



Barbara Williams
Certified Nursing Assistant
BridgePoint National Harborside Health & Rehabilitation

Barbara, as a Certified Nursing Assistant at Harborside Health & Rehabilitation, you work on the most challenging unit with the most clinically complex residents. The ventilator unit requires more training and a higher staffing ratio, and it is difficult to retain staff, but you show up for every shift ready to care for the most vulnerable. You are a team player, always willing to lend a hand, and you patiently work with new employees to show them the ropes. The love and kindness you show for your patients fills us with admiration, and we value your example.





Ginger Winder
 Director of Professional Practice
 CalvertHealth Medical Center

Ginger, in your role as Director of Professional Practice at CalvertHealth Medical Center, you oversee and manage all nursing policies—ensuring that clinical practice remains current and aligned with standards. In your oversight of unit-based nurse educators, you redesigned how newly graduated nurses are educated and onboarded. This investment in early-career nurses has laid a critical foundation for the future workforce. You also oversee the patient education program, improving patient engagement and understanding. We applaud your steady leadership.

Nova McGrew
 Director, Admitting and Patient Access
 Cedar Hill Regional Medical Center

Nova, while your primary role is Director of Admitting, your responsibilities have grown and evolved with the ever-changing needs at Cedar Hill Regional Medical Center. The programs you have helped establish include the gift shop and the chaplaincy program—providing comfort and support to patients, families, and staff. Currently, you are working to establish a donation closet for patients in need and a volunteer program that will bring extra hands and caring hearts. Your impact can be felt throughout the hospital, and you are aptly named, Nova—a shining star.



Lusayo Mwenifumbo
 Director of Partnership and Communication
 Centerbility of Maryland

Lusayo, as Director of Partnership and Communication at Centerbility of Maryland, one of your major contributions has been expanding the workforce strategically. This required a blend of data-driven planning, flexible staffing models, workforce technology, and cultural alignment. When Centerbility needed to choose a factoring company, you and your team evaluated different lenders based on multiple metrics across five categories. A colleague says you "know your onions," and this is high praise indeed! We are inspired by your skill and perseverance.



Yessenia Hernandez
 Medical Assistant, Qualified Spanish Interpreter
 Chase Brexton Health Care

Yessenia, as a Medical Assistant at Chase Brexton Health Care, you help patients feel respected and confident in their care. As a Qualified Spanish Interpreter, you also support those who face barriers because of limited English proficiency. One of your most impactful contributions is your support for patients who struggle to read. You step in with dignity and patience and make sure they fully understand their plan of care and what will happen next. Today we commend your attentiveness to the importance of accurate communication between patient and care team.



Margaret Savoy
 Direct Support Professional/Certified Medical Technician
 Cherished Hands Healthcare Services

Margaret, as a Direct Support Professional and Certified Medical Technician, you are an amazing asset at Cherished Hands Healthcare Services. By helping in service implementation, you ensure that each client has a special experience. Beyond that, you helped initiate the expansion of Cherished Hands into another county. You worked to safeguard that the expansion could occur with minimal cost to the company, and the expansion has brought a double return in 2025. Your colleagues agree you have a heart of gold, and they feel lucky to have you on board.





Delia Hill
 Director of Respiratory Care
 Children's National Hospital

Delia, as Director of Respiratory Care at Children's National Hospital, your commitment to patient care is evident in your daily actions. You consistently round in all areas of the hospital, offering hands-on support to staff and patients. Your presence is a source of comfort and reassurance to staff and families alike. Because you foster an environment of inclusivity and collaboration, team members are empowered to contribute their unique perspectives, leading to innovative solutions. You set the standard for excellence, creating a positive example for us all.

Lori Sprecher
 Clinical Manager, Family Connects
 Frederick Health

Lori, as Clinical Manager, you have expanded the reach and visibility of the Family Connects program at Frederick Health, shaping how maternal and newborn care is delivered in the community. You are personally engaged in care—doing home visits, modeling culturally humble practices, meeting families where they are, conducting presentations, and offering empathy and support. Your dedication can be seen in the trust of the families you serve, the loyalty of the nurses you lead, and the strength of the program you sustain.



Kara Couch
 Director of Wound Care
 The George Washington University Hospital

Kara, as Director of Wound Care at The George Washington University Hospital, the clinical decisions you make are based on the strongest available evidence, ensuring that treatments are grounded in robust research and patients receive the highest level of care. Furthermore, you are committed to advancing the science of wound care and actively contribute to the development of new knowledge in this area. You collaborate with teams throughout the hospital to implement safety initiatives and advocate for patients. And everyone is so proud of you!



Jeanne Hobbs
 HRIS and Benefits Manager and Chair of the DEIB Committee
 Goodwin Living

Jeanne, you are HRIS and Benefits Manager at Goodwin Living, and your accomplishments are many, but today we are honoring you for your leadership of the DEIB committee. Instead of backing away from diversity, you have embraced it in a way that is meaningful to all team members and residents. For example, you have created a calendar to include religious and cultural celebrations, held listening sessions, published a cookbook, and planned programs in which cultures and traditions are shared, including a delightful Parade of Cultures.



Kenya T. Johnson
 Deputy Director, Administration, MATCH Program
 HealthCare Access Maryland, Inc.

Kenya, as Director of Data Quality at HealthCare Access Maryland, you have ensured that data across the organization is accurate and timely, serving as a reliable foundation for decision-making and compliance. As the sole administrator of HCAM's electronic health record, you strengthened their ability to demonstrate measurable improvements in health outcomes and expanded access to quality health care. We are grateful for your expertise, which ensured that HCAM could grow responsibly while maintaining fiscal discipline and operational excellence.





Karla Rosado Torres
 Manager, Office of Appeals and Grievances
 Health Services for Children with Special Needs (HSCSN)

Karla, you helped establish the Office of Appeals and Grievances at HSCSN. Driven by your extensive knowledge and experience in quality improvement initiatives, you have worked diligently to educate on the importance of identifying and capturing grievances. Timely acknowledgment and resolution are critical, and you have managed to achieve a 48-hour turnaround for acknowledging all grievances and appeals—an outstanding accomplishment. We recognize and honor your contributions to improved awareness, accessibility, and compliance.

Maria “Lolly” Abastillas
 Occupational Therapist
 Holy Cross Germantown Hospital

Lolly, as an Occupational Therapist at Holy Cross Germantown Hospital, you treat every patient as a whole person and go beyond merely providing therapy. As the TogetherCare Epic Super User for the OT Department, you have supported eight Go-Lives, providing troubleshooting and ensuring efficient workflow adoption for patient care. Other members of your team commend your compassion, thoughtfulness, and dedication; your patients praise the extraordinary care you give them; and today, we are proud to present you with this award as Employee of the Year.



Christian Abulencia
 Emergency Night Responder RN
 Holy Cross Hospital

As an Emergency Night Responder RN at Holy Cross Hospital, you stepped into multiple critical roles without hesitation during a challenging and understaffed Code Blue. Your ability to adapt instantly—preparing and administering essential medications, operating the defibrillator, and even performing chest compressions—kept the resuscitation efforts moving. Throughout this intense and emotional event, you remained professional, vigilant, and calm. Your steady leadership not only supported the patient but brought reassurance to every team member present. This incident exemplifies your composure and empathy, and we are in awe.



Dr. Olivia Tchoupe
 Director of Operations—Care Coordinator/Dementia Care Practitioner
 Homs Senior Care

Olivia, in your dual role as Director of Operations and Dementia Care Practitioner at Homs Senior Care, you work directly with older adults while also coordinating services to ensure the right care is provided at the right time. You design care plans that reflect the whole person, supporting the physiological and psychosocial need of aging. These dementia-informed interventions reduce distress and promote comfort to clients who are often vulnerable and marginalized. We are inspired by how you combine strong leadership with genuine compassion.



Elizabeth Hayward
 Director of Medical Services
 Hospice of the Chesapeake

Liz, as Director of Medical Services at Hospice of the Chesapeake, your leadership in advancing person-centered, coordinated care models has directly improved access to care for patients with serious complex illness. Through strengthened care coordination and thoughtful program design, you ensure that patients and families receive compassionate and timely support during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. A trusted mentor and advisor, you are known for leading with humility, integrity, and respect. We are grateful for your commitment.





Dr. Nikki Carrington
 Director, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
 Howard University Hospital

Nikki, as Director of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at Howard University Hospital, you have helped lay the groundwork for consistent and transparent processes that promote efficiency and sustainability, while maintaining a patient-centered and equitable approach to care delivery. Your attention to detail ensures that the unit is operating in alignment with regulatory and quality standards. By supporting patient-facing education and staff preparedness, you have created a more informed and respectful experience for patients. Congratulations on all you do.

Gloria Mensah-Acquaye
 Director of Nursing
 Kaiser Permanente Mid- Atlantic States

Gloria, as Director of Nursing at Kaiser Permanente, you identify risks, resolve complex operational issues, and support leaders in executing quality, reliable care delivery. Respected by your team, peers, and physician partners, you are known for your depth of expertise and ability to lead with clarity, confidence and compassion. You are generous with your time, always willing to step in with a positive attitude that puts others at ease. Today we extend our admiration for your ability to anticipate barriers and address challenges, while uplifting others.



Daiva Mercado
 Clinical Operations Manager, Operating Room
 Kaiser Permanente Mid-Atlantic States; Tysons Corner Ambulatory Surgery Center

Daiva, as Clinical Operations Manager, you are committed to ensuring a safe and positive experience for every patient entering Tysons Corner Ambulatory Surgery Center. When you saw several instances in which unapproved procedures had been scheduled, resulting in cancellations, emotional distress, and hardship for patients, you took action. Now such cases are redirected well in advance. This is just one example of the many ways you seek to enhance safety, elevate care, and strengthen compliance. We are grateful for the way you pay attention.



George Thomas
 Vice President of Facilities
 Kennedy Krieger Institute

George, as Vice President of Facilities, you oversee the management of the schools, outpatient centers, inpatient units, and research labs at Kennedy Krieger Institute. Not only do you create healing environments that are accessible and welcoming, you produce magical experiences for the children, such as the enchanting holiday light show in the hospital garden—and guess who plays the role of Santa? From picking up community Thanksgiving turkeys to arranging accommodations for staff during snowstorms, you are almost too good to be true. But you are.



Kathleen Simkins
 Acute Care Nurse, ICU/IMU
 Luminis Health Anne Arundel Medical Center

Kathleen, as an Acute Care Nurse in the ICU at Luminis Health Anne Arundel Medical Center, you have been instrumental in building an environment of teamwork and empathy that stands strong against the stress and burnout that ICU nurses deal with. You show that it is more than just mastering medications or reading monitors; rather, it is the small, human touches that make a real impact. When you meet patients and their families on their worst days with strength and grace, you model how to face the toughest challenges. Every team needs someone like you.





Kelly Dietz
 Medical Assistant, Annapolis OB/GYN
 Luminis Health Clinical Enterprise

Kelly, as a Medical Assistant at Luminis Health Clinical Enterprise, your attention to detail not only improves clinical outcomes but also enhances the overall patient experience, whether the visit is routine or complex. For example, you proactively identified and escalated a radiology report, which led to the early identification of a precancerous lesion, allowing for rapid intervention and follow-up care. Furthermore, you play a pivotal role leading training sessions on new initiatives. We applaud your genuine care and the collaborative environment you foster.

Celeste Williams
 Unit Resource Coordinator, APEC, Preop, PACU
 Luminis Health Doctors Community Medical Center

Celeste, as Unit Resource Coordinator at Luminis Health Doctors Community Medical Center, you maintain well-organized, prepared environments that support safe, dependable care and contribute to strong team performance. Your calm and reassuring presence helps ease anxiety for patients preparing for surgery. You extend this same authenticity and kindness to your colleagues—brightening days with encouragement, warmth, and support. Today we honor your initiative, adaptability, and the way you anticipate needs. Thank you for making a difference.



Heather Thompson
 Cook
 MedStar Georgetown University Hospital

Heather, as a Cook in Food & Nutrition Services at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, you demonstrated true commitment during a snowstorm last winter. The storm resulted in a critical staffing shortage across the hospital. As the only production associate on site, you calmly prepped and cooked all three meals on the day of the storm. Because of you, all patient meals were delivered in a timely manner. You then remained on site, sleeping at the hospital for three days, putting the needs of the patients first. We hold you up as an extraordinary example.



Gene Herron
 Director of Finance—Baltimore Region Hospitals
 MedStar Good Samaritan/Union Memorial Hospital

Gene, as Director of Finance at MedStar Health, you work behind the scenes to ensure financial discipline, continuity, and thoughtful stewardship of limited resources. Through years of change, you have helped maintain strong controls, clear reporting, and consistent decision support—enabling leaders to navigate complexity with confidence. By ensuring financial stability and responsible resource allocation, you create an environment where caregivers can focus on delivering high-quality, compassionate care. Thank you for your steady leadership.



Denise Price
 Senior Executive Assistant
 MedStar Montgomery Medical Center

Denise, as Senior Executive Assistant, you support both the President and the CFO at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center, optimizing how executive leadership time, focus, and resources are used. Understanding that governance, operations, and finance must work together, you make sure meetings are purposeful, decisions are documented, and action items are followed through. When leaders are supported and organized, decisions are made faster, communication improves, and the organization is better able to meet patient needs. Our respect for you is immense.





Tyrone Staton
 Environmental Services
 MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital

Tyrone, it's hard to pinpoint your role at MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital because you are willing to step in wherever needed. By filling staffing gaps across multiple departments—Environmental Services, Transportation, Security, and Supply Chain—you allow them to continue functioning efficiently during unexpected shortages. Your willingness to help out, whether within your assigned role or outside of it, not only embodies teamwork at its best, it reflects your deep understanding of the way hospitals work best. You are invaluable.

Ngan Pham
 Clinical Pharmacy Specialist
 MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center

Ngan, as Clinical Pharmacy Specialist at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, you make sure clinical decisions are guided by careful assessment, collaboration, and communication. Recently, in your review of clinical data, you identified inconsistencies between laboratory findings and the patient's presentation. This prompted proactive engagement with the care team and collaborative discussions that resulted in care decisions that aligned with the patient's true clinical needs and prevented unnecessary treatment.



Ian Kotch
 Communications Manager
 MedStar St. Mary's Hospital

Ian, as Communications Manager at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, you have made an extraordinary impact by modernizing and streamlining internal communications. You approach communications with a strong business mindset, creating efficient, consistent messaging that aligns leaders and associates. Examples include your work with weekly leader huddles, your emphasis on associate recognition and digital storytelling, and your determination to increase the social media presence. Many thanks for your expertise and for keeping us up to date.



Mangla Gulati, MD
 Vice President and Chief Quality and Safety Officer
 MedStar Washington Hospital Center

Mangla, as Vice President and Chief Quality and Safety Officer, you oversee the patient relations department at MedStar Washington Hospital Center. Your team responds to the concerns of patients when they feel something is not going as expected. Your approach is to be empathic and transparent, first listening and then investigating and working with the bedside teams. In addition, you saw the impact of overcrowding and helped design a strategy to create additional capacity for inpatients in peak hours. We hope this award conveys our admiration.



Laura Godwin-Stewart
 Admissions Manager, Physician Assistant Program
 Mount St. Mary's University Physician Assistant Program

Laura, as Admissions Manager for the newly launched Physician Assistant program at Mount St. Mary's University, you helped build an admissions infrastructure from the ground up. You helped design, operationalize, and execute an in-depth admissions process focused on commitment to service and equity as well as academic excellence. These efforts yielded a full inaugural cohort of highly qualified students who are deeply aligned with patient-centered care and strong clinical outcomes. We salute all you do to prepare the next generation of clinicians.





Jacqueline Newton

Chief Nursing Officer & Vice President of Patient Care Services
Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital

Jacqueline, you joined Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital as Chief Nursing Officer & Vice President of Patient Care Services in January 2025. Since then, you have followed through with your commitment to improve outcomes. You have increased employee and patient satisfaction. Nurse retention has increased, while turnover has decreased in many areas. You spearheaded the hospital's workplace violence task force and implemented a visitor management committee. You're an innovative and hard-working executive, and we are thankful for the example you set.

Kristine Gallagher Sargsyan

Grants and Partnerships Manager
Primary Care Coalition

Kristine, as Grants and Partnerships Manager, you wear many hats at Primary Care Coalition. Through your leadership as Compliance Officer, you ensure that PCC operates with trust and accountability. You have strengthened internal systems and processes that directly support financial and operational health. You even stepped in to cover responsibilities and maintain stability during a critical staff transition. Whatever role you take on, you bring positivity, reliability, and a commitment to excellence. This is in appreciation for the many things you do.



Brooklyn Duval

Business Office Manager
Riderwood Village

Brooklyn, in your role as Business Office Manager at Riderwood Village, you support the Administrator and Director of Nursing—but your influence extends across all departments. You have helped develop tools such as the Quick Reference Guides that provide staff with critical information. You coordinate initiatives like the resident family meetings. You organize employee engagement activities that strengthen morale and always involve food. And if there is a snowstorm, you'll deal with it. You're described as a central force and that sounds about right.



Boryana Peeva

Direct Care Registered Nurse II
Sentara Northern Virginia Medical Center

Boryana, as an Intensive Care Unit nurse at Sentara Northern Virginia Medical Center, you take care of your patients and their families. Here is an example. You trained and planned to climb Mt. Everest. During your last shift before your adventure, you cared for a grandmother as she died, surrounded by her family. Learning that she was from Nepal, you shared about your trip, and they asked you to take a piece of cloth with messages they'd written on it. After a grueling trek, you placed the token beside many others. Thank you for honoring a life and fulfilling a promise.



Dr. Paul Fuchs

Service Chief for Young Adult Unit in Towson
Sheppard Pratt

Paul, thanks to your leadership as the Service Chief for Sheppard Pratt's Young Adult Unit in Towson, the unit is equipped to support the acute psychiatry needs of the young adult population. You are actively present on the unit, spending the necessary time to understand each patient and available to help and mentor team members or cover for colleagues. In addition, you volunteer to pilot new practices, and your committee work helps ensure effective quality care. This award recognizes your humanity and the way you recognize the humanity in each patient.





Cindy Jordan

Patient Safety & Quality Data Analyst
Sibley Memorial Hospital – Johns Hopkins Medicine

Cindy, as Patient Safety & Quality Data Analyst at Sibley Memorial Hospital, you manage large, complex, and ever-changing data streams and formats, and then interpret and reformat that work into interpretable and actionable plans. Your work around coding and documentation validation has been essential in maintaining the hospital in good standing with governmental agencies. The impact of your work also drives operational improvements that reduce patient harm and improve patient outcomes. Today we are delighted to recognize your achievements.

Khalid A. El-Sayed, MD

Director of Forensic Services
Spring Grove Hospital Center

Khalid, as Director of Forensic Services at Spring Grove Hospital Center, you go above and beyond to help the hospital and the system with any court-related matters. Your department delivers high quality reports and evaluations on time, despite a heavy caseload with last-minute case assignments. You educate judges about the patient population and train medical students in forensic psychiatry. Because of your expertise, you are a trusted source of consultation. On top of this, it's agreed: you're a super nice person. Your next-level commitment makes a difference.



Shawn Donnelly

Director of Revenue Cycle
Suburban Hospital- Johns Hopkins Medicine

Shawn, as Director of Revenue Cycle at Suburban Hospital, you are committed to both the organizational goals and the needs of patients. You see this as a win/win, as is illustrated by your work to improve the incidence of denials. A person has to be determined to tackle prior authorizations, continuation of care forms, and out-of-network issues—and you are determined, guiding patients under stressful circumstances and leading your team in developing successful tactics. Your team feels resilient and strong, and we thank you for the stability you've created.

Maariya Bassa

Medical Director of Quality
Unity Health Care

Maariya, not only are you the Medical Director of Quality at Unity Health Care, you are also a busy clinician and teacher of medical residents. As you oversee major improvements in the quality of care, your emphasis is on reducing disparities and driving health equity, with a focus on women's health. With a rare combination of quality improvement science and emotional intelligence, you have an inherent understanding of what makes multidisciplinary teams "tick." We're in awe of how you keep all the balls in the air as you advocate for both patients and staff.



Jania Matthews

Senior Director, Marketing and Communications
University of Maryland Capital Region Health

Jania, as Senior Director of Marketing and Communications, you create clear, compelling, and community-facing communications that directly advance the mission of University of Maryland Capital Region Health. Your internal communications are essential to the successful implementation of process improvements. And your 24/7 availability and responsiveness to urgent and emerging issues make you an indispensable partner to the leadership team. We value the way you support team member appreciation initiatives, and we value and appreciate you.



Priscilla Ebone
 Patient Safety Coordinator
 University of Maryland Capital Region Health

Priscilla, as Patient Safety Coordinator at University of Maryland Capital Region Health, you conduct detailed analyses of safety events, identify system-level opportunities, and partner with multidisciplinary teams to implement sustainable solutions that reduce risk and prevent harm. You have played a pivotal role in strengthening the patient safety framework by proactively identifying near misses and supporting teams in implementing effective corrective actions. We are heartened by your unwavering dedication to patient safety and healthcare excellence.

Stacey Small
 System Director, Graduate Medical Education
 University of Maryland Capital Region Health

Stacey, as System Director of Graduate Medical Education at University of Maryland Capital Region Health, you conduct comprehensive reviews of established program structure and make evidenced-based recommendations for improvement. You have successfully expanded academic partnerships with community stakeholders and neighboring academic programs, resulting in increased clinical education opportunities for physician trainees. Your collaborative approach and dedication to excellence in academic medicine have made a lasting impact.



Melinda Bussard
 Director of Quality
 UPMC Western Maryland

Melinda, as Director of Quality at UPMC Western Maryland, you play a critical role in driving continuous improvement and upholding the highest standards of care. Your expertise in quality and performance improvement supports the development and implementation of sustainable, process-driven approaches that produce measurable gains in clinical outcomes, patient safety, and organizational excellence. Your disciplined approach and high standards set a benchmark for the entire organization, and you show us how to make good things happen.

Avion Harriot
 Certified Nursing Assistant
 Woodbine Rehab and Healthcare Center

Avion, as a Certified Nursing Assistant at Woodbine Rehab and Healthcare Center, there is nothing you wouldn't do to ensure that your residents are safe, comfortable, and well cared for. Through your attention to detail, proactive approach to resident care, and commitment to efficiency, you help reduce preventable issues, improve resident satisfaction, and support strong census retention. Through your daily actions and the trust you build with residents, you establish an atmosphere of love and respect. We are thankful for the care you bring to work every day.



2026 Employee Of The Year And Matthew F. McNulty Awards Luncheon Official Photos

To view the full gallery of photos from our 2026 Employee of the Year and McNulty Awards Luncheon, visit our [Flickr page here](#). To learn more about the event, visit us [online here](#).



George Washington University Hospital Healthcare Council Highlight



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

When every second counts... turn to GW Hospital

The George Washington University Hospital (GW Hospital) is here for life's critical moments. From neighborhood streets to the world stage, we provide highly skilled clinical care to residents, visitors and heads of state.

We are home to one of the first Level 1 Trauma Centers in Washington, DC, and a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and offer nationally recognized services, including:

- Neurology & Neurosurgery
- Comprehensive Stroke Center
- Advanced Cardiology
- Kidney/Liver/Pancreas Transplant
- Cancer Center
- Orthopedics

GW Hospital. Defining Medicine

When it comes to choosing a hospital, one thing is clear: quality counts. And a century-long tradition of providing medical care in a comfortable and convenient environment means peace of mind for the thousands of patients who are cared for by the doctors, nurses and care teams at GW Hospital each year.

Since the current GW Hospital building opened in 2002, physicians and nurses have been treating patients in a technologically advanced hospital. GW Hospital is a 395-bed tertiary care, academic medical center located in downtown Washington, DC.

GW Hospital offers clinical expertise in a variety of areas including cardiac, cancer, neurosciences, women's health, and advanced surgery including robotic and minimally invasive surgery. GW Hospital is operated by Universal Health Services, Inc. (UHS), a King of Prussia, PA-based company that is one of the nation's largest and most respected providers of hospital and healthcare services.

"We possess an unwavering commitment to a standard of quality that reflects the accomplished team I have the privilege to work alongside," says Jason Barrett, Chief Executive Officer of GW Hospital and Group Vice President, District of Columbia Market.

"Our hospital represents what excellence in healthcare looks like when compassion, skill, and purpose align," Barrett added. "Our system is still that city on the hill. A place where care is delivered with dignity, where integrity guides decisions and where people come together to do hard things for the right reasons."

From the First Steps and Beyond

GW Hospital's mission is to provide the highest quality healthcare, advanced technology and world class service to our patients in an academic medical center dedicated to education and research.

Clinical Expertise

As a multidisciplinary, tertiary care hospital, GW Hospital offers many diverse services all in one central location. Primary care and specialty outpatient care are available through the Medical Faculty Associates, a multi-specialty physician practice group of more than 750 physicians covering 51 specialty and subspecialty areas.

GW Hospital has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as a High Performing Hospital for Arrhythmia; Diabetes; Heart Failure; Kidney Failure; Leukemia, Lymphoma and Myeloma; Neurology and Neurosurgery; and Stroke (2025-2026).

Other awards include being named one of America's Best Physical Rehabilitation Centers by *Newsweek* (2025), the Stroke Gold Plus and Target: Stroke Honor Roll Award from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association (2025) and accreditation as a Pulmonary Hypertension Center of Comprehensive Care Program by the Pulmonary Hypertension Association (2023-2027).

Cedar Hill Regional Medical Center

Healthcare Council Highlight

CEDAR HILL REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

GW HEALTH | WASHINGTON, DC

Cedar Hill Regional Medical Center (CHRMC) is the first new full-service hospital in Washington, DC, in more than 25 years. The hospital, which opened in April 2025, takes its name from the nearby home of abolitionist Frederick Douglass, located in downtown Anacostia.

CHRMC integrates clinical care with existing providers, The George Washington University Hospital and the Cedar Hill Urgent Care Center in Ward 8. Additionally, options are underway for a future freestanding emergency department in Ward 7. This clinical integration will establish a robust system of care for all District residents, but more importantly, it will ensure residents of Wards 7 and 8 have access to high-quality care in their community.

The \$434.4 million full-service hospital includes 142 beds (with the ability to expand to 184 beds), trauma care, adult and pediatric emergency departments, maternal health and delivery, a NICU nursery, outpatient services, a community space, a 500-car garage and a helipad for emergency transports.

CHRMC has a dedicated Pediatric Emergency Department that is staffed by Children's National Hospital board-certified pediatric emergency medicine physicians and pediatricians, as well as pediatric nurses and support staff.

The Pediatric ED is a full-service emergency department, featuring a separate registration, triage and waiting area for children and adolescents. Additional child-focused services include pediatric radiology and lab services.

Numerous outpatient clinics are now open, and more are coming soon. We offer a wide range of outpatient services including Cardiology, Cardiac Cath Lab, Endoscopy, Family Medicine, Gastroenterology, Obstetrics/Gynecology, Physical Therapy, Podiatry, Primary Care Clinic and Surgery. Coming soon is Dialysis, Mammography and more clinics.

"We listened to our community and heard the demand for accessible and specialized care, and that is exactly what we are here to do," says Kimberlee Daniels, Interim Chief Executive Officer of CHRMC and Chief Operating Officer of The George Washington University Hospital.

"My personal passion is to lead transformative efforts that result in population health and the overall well-being of the community," Daniels added. "To that end, we are actively engaging the DC community to create partnerships, foster strong relationships and build trust to create a healthcare delivery system that truly serves their needs."

CHRMC is deeply committed to providing every patient with safe, high-quality and compassionate care. We are guided by our mission to deliver healthcare services that patients recommend, physicians prefer and communities trust. Our "Quality and Safety Strategic Plan" establishes the structure and priorities needed to continuously improve outcomes and eliminate preventable harm. We integrate patient safety and quality goals directly into our operational and strategic priorities—ensuring data-driven decision-making and alignment with best practices in healthcare quality and safety. This commitment is reflected in every level of our organization, from bedside care to executive leadership, as we work together to foster a culture of safety, transparency and continuous improvement.

Together, we strive to create a healthcare environment where safety, compassion and excellence are the foundation of every patient's experience.

OSF HealthCare

Healthcare Council Highlight



OSF[®]

HEALTHCARE

OSF HealthCare: Elevating Complex Care for the Communities We Serve and Beyond

OSF HealthCare, a Catholic health system headquartered in Peoria, Illinois, with 18 inpatient hospitals and 27,000 employees, has a long history of anticipating the needs of those we serve, always guided by our Mission to serve with the greatest care and love. Our new 10-year strategy builds on that legacy with a bold vision: Establish OSF HealthCare as the premier destination for patients seeking expert care for the most complex conditions – both within our communities and beyond.

A vital component of this strategy is strengthening our systemwide capabilities in high-acuity, high-complexity cancer, heart, neurological and pediatric care. Through investments in advanced technologies, top-tier clinical talent, research collaborations and integrated care models, OSF will deliver exceptional outcomes that elevate our national profile. This commitment ensures patients with the most challenging diagnoses can stay closer to home while receiving world-class expertise.

The strategy also reinforces our dedication to whole-person care. The strategy emphasizes seamless care coordination, digital innovation and patient-centered experience redesigns that support individuals physically, emotionally and spiritually. Whether facing a lifesaving procedure or ongoing chronic-care

needs, patients will precisely receive the right care at the right moment.

Leadership engagement is vital to this transformation. Kimberly Russo, the Matthew F. McNulty, Jr. Award recipient and CEO of the Central Region of OSF HealthCare, plays an instrumental role as one of the executive sponsors of this strategy. Her guidance ensures OSF builds the cultural foundation, aligned leadership behaviors and organizational readiness required to bring this innovative strategy to life.

Additionally, as CEO of the Peoria-based Central Region, Kimberly has ownership of operations of OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center, the largest medical center in Illinois outside of the Chicagoland area; OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois, the only full-service pediatric hospital in Illinois outside of Chicago; and the three OSF HealthCare Institutes dedicated to cancer, cardiovascular and neurological care. All are vital to the success of the complex care strategy. In her short tenure, Kimberly has already implemented improved processes and systems resulting in greater efficiency and throughput.

By executing this 10-year strategy, OSF HealthCare will strengthen the ability to serve more people, more meaningfully with compassion at the center of every interaction.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

14th Employee of the Year Awards and
27th Matthew F. McNulty, Jr. Award
Luncheon



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
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2026 Omega Logan Silva Scholarship Recipient

We are thrilled to announce that Hannah Hollis, BS, is the recipient of the fifth annual Omega Logan Silva Scholarship. She will begin a dual Master of Public Health and Master of Physician Assistant Studies program at The George Washington University in May 2026. Through this training, she aims to integrate clinical practice with population health strategies to deliver equitable care, with a focus on women's health.

Hannah graduated in 2024 from Howard University with a BS in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. While living and serving in Washington, DC, she discovered her passion for public health and developed a deep commitment to service. After graduation, she worked as a Medical Assistant at an allergy and asthma clinic, gaining hands-on experience with chronic respiratory conditions. She currently serves as a Medical Assistant in a primary care practice.

Hannah is passionate about bridging gaps between marginalized populations and healthcare systems. She aspires to advocate for policies that protect and expand women's autonomy in healthcare decision-making and looks forward to mentoring future healthcare students.

The Omega Logan Silva Scholarship will help ease the financial burden of her graduate education, allowing her to focus fully on her studies. She is deeply grateful for the support of The Healthcare Council and honored to receive this award from an organization dedicated to quality healthcare in the Mid-Atlantic region—a community she plans to serve throughout her career.



2026 Omega Logan Silva Scholarship Recipient: *Special \$1,000 Award*

We are pleased to announce that Rachael Omotosho, a high school senior at Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr. High School in Upper Marlboro, MD, is the recipient of a special \$1,000 scholarship award this year.

Rachael stood out among a strong pool of applicants for her exceptional application and interview. Her passion for healthcare and clear vision for the future impressed the Omega Logan Silva Scholarship Committee, leading them to recognize her with this additional award.

When asked where she sees herself in 5–7 years, Rachael replied, "I hope to be accepted into a medical scientist training program, where I will deepen my understanding of subjects such as molecular medicine, bioethics or pharmacology."

This year's special \$1,000 award to Rachael recognizes her outstanding potential as she prepares to take the next steps toward a career as a medical scientist. The Healthcare Council congratulates Rachael on this well-deserved honor and wishes her every success as she pursues her educational and professional goals in the Mid-Atlantic region's healthcare community.



2026 Selfless Service Award



We are proud to announce that Dorothy "Dottie" Kocher is the recipient of the first-ever Selfless Service Award from The Healthcare Council.

Dottie began her career in the 1970s in procurement at Washington Adventist Hospital. A colleague quickly recognized her exceptional integrity, discretion, organization and attention to detail, encouraging her to apply for a position in the President's Office. What started as a "Secretary" role has grown into decades of dedicated service supporting 10 hospital presidents.

Humble and understated, Dottie still wonders why she was chosen. Yet her colleagues know the truth: while she believes she worked for them, they have truly worked for her. A quiet wealth of knowledge, she excels at prioritizing commitments, making impossible schedules possible and offering wise counsel

with grace and professionalism.

Through the transition from Washington Adventist Hospital to Adventist HealthCare White Oak Medical Center, Dottie's calming presence and can-do attitude have remained constant. She currently supports Anthony Stahl, President of White Oak Medical Center, and Dr. Jim Rost, Vice President & Chief Medical Officer.

In recognition of her extraordinary dedication, loyalty and selfless service spanning more than five decades, The Healthcare Council is honored to present Dottie with its inaugural Selfless Service Award.

Guest Host Melissa Mollet



WellLink and The Healthcare Council were delighted to have Melissa Mollet host the 2026 Employee of the Year and McNulty Awards Luncheon once again this year.

It was an honor having her return as emcee. Her warmth, professionalism, and engaging personality made the luncheon truly special.

Melissa anchors the 4:30 a.m. hour of News4 Today and delivers traffic reports throughout the morning on NBC4. A Gaithersburg native and graduate of Gaithersburg High School, she began her journalism career as an intern at NBC4 while in college. She returned in 2010 as a reporter for News4 Today.

Mollet has earned six EMMY awards, including one for her 2013 story "Rescuers Rescued," which covered a dramatic Beltway accident involving a fire truck. She also created two popular NBC4 franchises: Finding Families, which highlights foster children in need of loving homes, and Meet Your Street, a fun look at the origins of local road names.

Previously, she anchored mornings at KDVR in Denver, where she won a Colorado Broadcasters Association award for Best Breaking News Story. She has also reported for Cable News 21 in Rockville, Newschannel 8 in Washington, and NBC25 in Hagerstown.

Melissa lives in Maryland with her husband, Jake, and their children Brennan, Barrett, and Colette. Frank, their minigoldendoodle, serves as the family mascot.





Collaboration.
Cooperation.
Education.

Brian Lane

President & Chief Executive Officer
brian.lane@mywelllink.com

Les H. Pitton

Immediate Past President & Chief Executive Officer/Consultant
les.pitton@mywelllink.com
lpitton@healthcare-council.org

Daniel Lettenburger Klein

Chief Member and Programming Officer
daniel.lk@mywelllink.com

Kerri Scriven

Senior Director
kerri.scriven@mywelllink.com
kscriven@healthcare-council.org

Ashli Melton-Thompson

Project Coordinator
ashli.melton@mywelllink.com
amelton@healthcare-council.org

Donna Bailey

Manager, Member Growth & Engagement
donna.bailey@welllinkgpo.com

Jason Hill

National Account Manager
jason.hill@welllinkgpo.com

Jami Starliper

National Account Manager
jami.starliper@welllinkgpo.com

Teresa Sirbaugh

Field Services Support Specialist
teresa.sirbaugh@welllinkgpo.com

Interested in Joining The Healthcare Council and WellLink?

The Healthcare Council continues to grow its inclusive, broad-based membership to reflect the full spectrum of healthcare providers across the mid-Atlantic region.

Now, as part of WellLink, members gain access to an even greater network of resources, connections and solutions, extending beyond the region to a national community.

The Healthcare Council remains committed to delivering exceptional value by keeping dues affordable while expanding opportunities for engagement, collaboration and growth.

Members benefit from timely communications, professional connections, strategic partnerships, educational programming, surveys and collaborative initiatives, now enhanced by WellLink's integrated capabilities in advocacy, group purchasing and innovation.

To learn more about membership opportunities with The Healthcare Council and WellLink, please contact us at 301-731-4700 or visit us at: Healthcare-Council.org

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The Healthcare Council Vision:

To meet the healthcare challenges of tomorrow by working together today.

Mission Statement:

The Healthcare Council is a membership organization dedicated to helping members reduce costs, encouraging co-operative working relationships and promoting quality healthcare in our region.

The Council functions as a neutral intermediary to facilitate networking and to provide member driven services.

Purpose:

The Healthcare Council is an organization consisting of hospitals and allied health care facilities, associations and educational institutions located in the Mid-Atlantic region. The purpose of the Council is to provide for members "strategic and business advantages" that no single institution or system can efficiently or economically develop alone.

Divisions of specific activity have been formed to carry on the ever-changing tasks at hand. These divisions develop information and improve performance using cooperative networking meetings, surveys, group discussion, analysis and continuing education programs.

The aim of the Council's wholly-owned subsidiary, ShareSource, is to serve its membership in the promotion of programs and services that will enhance the members' ability to operate their organizations successfully and cost effectively with integrity and competency.

The Healthcare Council is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation.

The Council has opportunities for Associates. For membership information, call 301-731-4700.