

Each year, UCP of Greater Cleveland is privileged to recognize numerous staff members who have met career milestones with the granting of service awards. In the past, we have publicly honored these employees at our Annual Meeting in front of their peers, clients and community members. As you know, this year's Annual Meeting has been cancelled due to the pandemic forcing us to find an alternate way in which to celebrate. Trish chatted with each by phone and all received a cash award and a certificate commemorating their years of service.

In addition to thanking these individuals, we want to bid farewell to **our longest tenured staff member, Tom Donovan of OakLeaf**. Tom has devoted his career to our agency and has made his mark on hundreds of lives...not only our adult clients, but also on all of his fellow staff and the many employers with which he worked over the course of more than three decades. Tom's kindness, patience, and genuine support led to the employment and life successes of hundreds. We all wish Tom the very best.

Please take a few minutes to read about our 17 service award winners below who have been with us between five and 20 years! When you have the opportunity, offer your congratulations to them. How fortunate UCP of Greater Cleveland is to have them!

20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Lori McGowan -- Receptionist: 20 Years of Service

Lori has honored us with her service for the past two decades! She is the epitome of stability and service. She knows all of our clients, their families and their transportation providers and she warmly welcomes them day-in and day-out! She guards the lobby (and phones) with a passion for client care and does not shy away from demanding that each client be serviced to our highest ability. She is tough and persistent but also kind, generous and quick to smile! Lori's 20 years of service represent the longest tenure of this year's service award winners!

-Bob

15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Celia Chesnick -- LeafBridge Children and Family Services Manager: 15 Years of Service

As a licensed social worker, Celia has helped hundreds of children and their families navigate their community as well their therapeutic and educational environments. Celia started at UCP as an Early Intervention Specialist and was then promoted to Children and Family Services Manager. She works with the entire family of each child served. She advocates for children in the school and therapy setting, as well as finds resources and educates our families on how to self-advocate. Celia is responsible for all LeafBridge client intakes, Information and Referral, and manages all therapeutic appointments. She also tours Cleveland Clinic's medical residents to introduce them to supporting individuals with developmental disabilities. Staff and other managers respect Celia for her wealth of case management knowledge and expertise. She is truly one of a kind!

-Intesar

Raynetta Jenkins -- LeafBridge Therapy and Education Aide: 15 Years of Service

Ray puts her heart into everything she does for our students and clients, insisting on excellent and compassionate services for all. Ray lights up the room with her smile and earns trust from our clients through caring relationship-based actions. Ray strives to learn something new every day and she acts in the true spirit of a team. Ray's skillset is versatile as in the last year she faithfully and skillfully served our

OakLeaf clients in day services and group homes, as well as LeafBridge clients in the Day Program. Ray, thank you for your 15 years of high-quality service in LeafBridge and OakLeaf!

-Laurene

10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Nicole Booker- OakLeaf Homes Direct Support Professional: 10 Years of Service

Nicole is one of Memphis House's most reliable and loyal staff members. Throughout these ten years she has remained an advocate for all of the individuals she serves. She has great rapport with them and her co-workers. We appreciate Nicole's dependability and her willingness to work the third shift!

-Aretha

Lakesha Porch -- OakLeaf Activities Coordinator: 10 Years of Service

For the past 10 years Kesha has been a dedicated employee of UCP. She started as a Direct Support Professional and then transitioned into the role of activities coordinator. As our agency and industry changes and grows, so does she. She is always willing to tackle new projects and offer creative ideas, keeping our clients' independence and person-centered plans top of mind. Kesha has a true passion for making every day great for our clients, and always does it with a smile.

(P.S. She does a great job of making her boss look good on a daily basis 😊)

-Amy

Donna Woods -- Executive Administrative Assistant: 10 Years of Service

Donna has a unique work history with UCP: she has shared her administrative talents in LeafBridge, OakLeaf (before it was called OakLeaf!) and Administration! Donna's wide scope of experience, her get-it-done approach and her willingness to help with all and any tasks has made her extremely valuable to the Agency in so many ways. Donna's passion for our mission, commitment to her work and support of all those around her set her apart as an exceptional member of our team!

-Trish

5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Hester Brown -- OakLeaf Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional: 5 Years of Service

Hester has been an integral part of the Oakleaf homes team for 5 years. Her commitment to the people who live in the homes is always at the forefront of her thoughts. She is continually championing ways to enrich the lives of Memphis and Edendale residents. Hester's passion is undeniable and a testament to her character. Her knowledge of the intricacies of the ICF system in Ohio is invaluable. Thank you, Hester, for your service these past 5 years.

-Andy

Khawanda Ewing -- OakLeaf Homes Direct Support Professional: 5 Years of Service

Khawanda is an indispensable employee and a pleasure to work with! She goes above and beyond always making sure the expectations for a high quality of life are met for each individual. She takes time to speak with the individuals she supports and their families. Khawanda's positivity and energy lights up the house!

-Aretha

Charles (Charlie) Freed -- OakLeaf Partners Site Supervisor-Oatey: 5 Years of Service

Charlie has been a staple in OakLeaf's Group Employment Program at Oatey for the past 5 years. He is well respected among his co-workers and employment partners. He has a great relationship with all of

the Oatey clients and their families as well. On several occasions, Charlie has also filled in to job coach when his expertise was needed. Charlie's dependability is one to be rivaled. He always follows through on his assignments and is eager to learn as much as he can. He has played an integral role in the progression of many of our clients' employment goals and that is something to be proud of!

-Kate

Chris Goodman -- OakLeaf Day Services Float: 5 Years of Service

Chris has grown in his role as the Day Services Float at UCP Westlake. Chris accompanies our clients into the community every day, and assists individuals at volunteering regularly at Medwish, Holy Trinity Church's Brown Bag Concerts, the Westlake Porter Library, etc. He takes clients swimming twice per week at either our Wolstein therapy pool or at the French Creek YMCA. Chris is expert at helping clients in the water. He helps them feel safe while he works with them on having a fun and therapeutic experience. He helps in the classroom especially when it comes to computers and technology and has built great relationships with the clients. In addition to all of the wonderful work Chris does for UCP Westlake, he is a much valued supplemental staff member at our Memphis House, and he assists as a co-worker with their commute to and from Memphis House on a regular basis. Chris is a pleasure to work with!

-Tiffany

Carol Gray -- OakLeaf Day Services Community Connector: 5 Years of Service

Carol has worked with UCP's Wolstein Day Services clients for 5 years, but she has known some of them much longer. Carol came to UCP after retiring from the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities where she worked in their Developmental Centers with so many children who are now in our adult program. Carol is an informal leader not only in the Day Services classroom where she works, but for all of the Day Services staff at Wolstein (sometimes including her supervisors and managers!) She has a vast amount of knowledge and experience working with clients with developmental disabilities and is able to share her knowledge in her very gentle way so that she is respected and so that others follow her lead and want to learn from her. UCP "hit the jackpot" when Carol decided she did not want to sit home during her retirement. It is truly her life's passion and she cherishes each and every client she serves.

-Carmen and Crystal

Eric Hibinger -- OakLeaf Partners Job Placement Supervisor: 5 Years of Service

Eric began his career with UCP as a Job Placement Specialist and later was promoted to Job Placement Supervisor. It is telling how he has moved into that position so quickly. Eric works around the clock at times to ensure our clients are receiving quality services and doing whatever it takes for them to be successful in their job placement. Eric has an innate ability to connect with people which has contributed to the growth of our referrals and Business Advisory Committee members along with strengthening and building relationships with employment partners in the community. Even during a worldwide pandemic, Eric has found a way to bring his team together and continue to serve our clients!

-Kate

Ann Hopkins -- LeafBridge Intervention Specialist: 5 years of Service

Ann's dedication shows in her passion for and commitment to the Day Program from the program's early stages. She has been instrumental in transforming the Day Program to what it is today through her persistence and dedication! Ann embodies the mission of UCP as she finds ways for all students to be consistently included in the community in meaningful ways. She goes above and beyond by forming collaborative relationships in the community so that UCP's clients are welcomed and supported. Ann is well loved by her teammates and a favorite among students. Thank you, Ann!

-Laurene

Andy Kruse -- Associate Director of Oakleaf: 5 Years of Service

Andy has come a long way in five short years with UCP. He began his career as a Job Placement Specialist where he excelled at creatively placing many individuals into high-paying, non-traditional jobs based on their unique skills and abilities. He was then promoted to Transition Coordinator where he helped with the smooth functioning of Project SEARCH and Summer Youth Work Experience sites. For the past two years, Andy has served as Associate Director of OakLeaf Services where he guides the day-to-day operations and supports the program managers and staff, with a particular focus on our two group homes. He has offered tremendous and much-appreciated assistance to the Director in his latest role, as well as innovative and insightful ideas for improving the overall agency, enhancing revenue and streamlining department processes. He is a man of many talents, from IT to gardening to baking! Congratulations on five years of dedicated service, Andy!

-Paul

Rikeda Lattimore- OakLeaf Homes Direct Support Professional: 5 Years of Service

Rikeda is a compassionate and hardworking employee who always prioritizes the health and safety of Memphis House's clients. She is dedicated and committed to her work, picking up extra shifts and performing duties beyond what is asked of her. Her smile and laughter bring a sense of warmth to all around her which brings joy felt throughout the house. She lifts the spirit of clients and staff every day. Rikeda treats our individuals as she would her own family members – we cannot ask for more!

-Aretha

Liz Wilson -- OakLeaf Partners Job Placement Specialist: 5 Years of Service

Liz has been one of our most successful job placement specialists over her first five years with OakLeaf Partners. She is a consistent, positive force in the lives of her clients and is always searching for new and innovative ways to help them grow and be productive members of their communities. She continually is among the top placement staff in the organization and she continues to be a moving force in the world of job development, overall. It has been a pleasure to job develop alongside her over the last 5 years!

-Eric

Rebecca Young – LeafBridge Occupational Therapist; Maple Heights: 5 years of Service

Rebecca is an energetic, passionate, and creative personality who tirelessly gives her time and talents to students in need of school based occupational therapy services. Rebecca has developed a passion for pre-school intervention and has adapted to the yearly changing demands of state and local legislation for school intervention. Rebecca moves seamlessly from one school improvement project to the next, assuring that all staff and students know that occupational therapy is a dynamic and influential support that can benefit everyone. Rebecca was awarded employee of the year for 2019 because of her steadfast dedication to her career!

-Amanda