

2012 National Heroes

Antoinette “Kelly” Simon, HHA

Tampa, Florida

HHA **Antoinette “Kelly” Simon** joined our BAYADA Tampa, FL (TAM) office in 2004. About the same time, she began to care for a man who was diagnosed with quadriplegia 13 years earlier. Clinical Manager **Sharon Davis** shares, “It takes a special person to care for a client who is completely dependent on others—not only with respect to the routine self-care and adaptive daily living skills needed, but the special equipment, time, and patience that is required. You must constantly be aware of safety precautions to prevent injuries the client would not be able to feel.”

Kelly’s keen awareness of a red spot on her client’s leg prevented a potential wound and a lengthy healing process. “Through Kelly’s observations, she realized that the client’s weight would shift in his chair after he was up a while, and his lower leg would rub on an extender piece of the wheelchair,” explained Sharon. Kelly called the equipment company and scheduled a visit the following day to have the chair evaluated. The client says, “Kelly cares about my well-being and lifts my spirits on a tough day.”

In seven years, he reports, Kelly has never missed a day of work or “been in a bad mood.” He says Kelly is his arms and legs, six days a week. He feels she allows him to have control over what his body no longer will. “There are days when I feel like Kelly knows me better than I know myself. She treats me with dignity and respect. I trust her with my life, which she holds in her hands.”

Mitchell Thomas, PT

Newark, Delaware

PT **Mitchell Thomas** from the Newark, DE (NEW) office “has been a shining example of *The BAYADA Way* since his start two and a half years ago, taking care of many clients with a wide range of medical conditions,” shares Clinical Manager **Terry McIntyre**. Director **Carla Gauger** adds, “Mitch adapts well to whatever his clients’ level of understanding and needs are.”

Part of Mitch’s special character is his ability to reach clients who are resistant or unwilling to participate in therapy at the outset. In one such scenario, Mitch had his client smiling and thanking him by the end of his visit, because he provided helpful explanations and aligned his care with the client’s goals. Terry observed Mitch’s dedication to his clients firsthand during one home visit. The client had sustained a self-inflicted injury just prior to Mitch’s arrival.

Terry recalls, “Immediately, Mitch redirected his focus to ensuring the client’s safety.” He reviewed and explored the client’s ability to manage her own care, determining that she had not been administering her medications, monitoring her blood sugar, or eating.

Two and a half hours later and with much patience, Mitch ensured the client was fed, medications were administered, the home environment was thoroughly assessed, blood pressure was checked, and the client was stabilized. He left only after providing very detailed, yet simple instructions that the client was able to understand. Carla says, “Mitch is compassionate in his acceptance of each client’s needs, limitations, and potential.”

Anindita “Nita” Spielberg, RN

Mt. Laurel, New Jersey

RN **Anindita “Nita” Spielberg** from the Mt. Laurel, NJ Pediatrics (MLP) office is a Hero to her team because she helps people in quiet ways, with no fanfare on her part. Client Services Manager **Michelle Moran** explains, “She brings out the best in people. She tries every day to find good in her work and other people. She is always eager to learn, help, and improve herself so she can continue to offer more to those around her. She enhances everything she touches, and does it all with modesty, grace and love.”

One client’s mother says, “Nita celebrates my son’s life despite his profound disabilities. She helps him see his own importance as a person and continually engages him in conversation and interaction. Through her words and actions, Nita has consistently made my son feel like he matters in this world.” Little things that in some way ease the burdens of others are offered freely and regularly by Nita. She shops for clients or their families when they cannot. She offers to teach yoga, relaxation, or exercises to decrease stress. She volunteers to escort clients to the doctor and asks to participate firsthand in conversations about her clients’ well-being. She also researches ways to assist her clients on her own time. Associate **Nicole Freedman** shares, “Nita’s warmth, concern, heartfelt caring, and helpfulness are palpable. Her positive energy serves as an inspiration to all those she encounters.”

Farah Housh, LPN

Gastonia, North Carolina

LPN Farah Housh has impressed many of her colleagues at the Gastonia, NC Pediatrics (GP) office with her dedication to our clients and the nursing profession. A prime example was when Farah jumped right in after being offered an opportunity to accompany a 17-year-old client with a trach and vent to muscular dystrophy camp.

Running back and forth from cabin to lodge, ensuring all needed supplies were handy, was all in a day's work. Farah blended into her environment, and thought nothing of having to discreetly remove the polish from one of her client's fingernails to obtain oxygen saturation stats—all without having her skip a beat while dancing with her friend. That's because "clients' needs are always of the utmost importance to Farah," says Associate **Katie Tanko**. The client who Farah helped at camp shares, "Farah is one of my favorite nurses. She always makes me laugh." She never lets client safety take a backseat to fun, however. When the client requested to join her friends in the pool at camp after an incident with her trach, Farah had to say no. The client, recalls Katie, "had enough respect for Farah to accept her answer graciously, even though it was not what she wanted to hear."

Farah's ability to connect with all of her clients and respect boundaries make her the nurse of choice for many families. One mother shares, "Due to Farah's conscientious nature, she is our preferred nurse to make appointments, organize and order supplies, accompany us to doctor appointments, and train nurses to work in my home." Farah's ability to meet the needs of her clients on a physical, intellectual, and emotional level has gained her the respect of her clients and office staff alike.

Kristi Sakamoto, LMHC, MSCP, NCC

Oahu, Hawaii

Kristi Sakamoto, LMHC, MSCP, NCC, has been a vital part of the Oahu, HI Behavioral Health (OAB) office since 2006. Kristi is strongly committed to her clients with special needs, and has developed long-term relationships with many of them from when they were young and are now in high school.

Clinical Manager **Grace Bunghanoy-Diama** shares, "Parents and teachers are extremely happy with her work because she produces results. Challenging behaviors that were intense, severe, or frequent are reduced due to Kristi's vision, leadership, and expertise." One of the keys to Kristi's success is her use of evidence-based interventions with intricate data collection systems that produce accurate, valid, and reliable data. To ensure her clients meet their goals, Kristi often creates individualized education materials or resources. If she says she will create a visual schedule for her student, Grace knows it will be ready the next day.

"Kristi conducts herself with integrity and professionalism, putting her clients first," says Grace. "She has been a consistent provider who the schools can depend on to fulfill their needs."

Alise Odom, HHA

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Alise Odom HHA, joined the Philadelphia, PA Pediatrics (PHP) office, primarily caring for one young man with cerebral palsy. Quite simply, Clinical Manager **Rose Jean-Baptiste** says, "Alise is the best home health aide I have encountered. I have met many good aides, but Alise towers above the rest."

Alise's approach to client care is proactive, always anticipating her clients' needs. For example, "While waiting for her client to come home from school, Alise prepares all of his supplies, gets his favorite snacks ready, and has the TV set to his favorite program," explains Rose. Then, at the bus stop, she makes sure he was secure during his ride and provides a complete inspection, up and down. When the client's mother was experiencing her own medical issues, Alise made a point of using the client's nap time to do some extra chores around the house, such as laundry or loading the dishwasher. Client Services Manager **Allison Hafft** comments, "No one asked her to do these little extras. She just knew that his mother needed that support."

The client's mother says Alise holds a special place in her heart. She believes that her son is a "healthier and happier child" since Alise entered their lives. "He has been rejuvenated and is taking major steps in his healing and development. I give Alise much of the credit for his achievements."

Bernadine Brown, HHA

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HHA **Bernadine Brown** from the Philadelphia, PA Specialized Contracts (PSC) office always provides exceptional care to her clients. “While Bernadine possesses and demonstrates the qualities of compassion and excellence,” shares Area Director **Maureen Wright**, “it is her reliability that is the foundation for the trusting relationships she is able to develop with her clients.”

With one client in particular, Clinical Support Specialist **Cay Ambrose** expressed that Bernadine’s interpersonal skills rounded out the total package. She instinctively knew when to add a little levity to a situation, and when to offer space and quiet time. “Bernadine’s calm nature was just what our client needed. Nothing he asked for was ever a problem, and if it was, Bernadine never let him know it.” For example, in the client’s eyes, someone helping him tend to his cat was just as important as any other aspect of his care. While both he and Bernadine knew that cat care was not part of the care plan, the client often expressed gratitude for her willingness to help with something that meant so much to him.

Bernadine’s excellent care is also defined by her strong relationships with two other long-term clients. Client Services Manager **Kathy Lever** adds, “Bernadine’s heart is so big—she is always willing to help out with new clients, as well as stepping in for other HHAs.” Bernadine joined BAYADA in March 2010.

Mary Odom, LPN

Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania

One of LPN **Mary Odom**’s clients with the Lehigh Valley, PA Adult Nursing (LVA) office expressed that she will always have a special place in the lives of his family members and he will “be forever honored to have her here taking care of me.” These words come from a man who considers himself an “expert at analyzing nurses,” having spent six months in the ICU before coming home to receive home health care.

“Mary falls into the highest ranking of the ‘superior nurse’ category,” he praises. Client Services Manager **Didi Caramuche** agrees, adding, “Mary works long hours for our clients. She fills out her nursing notes as though she is writing a chapter of a client’s life in a book. Her skills are impeccable and unmatched. The care she provides mirrors that of a seasoned physician.”

Mary has a personal touch that builds a positive rapport with office staff, clients, and families. “She made a special effort to see that one client received a special gift on Father’s Day,” recalls Didi, “It made a significant impact on him.” When she found out that another client with a trach and ventilator wanted to experience a real vacation for the first time, Mary volunteered to accompany him on a four-day cruise with his family. What was once thought to be out-of-reach became a reality, thanks to Mary.

Didi says, “Mary is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles, and this makes her extraordinary!” She has been providing care to BAYADA clients since 2001.

Heather Chin, RN

Westchester County, New York

Working with the Westchester County, NY (WC) office for a little over a year now, RN **Heather Chin** has had a tremendous impact on the lives of two little girls and their families. Her first client has paid Heather the biggest compliment any three-year-old girl can. She named her prized Barbie doll with long dark hair after her. “My daughter is very fond of this Barbie and takes it everywhere,” shares the client’s mother.

In fact, her daughter’s morning routine often involves answering the question, “How many more minutes until Heather gets here?” She says her daughter’s enchantment with Heather is grounded in Heather’s expertise and character. “Heather has excellent clinical skills and maintains a calm and collected sense in all situations. She engages my daughter in creative play and creates educational moments with her all day long.” The client’s mother also appreciates how Heather stays informed about her daughter’s physical therapy needs, asks important questions, and encourages the client to bear weight through standing and walking outside of her therapy sessions.

Heather’s initiative is also seen in the care of her second client. Associate **Jennifer Ingalls** says, “Heather goes above and beyond her responsibilities of nursing. She has taken it upon herself to educate her 19-month-old client by teaching her sign language—an effective and advanced way to communicate. It shows who Heather is as a person. She cares about educating her clients.”

John Morris, RN

Charlotte, North Carolina

RN **John Morris** joined the Charlotte, NC (CHA) office in 2009, and has been caring for a 30-year-old man with spinal muscular atrophy. Clinical Manager **Kelly Mincey** shares, “The client has been 100 percent dependent on other people to meet his every need for his entire life. I don’t just mean the activities of daily life. Just the basic needs of breathing and eating have to be managed by carefully trained caregivers.”

The client has experienced hundreds, if not thousands, of nurses along the way, and he isn’t impressed very easily. He says John, however, will always be considered his Hero. “Although I may lead a stressful life, John always fills the air with his calmness, which is extremely beneficial to my mental health. I wake up with a smile when John comes to work and I still have a smile when he leaves at the end of the day. This is priceless to me.”

John’s client recently met with legislators and made a presentation in order to secure services considered to be life-saving. Kelly says, “The presentation required a lot of work behind the scenes, beyond the hours and hours of time the client spent at his computer. John created a movie and photo presentation for his client that was included, but he never told anyone. It is just one of those things he did as a client advocate—a silent, unsung Hero!”

John also adds to the quality of his client’s life by reading aloud with him (15 books in 3 and a half years), and discussing science fiction movies or shows from the History Channel. John continues to work at a local trauma center to keep up his emergency treatment skills, and he is a CPR instructor. With very little notice, John even taught a class for fellow nurses whose certifications were about to expire, so their clients would not go without service the following week. Once, when there was an overnight freeze predicted, John made arrangements to stay nearby his client’s home, simply to ensure he’d get to work on time in the morning. John’s client aptly says, “John is a completely different class of nurse.”

Amber Lehman, LPN

Williamsport, Pennsylvania

When Williamsport, PA (WLM) Associate Director **Kristen Beals** created a full-time position for a nurse who could care for clients and also work in the office as needed, her team unanimously agreed that LPN **Amber Lehman** would be a great fit. Amber has been competently caring for BAYADA clients for over four years, and has impressed Kristen as an “experienced trach and ventilator care nurse who can work with any age group and in any social situation.”

Kristen explains, “Amber walks into every home with an aura of confidence that sets the family and the client at ease. She works hard to educate herself and uses sound clinical judgment at all times. Plus, Amber isn’t afraid to take control of a situation; she calls doctors, therapists, and schools when necessary.” Clinical Associate **Donna Brown** observed Amber’s work firsthand by spending several days with her in a classroom for children with multi-developmental disabilities. She was caring for a young child who has a tracheostomy and requires frequent suctioning, g-tube feedings, and medications. “Amber skillfully cared for her, keeping in mind at all times her fragility and comfort as she attended to all of her complex needs.”

Amber was recognized by a fellow BAYADA health care professional that she trained in the field as “the best trainer she has ever worked with.” During their shift together, the client had a seizure. The nurse being trained needed her watch to time the seizure and realized the battery of her watch went dead. Amber used her watch instead and when the seizure ended and all was well, Amber took the nurse’s watch to Walmart and had the battery replaced for her. Clinical Manager **Karen Shrimp** has always been impressed with Amber’s work. “Whenever I ask her to do something, I know it will be a job well done. Amber is conscientious and leaves no stone unturned.”

Harold Williams, HHA

Media, Pennsylvania

HHA **Harold Williams** “is one of the most conscientious and hard-working home health aides I have met during my years with BAYADA,” says Client Services Manager **Jane Hardcastle**. He joined the Media, PA (MED) office in 1996, and has cared for his current client since 2007. “Harold has gone to work despite snowstorms, a severe toothache, and most recently, even after his home experienced a fire,” continues Jane. “I offered to replace Harold on his shift the next day, but he told me there was no need.” His client had a doctor’s appointment, and Harold fully intended to get him there.

Division Director **Carole McMahon**, who is also the wife of Harold’s client, adds, “When we moved and our house was not accessible to public transportation, I was concerned about coverage. Harold said he would like to continue, and would check out the walk from the bus. He has walked the mile to and from the bus for nearly three and a half years. Rain or shine—or snow. You can set your watch on Harold. He arrives at 7:15 am Monday through Friday, and works every Saturday and Sunday evening for one hour.”

Harold’s client has quadriplegia and many physical needs. Harold needs to operate a Hoyer lift and other special equipment and provides daily range of motion exercises, a shower, and meals. When the client is up in his power wheelchair, Harold positions him appropriately, and then repositions him as needed throughout the day. Carole says, “It takes a lot of work for Harold to get my husband up and about, but he always encourages him and does whatever is needed. He takes great care with my husband and motivates him in his unassuming way. He is a quiet hero who deserves to be recognized for all he does, and for always bringing positive energy with him. He makes my husband’s quality of life better, brings the consistency he needs to sustain his lifestyle, and provides the positive feedback he needs to make each day as meaningful as possible.”

Lance Gardner, PT

West Chester, Pennsylvania

Ever since the West Chester, PA Home Health (WCV) office first started using the Press Ganey client satisfaction survey, PT **Lance Gardner** has been named monthly by clients for the great care he provides.

One client stated, “Lance was like magic!” He provided such great care that the client was walking after only one week. Another client shared that she never had a reason to call the office because Lance and the rest of the team met all of her needs. Yet another client mentioned to her clinical manager that she has endured low back pain for years. When Lance arrived on the scene, he was able to demonstrate some exercises that completely relieved her back pain.

Director **Roxanne Holt** feels that Lance’s success does not come as a surprise. “He places his clients first, and paints a clear and concise picture of their needs with his stellar documentation.” She also admires the way he strives for positive outcomes and has a strong work ethic to ensure that the desired results are achieved.
