

2010 BAYADA National Heroes

Nazarena “Rena” Balagat, CNA

St. Louis, Missouri

The remarkable work ethic of CNA **Nazarena “Rena” Balagat** from the St. Louis, MO (SL) office quickly makes a favorable impression on every client she visits. Client Services Manager **Kim Gonzales** adds, “Rena has a dedication to excellence that I have rarely seen. I have heard nothing but glowing reports about her work performance.”

That is why she never has second thoughts about placing Rena with a client. Word of Rena’s professionalism travels so quickly that it even generates more referrals! The sister of one client in a rehab center spoke so highly of Rena that the daughter of another woman called to start 36 hours per week of service for her mother—solely on the condition that Rena provide the care. Associate Director **Lauren Fronczek** shares that Rena works seven days a week, develops strong connections with her clients, and simply “works magic” to guarantee client satisfaction.

Rena’s reputation isn’t limited to the St. Louis area. Comments from the family of one 97-year-old woman have come from all over the US. Lauren explains, “We received e-mails from family members who live in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Texas as well.” The client’s daughter said, “Without Rena’s assistance, I am certain my mother would be a resident in a nursing home.” The client’s niece says her aunt is “very set in her ways and not always easy to please,” but she is “very happy with her caregiver.” Another daughter shares, “Mother always has meals available to eat so she won’t have to use the stove. The soups and casseroles Rena prepares are always delicious!” The client’s granddaughter shared, “Ever since the first day my grandmother has had Rena as a helper, she has been a much happier person. She no longer fears how she is going to accomplish daily tasks. She is very confident and trusts Rena.” With all these testimonials to her name, Lauren says that since her start in 2008, “Rena is spreading *The BAYADA Way* near and far!”

Cheryl Blanco, LPN

Lehigh, Pennsylvania

LPN **Cheryl Blanco** joined BAYADA in 2001. For the past year, Cheryl has been caring for Lehigh, PA (LEH) clients. In order to bring a child with a ventilator home from the hospital, Cheryl needed to become certified, and traveled over two hours to accomplish this. She now regularly cares for this client, along with another three-year-old girl who has epidermolysis bullosa—a rare genetic disorder that can cause severe blistering of the skin.

This child’s wound care routine requires two skilled caregivers to complete, and involves whirlpool treatments and dressing changes to much of her body. Clinical Manager **Becky Holmberg** says, “I have had the honor of working side by side with Cheryl, performing three-hour wound care shifts. She not only performs the wound care skillfully, but makes the client laugh and smile during the procedure.” Client Services Associate **Lacy Rivett** adds that Cheryl “always incorporates lots of love and play into all of her client’s daily regimes.” Her LEH team also points out that Cheryl is always the first to contribute to fundraisers to help this family. It’s no surprise that her colleagues count her among BAYADA’s exceptional Heroes.

Marian DeFoe, MSW

Berks County, Pennsylvania

MSW **Marian DeFoe** has worked at the Berks County, PA Visit (BRK) office for over three years. Director **Ellen Motta** feels Marian “has definitely found her calling! She is truly passionate about her social work role and thoroughly enjoys making a difference in people’s lives, yet in such a humbling way.”

Marian’s attentiveness to detail always ensures outstanding documentation, thorough communication, and top-quality educational materials. Because Marian simply has a knack for making the most challenging care situations run better, those are the ones she will typically be assigned, says Ellen. Marian works another full-time job, but that commitment doesn’t limit the service she offers through BAYADA. During a visit to a client who had suffered a stroke and whose husband had poor vision, Marian noted that the client was having difficulty raising her arm. The office’s on-call manager soon arrived and assessed that the client’s blood pressure was abnormally high and a trip to the hospital was in order. That’s when Marian went into “Hero mode,” says Ellen. She volunteered to cook the family a meal so they could leave on a full stomach, then offered to drive the husband to the hospital and wait until he was ready to come home—all after having worked a full day at her other job! Marian called the husband the next day to check on the client. The husband stated, “This just seems to be the kind of person she is, very nice and caring.”

Ellen has repeatedly found that Marian does not consider her job done after her visit to a client’s home is performed. “She is extremely professional, knowledgeable, reliable, friendly, and always goes above and beyond for her clients and the office staff.”

Ann Dunn, LPN
Allentown, Pennsylvania

LPN **Ann Dunn** has been a nurse for the Allentown, PA Pediatric (ALL) office for the past 12 years. She has been much more than that to one special little girl, Ann's primary client, for the past four. The mother explains, "Ann was Julia's nurse, but also our friend. She has done for us more than anyone has in our lifetime."

Born prematurely at only 1 lb, 1 oz, this little girl was finally released from the neonatal intensive care unit at age one. However, she didn't come home alone. She came with a tracheostomy, a G-tube, and a ventilator with four liters of oxygen. The family was overwhelmed by the challenges ahead. Even though they were armed with equipment training, it was Ann who became their real teacher from day one, helping them to adjust.

Ann proved time and again that her assessment skills were superb. "She knew how to recognize the first signs of illness and when to call a doctor to get her started on antibiotics or steroids," recalls the mother. Ann is also credited with saving her client's life multiple times when problems occurred with her tracheostomy tube. Ann was a teacher as well for her client—showing her how to read, count, and use the computer. Ann taught her how to talk with a Passy-Muir valve and then with an open stoma. She taught her how to overcome an eating aversion once her tracheostomy tube was removed. She taught her how to walk and how to pull a ventilator behind her. And she taught her how to be a friend, singing songs, comforting her in a rocking chair, and playing.

The mother feels, "Ann helped my daughter become the child she is now, a happy five-year-old who is playing and running with other children, talking in almost full sentences, and eating normally." The family admires Ann "for the person she is — a wonderful, kind, loving human being."

Christine Dielmann, PT
Wilmington, Delaware

PT **Christine Dielmann** has been providing physical therapy for Wilmington, DE Visits (WIL) clients since 1991. Though her schedule is often quite full, she never turns down a referral. Director **Laura Workman** respects Christine's detailed plans of care and the positive outcomes and recoveries that result.

Part of this success stems from Christine's ability to create alternative methods for her clients to perform difficult tasks. One elderly couple talked about Christine's ability to tailor their exercises to each of their individual needs and take their personal physical limitations into account. Christine's habit of calling ahead to schedule appointments and accommodate her client's schedule always leaves a favorable impression.

Another key aspect to Christine's rapport with clients is her unfailing good spirits. "Christine was never moody or impatient," shares one pleased client. Everyone who has the pleasure of working with Christine describes her as exceptionally capable and caring.

Susan Moser, LPN
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

LPN **Susan Moser** has been providing care to many Lancaster, PA (LAN) Pediatric clients for the past seven years. "It is an absolute pleasure to observe Sue when she is providing care," comments Director **Kelly Kondikoff**. "It is evident through her interactions with all of her clients that she has an extremely big heart and keeps their best interests in mind while providing care. She makes a significant impact on each client's quality of life."

Recently, Sue's primary client experienced a change in status that caused discomfort, pain, and an altered disposition. Her tireless interventions and family guidance ultimately led to an effective means of relieving the child's adverse symptoms. In many ways, Sue can be described as a great leader for her ability to mobilize efforts that benefit her clients. Kelly shares, "She has also been recognized as a preceptor for her ability to educate, train, and mentor others. She is well-respected by her peers and the rest of the care team as an essential team player."

Even when it comes to sacrificing her own time, Sue does what is best for her client. The client's parents acknowledge, "We can sometimes have a very difficult schedule and have to change it on short notice. Sue doesn't complain and always works with us." Most importantly, the parents recognize that they can always feel secure in the quality of care Sue provides their daughter. "It is so comforting to have the trust in your nurse to be able to leave and know that our daughter is very well taken care of, and that she gets the attention and love that she needs."

Clinical Manager Terri Lee knows Sue as a nurse who strives to make her clients smile, keep them medically stable, and ultimately improve their quality of life. "Sue is a true asset to BAYADA and strives each day to live *The BAYADA Way*."

Cathy Akbari, RN
Charlotte, North Carolina

RN **Cathy Akbari** from the Charlotte, NC Pediatrics (CHP) office has cared for many clients since her start with the company in 2002. Director **Ali Genthner** shares, "She has always displayed such compassion for our clients."

The family of one client immediately fell in love with her when she began caring for their child. Recently, they developed an even deeper respect for Cathy when she willingly put her own life in danger to secure the safety of her five-month-old client during a recent electrical fire in the home.

The incident began when a fire broke out on the first floor of the family's two-story home. Cathy immediately yelled for the baby's cousin, a young male, to grab her client's emergency go-bag, containing needed medical treatments, while she carried the baby out of the home. The cousin ran upstairs to get the bag, but on the way down, the stairway runner caught fire, trapping everyone upstairs. Ali recounts, Cathy did everything she could to shield the baby, and had to make a terribly difficult decision. She realized the only way to get the baby out of the burning house was from the upstairs window. Gasping for air, Cathy did the almost impossible, and tossed the baby from the second-story window to safety outside, where a neighbor was ready to catch him, with the cousin, who had jumped from the window himself. Fire crews had to rescue Cathy from the home.

Cathy's injuries resulted in a three-week hospitalization and a week of rehab. Clinical Manager **Amy Winborne** shares, "It was not until we could prove to Cathy that the baby was alright that her condition started to improve." Cathy is still recovering from these events last May and staying with her sister in Kentucky.

Karen Simpson, LPN
Atlanta, Georgia

LPN **Karen Simpson** from the Atlanta, GA (ATL) office "is the kind of nurse BAYADA strives to recruit," says Client Services Manager **Patrick Balster**. "She is an employee who is goal-oriented, and strives to further herself in every possible way she can." Patrick thinks that "Karen has a strong connection with our vision and mission," but it is her "enormous heart" that makes her the extraordinary employee that she is.

For one family that Karen serves, the extra care that she brings is "the understanding that cancer is a family disease." The client's husband shares, "We needed someone to take care of my wife, but what we got was someone who cares for our family—and we are very lucky and grateful."

Karen began working at BAYADA three years ago. Area Director **Doug McNew** reflects, "I have enjoyed watching Karen embrace The BAYADA Way over the years and truly put her clients first. She is an extremely compassionate nurse and I am thrilled she is part of the team here in Georgia."

Kristin Morrison, CNA
Charlotte, North Carolina

CNA **Kristin Morrison** arrived on the doorstep Bayada's Charlotte, NC Personal Care (CPC) office a year ago, right after earning her nursing assistant certificate. One client Kristin cares for endured a stroke 13 years ago and has recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Of the dozens of individuals who have provided care over the years, the wife feels, "Unequivocally, Kristin Morrison is head and shoulders above the rest."

Kristin was also the youngest caregiver ever assigned and the family remarks on her maturity and special demeanor. The client's wife says, "Kristin radiates a positive energy, which is wonderful around the house." Her skills are also top-notch. On one occasion, Kristin observed the client choking on his lunch. She performed the Heimlich maneuver immediately, dislodged the food, and saved his life.

On another occasion, Client Services Manager **Melissa Anchia** recalls, "Kristin followed her instincts, which were telling her that something just wasn't right." After speaking with the clinical manager, she dialed 911 and had her client taken to the hospital. He was admitted with a cold and low oxygen levels. The client's wife shares, "Kristin did everything right. She called the ambulance, sent a list of medications with the paramedic, and even fed the dog and put him in his crate before leaving the house. She is very thorough and has so much common sense. She is just wonderful."

Toni Kearns, LPN
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Since her start at the Lewisburg, PA (LEW) office in 2007, LPN **Toni Kearns** has proven time and again that she can and will positively impact the life of any client she serves. Clinical Manager **Toni Shaffer** shares that by successfully transitioning her most compromised client with a trach and vent home from the hospital and easing the anxiety of the entire family, “Toni Kearns has proved to be an exceptional nurse.”

Another little boy struggled with eating since birth. However, the mother acknowledges, “Toni is able to take the extremely difficult task of getting him to eat and turn it into a positive experience for him. Her approach is not only encouraging, but empowering.”

Another teenage girl under Toni’s care endured years of reconstructive surgery to her face and head. Toni assisted in transitioning this girl from care at home to school. Director **Ruth Ann Kephart** shares, “It wasn’t long before the client was sporting a new hairdo, of course with Dad’s permission. The client gained confidence with Toni’s love and support.”

Client Services Manager **Lauren Johnston** believes, “Toni is a great go-to nurse in any situation, challenging or otherwise, and I couldn’t imagine nominating anyone else to be our hero!”

Ann Sprenkle, LPN
York, Pennsylvania

Ann Sprenkle has worked as an LPN for the York, PA (YRK) office, practicing holistic care for just over three years with one particular client. “Ann acknowledges the importance of her client’s medical needs, but she recognizes it as only a part of his overall care and well being. She is intuitively aware of her client’s developmental level, and she adapts her care based on his responses,” explains Director **Kelly Kondikoff**. Ann regularly administers proper oral and nutritional care, and attends to her client’s physical needs by moving him from one location to another. Still, she makes time for nurturing his spirit, making sure laughter is a regular part of his day, and stimulates his mind by introducing new experiences and tactile stimulation.

The client’s mother has always found Ann to be a nurse with the most exceptional skills, but it’s Ann’s commitment to her son that stands out the most. Fellow LPN **Teri Kronmeyer** agrees, adding, “She has filled in on more occasions than we can easily count to cover her client’s needs.” Teri also knows Ann as a consummate professional, whose choice of words and actions are always well thought out and executed with positive outcomes in mind.

Kelly concludes, “Ann has shown her abilities to lead, educate, mentor, and support her fellow colleagues. She is a team player and exemplifies *The BAYADA Way* in all her actions.”

Terry Uvino, RN
Morristown, New Jersey

RN **Terry Uvino** “is a spark that has shined for 16 years” for the Morristown, NJ (MOR) office. Client Services Manager **Anna Anderson** further attests that Terry is a nurse who is “no-nonsense, thorough, direct, and firm, yet full of good humor and encouragement.”

She currently cares for one client, and she does it “with so much joy and energy,” according to the mother, that it doesn’t even seem like a job. “Other nurses can’t help but notice how caring she is, and the commitment she shows. They all hope to catch some of her spirit and ‘can-do’ attitude.”

Terry’s nature allows her to fit seamlessly into the lives of her client and his family. She instinctively knows what needs to be done and does it. From writing down all relevant information in her client’s chart to bringing medications at the correct times, Anna asserts that Terry is organized in all aspects of client care. On snowy days, Terry even has the initiative and foresight to offer to cover another nurse’s shift for a long-term client simply because she lived closer.

Her client’s father notes, “Terry is so devoted and like part of our family. She is just like the nurse on the TV commercial.”

Eleanor Somers, CHHA
Atlantic City, New Jersey

Eleanor Somers has worked at the Atlantic City, NJ (AC) office since 2008. She is a CHHA whose sense of humor aides in building relationships and contributes to positive client outcomes.

Clinical Manager **Jacqueline Callahan** notes that Eleanor even dresses in cheerful attire, complete with coordinated lanyards for her ID badge. She has cared for a number of clients, most of whom have taken the time to call the office and offer compliments about her service. Perhaps that's because she makes each client feel special, and does not allow a birthday or special occasion to pass by unnoticed.

One client's husband attests, "We can't imagine Eleanor being any more responsive if she were a member of our family." Eleanor exudes confidence, and clients feel they are in capable hands. Jacqueline explains, "Eleanor is able to relay her understanding of any complex issue, and is able to find a simple solution to calm any storm."

The daughter of a couple receiving services offers, "Because of the person Eleanor is and all that she gives and does for both my parents, she has relieved a tremendous burden from me. I know every day that Eleanor is with my parents, they are treated with respect, dignity, genuine compassion, and love."

Bernard Gaulin, Jr., HHA
Port Richey, Florida

Bernard Gaulin, Jr. (JR) came to the New Port Richey, FL (NPR) office in January 2010 after an unlikely change in careers from construction worker to HHA. He now cares for multiple clients, some of whom receive services through the Veteran's Administration (VA). The clients' social worker through that organization offered, "If all of my clients were cared for by JR, I would sleep easier at night. They are clean and neat and cared for." One client goes so far as to say that JR is his guardian angel. "He gives me something to look forward to each day." More than that, JR has managed to restore his clients' dignity and sense of purpose. When one man using a wheelchair was showering with a garden hose in his backyard, JR took it upon himself to think outside the box and have an accessible shower stall built in his mobile home. Now, he looks forward to hot showers in privacy!

Another young man who has female caregivers missed out on doing "guy things" until JR entered his life. He now puts the tools he's collected over the years to good use doing woodworking projects. Client Services Manager **Eileen Tenly** observed, "This usually very shy, quiet, serious young man has now come out of his shell." One client's brother even attributes his caregiving skills to JR. "JR gave me the confidence and has really taught me a lot."

When asked about the positive impact he has had on his client and the client's brother, JR indicates, "If anything, they contributed to me being a better person."

Barbara Sauer, MSW
Denver, Colorado

MSW **Barbara Sauer** has been a valuable member of the Denver, CO Visit (DV) clinical team since 2006. North Denver, CO Visits (NDV) Director **Channie Wright** comments, "She has faithfully covered the entire Denver metro area for all three skilled Visit offices. Her knowledge of community resources and her expertise in Medicaid regulations have been invaluable in helping countless patients receive additional services." DV Director **Linda Gaetani** adds, "Barb always attends care conferences weekly and is perceived as an integral resource for patient care needs by nurses and therapists." At the drop of a hat, Barbara will take action to provide for a client in need.

When a call came in about a client without food, she managed to perform a visit the same day so Meals on Wheels would begin delivery without delay. Barbara even assisted an elderly woman in replacing her furnace after seeing space heaters scattered around her home for a few weeks. Then, a subsequent visit to the client's home revealed the strong odor of gas. With oxygen tank in place, the client proceeded to check the pilot light in her kitchen. Barbara stopped the client in her tracks, and called 911 instead. When emergency help arrived, all were told that the building would have exploded with any spark of flame. PT **Maryanne Kenney** shares, "Barbara was a hero who truly saved lives with her quick thinking."

Mary “Mamie” Doyle, PT

Newark, Delaware

PT **Mary “Mamie” Doyle** has been working with clients of the Newark, DE (NEW) office since 2003. Her first 4,000 hours were as a contracted employee, but as soon as her family situation allowed, she became a full-time BAYADA employee. She has since logged nearly 2,000 more hours!

Director **Carla Young** notes that Mamie “is unfailingly responsive and cheerful with her coworkers.” As such, she was a natural choice for training both nurses and therapists in adopting new tools and transitioning to new requirements. The consummate professional and team player, Mamie can be relied upon to assist other therapists when time off is needed, and to be flexible with her territory when her office’s needs change.

Clients attest, “Mamie is a terrific therapist. She works you to the extent of your abilities, but with a smile and kindness.” Mamie’s advocacy skills and power of suggestion have been evidenced by one client’s daughter. “Mamie went the extra mile in arranging for my dad to get what we like to call ‘the Cadillac of walkers’. It is amazing to see the difference in the way he can walk so much more quickly and upright.”

Carla concludes that Mamie’s kindness and warmth, and encouragement and support help her clients make the effort needed to reach their goals.

Nancy Grilli, RN

Linwood, New Jersey

RN **Nancy Grilli** has been an unassuming kind of nurse since her start at the Linwood, NJ (AC) in 2005. One client believes her work may go unnoticed at times, simply because she does it so well. Still, “She makes a difference in so many ways.” Whether it is bringing the garden indoors for a client who loved gardening, helping a client bake, bringing special treats when family comes to visit, or providing peg tube and trach changes seamlessly, Nancy does it all.

Nancy’s determination and follow-through ensures that even challenging situations result in positive outcomes. There were concerns about bringing a Visit client home from a facility due to frequent falls. Client Services Manager **Janice Bucknam** reports, “We have had a few challenges, but Nancy sees him weekly and he is living independently with the help of a live-in aide.” Nancy’s clients come to trust and respect her clinical advice. One family shares, “Nancy’s encouragement allowed our loved one to achieve the things she thought she’d never do again.”

The client herself adds, “Because of the smiles, kind words, help in every way, the many things you have taught me, and the many things I’ve come to count on you for, I trust in my nurse, Nancy.”

Paula Young, LPN

Linwood, New Jersey

LPN **Paula Young** joined the Linwood, NJ (AC) team in 2005. “One young woman who Paula works with has the benefit of her compassion, as she tirelessly advocates for her needs,” shares Director **Maryann Prudhomme**.

“Paula has been with this young woman through the challenges of adolescence and fitting in socially, as she has quadriplegia due to an auto accident ten years ago.” The client’s sister recalls, “Paula stepped right in and helped us from day one. She led us in the direction we needed to go.” Paula attends to her client’s medical needs, as she attends a special services school, but also encourages the client to develop socially and emotionally. She escorts her client to social outings and school functions.

Paula has grown to know her client like no other—she reads her lips, knows when she disagrees, and can interpret her feelings. The dynamics of the home can sometimes lead to challenges, but Janice shares, “Paula handles it with a mature attitude.” This same demeanor allows Paula to adapt to the challenges inherent to caring for many different clients. Maryann says that Paula’s “sensitivity, confidence and reliability” also helped support a wife caring for her husband diagnosed with ALS during his last days.

Jane Harrison, HHA

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HHA **Jane Harrison** joined BAYADA in 2001, and has been caring for one client of the Main Line, PA Adult (MLA) office for the past six and a half years with 100% reliability. Initially, the elderly client, both blind and unable to walk, lived in an assisted living facility in her own apartment. Recently, however, the client moved to a senior apartment complex outside MLA's regular service area to be closer to family. There was no question that the family wanted Jane to continue providing care, and without hesitation, she did. Clinical Manager **Jackie Sallade** shares, "Along with providing excellent personal care, Jane always makes sure to care for the whole person."

Although moving out of the assisted living facility meant there would be no more concert trips or lunches out that the client loved, Jane found a way to continue the tradition. Fridays became regular concert days, whereby Jane's client would get dressed up and sit in her special concert chair to hear recordings of her favorite composer, Mozart. Friends would sometimes gather to make it a social event. Despite the client's pureed diet, Janet would create special lunches on occasion and announce that they'd be eating at the client's favorite destination, The Cricket Club.

An "intuitive caregiver" is how Jackie categorizes Jane. "She sees her client may have limitations, but it does not limit what the client can experience. All the pleasures that mean so much are made as real as possible."
