

# PROGRESS

CONNECTING  
PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES  
TO LIFE'S  
POSSIBILITIES

A PUBLICATION OF UNIFIED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

FALL 2020

## HOODSTOCK XVII GOES VIRTUAL AND RAISES \$80,000

We made history this year as people from around the country and world celebrated Hoodstock XVII virtually on the Hoodstock Bmore YouTube channel. In traditional Hoodstock fashion, Roses n Rust headlined, performing classics from the '60s and '70s, and The Wafflers closed the show. Event founder and Roses n Rust band leader Russ Causey along with Director of Development Lauren Bussard and event emcee Bill Romani provided live commentary from Spoons in Federal Hill.

The event included prerecorded videos sharing the evolution of Hoodstock from a backyard party to a signature fundraiser and a look at how it benefits the programs and services Unified provides to people with disabilities. A raffle for the fan favorite "Be Cool" YETI Cooler of Cheer and an online silent auction added to the fun.

Hoodstock raised \$80,000, attracting more than 1,200 viewers, with people tuned in from 12 different states as well as Thailand, Australia, Canada and the U.K. Hoodstock began in 2004 as a neighborhood event in the backyard of former Unified board member Russ Causey and wife Jen's home in Federal Hill. It has grown into a major fundraiser for Unified raising more than \$804,000 since its inception.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award. "Sam Tucker showed us how we are defined by our abilities not our disabilities in how he lived a meaningful and fully integrated life," said President and CEO Diane Coughlin.

Baltimore Ravens Senior Advisor for Player Development and Unified Board Member O.J. Brigrance virtually presented this year's award to Judy Crum, who lives in one of our residential homes in Frederick. "Judy has worked hard to become an articulate and confident young woman and an advocate for herself and others. During the pandemic, she has demonstrated an amazing ability to boost people's spirits all around her," said Mr. Brigrance.

Mrs. Coughlin thanked everyone who participated in this year's virtual Hoodstock and appreciated that

they had chosen to support the hundreds of individuals Unified assists every day.

A big thank you to event chair Russ Causey and his committee: Kathy Bradley, Barry Brill, Lauren Bussard, Angela Lane, Nick Richardson, Carol Sholes, Emily Evans Sutorius, Kate Ziegelstein and Manette Zinkand. We also thank the bands for donating their time, Unified staff and volunteers, our many generous sponsors and everyone who contributed and tuned in to this year's event. Special kudos to our production company Gregg Landry and BlueRock Productions. We couldn't have done it without you.

Our virtual Hoodstock was free of charge. However, we did ask for contributions and sponsorships. You can still watch this year's Hoodstock on the Hoodstock Bmore YouTube channel, and it's never too late to donate at [unified.org](https://unified.org). Your contributions are truly appreciated.

**Mark your calendars for Hoodstock XVIII on Saturday, October 23, 2021, at its new location The Winslow.**



Russ Causey (center) with Roses n Rust.

see list of sponsors inside ►



OUR MISSION:

TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE, PRODUCTIVITY, AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE THEY SEEK.

**We'd especially like to thank this year's 47 sponsors. Your support during this challenging COVID-19 year means a great deal to us.**

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Individuals and staff  
from our Winslow  
residential home  
celebrate Halloween.

## AROUND THE AGENCY



Individuals and staff from our  
Frederick region attend a Trunk  
or Treat event.

## DEVELOPMENT NEWS

We look forward to holding our **Golf Classic on April 26, 2021**, at The Elkridge Club. Stay tuned for more information.

Unified is grateful to **Miss Evelyn Schwartz who left a \$122,000 estate gift to Unified** in memory of Shirley Schwartz. For more information about including Unified in your estate plans, contact Director of Development Lauren Bussard at [lbussard@unified.org](mailto:lbussard@unified.org).

Unified was awarded a **\$75,000 Nonprofit Recovery Initiative grant** to offset COVID-19 expenses such as PPE and cleaning supplies.

Thank you to the **Thomas family for again donating \$10,000 to our Residential Fund** for the upkeep of our homes.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO JUDY CRUM

Congratulations to Judy Crum, this year's recipient of the Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award. Her indomitable spirit makes her an obvious choice. Judy is a champion of positivity, and her ability to boost people's spirits has been a welcomed bright light during these difficult pandemic times. "I would not be able to touch people the way that I have if I did not have a disability," she says. "My dad and stepmom, along with my faith, have taught me to see things in a positive light."

Judy has overcome many struggles – a marriage that ended in divorce and having to move out of her father's home when he became too ill to care for her. She says, "Those experiences made me a stronger person." She does not let them dampen her joy for life, a joy she has been sharing with everyone at Unified since she moved into the Center Street residential home in January of 2018.

An avid reader with a passion for poetry, Judy is proud to have graduated from a public high school and to have taken college courses. She recently participated in a self-advocacy class through the THRIVE program at Frederick Community College and has become an advocate for herself and others. "I want to help others and be a voice for people with disabilities," she says. Since coming to Unified, Judy has blossomed into a confident, outgoing and articulate young woman. She is an inspiration and a role model to everyone she meets and represents the CAN DO attitude in all aspects of her life.



Judy Crum with her father  
Harry Fellers.

# THE DELREY SPIRIT LIVES ON

Unified closed Delrey School at the end of the 2019-2020 school year, after 55 years of serving children with disabilities. Delrey was a pioneer in integrating services and supports into an educational setting for children with disabilities, and for many years, it was one of the cornerstones of our services.

Delrey's closure is bittersweet. As public schools began offering special education programs and services, Delrey School experienced unsustainable declines in enrollment. Our remaining students were placed in new programs where we know they will thrive, and in the words of beloved former principal Mimi Wang, "The closing of Delrey will not end the Delrey spirit. The fond memories of the school will stay in the hearts of its students, staff and parents."

Mimi retired in 2017 after serving at Delrey for more than 45 years. "We provided a very unique program to support students with multiple medical, physical and educational needs," she says. Many of the staff spent their entire careers working with Mimi. "I had the good fortune of being surrounded by dedicated staff, hardworking students and very supportive parents and administrators."

Delrey opened in a small house in Catonsville, Maryland. "It was kind of a run-down place, but none of that mattered. I immediately fell in love with Mimi and the staff," says Allison Clark, mother to Sutton, a Delrey student from age three to six. "Sutton was my first child, and I was terrified to send her to school, but then we visited Delrey, and I was sold." Sutton made tremendous progress. "She learned how to walk, eat and talk at Delrey," says Allison. "The staff were able to get Sutton to do things that no one else had been able to do." Sutton followed Delrey when it moved in 2008 to the new state-of-the-art building in Landsdowne.

"Delrey gave us the skills to be Jarred's biggest advocates," says James Jones. His son Jarred attended Delrey from age three to nine. Jarred's mother Vanessa Jones adds, "The early interventions Jarred received – the feeding clinic, sensory and texture therapy, and physical and occupational therapy – gave him the foundation to progress educationally. Delrey gave Jarred the confidence that he could do anything and showed parents there were no limits to what their child could do."

Jarred transitioned to public school in third grade and graduated from the sports science magnet program at Kenwood High School, a public high school in Baltimore County. He was the recipient of the Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award in 2013, and until COVID-19, he was a seasonal Guest Services employee during Orioles games at Camden Yards. Jarred says, "Delrey was awesome." His fondest memories are of the many friendships he made.

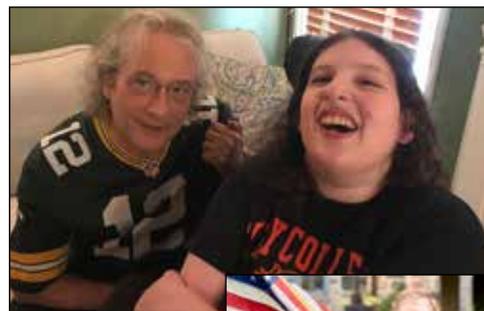
Former student Selina Lee says, "The best part of Delrey was being in a place with other children with disabilities, to be accepted and to have friends like myself." Selina started Delrey in preschool, at age two and half, and received services that laid the foundation for her to transition to public school at age six, for first grade. While at Delrey, she received assisted speech technology and her first power wheelchair.



▲  
Mimi Wang



▲  
Jarred Jones



▲  
Selina Lee (r) with  
her father John (l).

▲  
Sutton Clark with  
her family (l to r):  
Estelle, Jonathan,  
Oliver, Sutton and  
Allison.



"From the beginning, the plan was for her to be mainstreamed in public school," says Selina's father, John Lee. "Delrey really prepared Selina academically." That early foundation combined with Selina's hard work and dedication resulted in Selina graduating eighteenth in her class from City College, a magnet high school in Baltimore, and going on to pursue a degree in Latin at the University of Illinois.

Delrey embraced the student's whole family and developed a deep sense of community. It is telling that so many students and their families have stayed in touch with each other and with Unified. Through school picnics, outings and summer programs, former students have reunited. Sutton's father, Jonathan Clark, has co-chaired Unified's Golf Classic for nine years. Both Jarred and Selina remember returning to student teach in middle and high school. Selina's father, John Lee, is a musician with The Wafflers, a band that has performed at Hoodstock for 16 years.

Delrey School holds a cherished place in our hearts, and we are grateful for all the memories and all the people we touched.

# A HERO IN COVID TIMES

Kirstie Carter began her career with Unified one-and-a-half years ago in Cumberland as assistant residential director and then transitioned into the Day Program director position. Kirstie's mission is to put other people first and do whatever she can to impact lives positively. She knows that life can be difficult for the individuals in our residential homes and Day Programs, especially during these COVID-19 times when their routines have been disrupted. So, Kirstie has made it her mission to put some joy into their lives.



Kirstie Carter



Candie Bettis

Director of Operations for Allegany and Garrett counties Doug Bush says, "Kirstie is always looking to do things even better and make life more fun for our individuals. The wonderful response she gets from our individuals and how well they relate to her is indeed heartwarming to see. She has also led our efforts to enhance our Zoom programming to keep all of our individuals engaged during COVID-19."

Every morning, Kirstie leads Zoom activities and encourages everyone to participate. Afterwards individuals select specific Zoom sessions that are of interest to them. For July 4, Kirstie organized a socially distant Fourth of July picnic with tents for each residential home, and over the summer, she planned ice cream social events and pizza parties.

Most recently, Kirstie helped individuals celebrate fall in style, by going to a pumpkin patch and to Trunk and Treat's Terror Alley, where they drove through Halloween and fall harvest decorations, saw cars and buses decked out for Halloween, and, of course, enjoyed treats. Kirstie has also organized trips to places that are not crowded or where only our individuals are present. She has involved Candie Bettis, one of our individuals who lives in a residential home in Cumberland, in the planning process. These trips have become known as KC's (Kirstie & Candie's) Bizarre Adventures. Kirstie calls these activities "fun with a purpose" and is gratified to see how they lift the spirits of our individuals.

Kirstie has been selected to be a mentor in Unified's Mentor Program when it resumes after COVID-19. Thank you Kirstie for being a true hero during COVID-19 and always going the extra mile to put our individuals first.



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## WORKPLACE GIVING . . .

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Agency numbers for Unified Community Connections are:

- United Way of Central Maryland #024
- Combined Federal Campaign #70735
- Maryland Charities Campaign #52-0696384
- Combined Charities Campaign #8024
- Frederick County/City #0522
- Frederick Private, Cecil County, Allegany County and other areas in Maryland #53

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