

# PROGRESS

A PUBLICATION OF UNIFIED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

CONNECTING  
PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES  
TO LIFE'S  
POSSIBILITIES

FALL 2021

## ALICE AMES NAMED 2021 CAN DO AWARD WINNER

Alice Ames was named the 2021 Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award winner for her amazing spirit and determination in battling cancer. Alice has been with Unified for more than 20 years and currently lives in one of our residential homes in Hagerstown and participates in our Hagerstown Day Program. She is referred to by all her Unified friends as "the diva," and everyone who knows her says that you will never meet another person who is as kind, caring and positive as Alice.

The last few years have been challenging for Alice, and recently she was diagnosed with cancer for a second time. The first time, she was lucky to beat the cancer and make a full recovery. Although the cancer has returned, Alice's positive attitude has her saying, "I am the luckiest person alive." No matter how many tests and chemo treatments she has had to endure, they never broke her. She continued to stay positive and fight and is still fighting today.

Alice can turn your frown upside down just by her smile and laughter. Even during her chemo treatments, she always had her iPad with

her to be sure she did not miss her Zoom lessons. She is always praising and encouraging everyone for all they do and is the type of person who would give you her last dollar if you needed it. Alice's drive to remain positive and the strength she shows every day reflects in her waking up each morning determined to make a difference in someone's life. Alice truly touches everyone's soul. When presented the Can Do Award, she said, "Thank you. This is really marvelous, fabulous and beautiful!"

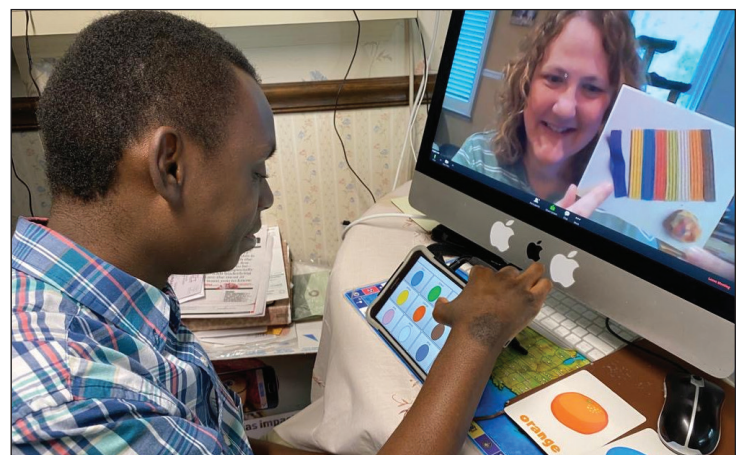


President and CEO Amy Kreitz (l),  
Alice Ames (c) and Rebecca Tucker (r).

## DELIVERING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Assistive technology services play a vital role in the lives of many individuals who receive supports from Unified, enabling them to function and live more independently. Unified's Director of Assistive Technology Angela Strauch Lane provides assessments and training for assistive technology services tailored to an individual's specific needs. These services may include communication devices for individuals who are nonverbal; computer software to assist with reading, writing and spelling; and dictation programs to help individuals with motor deficits who cannot use a regular computer mouse for typing.

Traditionally, assistive technology services are delivered through in-person, face-to-face meetings. During the pandemic, when stay-at-home and social distancing initiatives were implemented, Angela had to rapidly adapt to changing safety protocols.



Director of Assistive Technology Angela Strauch Lane (pictured on computer screen) provides services virtually.

continued inside ►



## OUR MISSION:

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

"Initially, I could not meet with anyone in person," she explains. "A disruption in services was not an option. We did not want any time to pass where individuals might not be able to communicate or get the equipment and services they needed." Unified has contracts with many local outreach programs, and Angela cites Unified's work with the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Clinic at Johns Hopkins as one of many examples where it is critical that individuals receive timely services.

Angela quickly moved to a remote service model and established new methods such as no-contact delivery of devices and meeting outside and in communal spaces. She has become adept at using virtual technology such as Zoom to meet with individuals and TeamViewer to share computer screens and assist individuals with installing and using software. Angela felt more prepared than most because in March 2020 she was teaching a class on augmentative alternative communication at Loyola University Maryland and was up to date on the latest technology and communication methods.

A silver lining of the pandemic is that with everyone at home, there was an uptick in family engagement in the process of receiving

services. Angela hopes that continues as life returns to normal. In-person delivery of assistive technology services returned in July 2020. However, some individuals, either for safety or convenience, have opted to continue receiving services virtually. "They do not have to worry about transportation or travel time, and often it is easier for busy family members who want to be involved and participate in the appointments," notes Angela. "I do not expect virtual services to replace in-person services, but having the option for virtual services expands the opportunities for Unified to support individuals who have disabilities."

## SAVE THE DATE

**Unified's Annual Golf Classic**  
**Monday, May 2, 2022**  
**Elkridge Club**



Support Unified Community Connections when you shop on Amazon Smile: [bit.ly/UC2\\_Smile](https://smile.amazon.com/?ref=af_pn_unified_community_connections).

## WORKPLACE GIVING

Did you know that if your workplace participates in the United Way Campaign, another federated appeal or has an in-house program, you can designate your support for Unified Community Connections through payroll deduction?

Agency numbers for Unified Community Connections:

- 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

*Unified Community Connections is a proud member of Community Health Charities of Maryland.*

## STAFF NEWS



**Angela Hanft** has been promoted to chief operating officer. She joined Unified's leadership team as an assistant residential director

more than six years ago. Her skills and experience were quickly recognized, and she rose to the position of assistant to the chief operating officer in 2016. Throughout her service to Unified and the individuals we support, Angela has received commendations for her stellar work, which most recently included the expeditious scheduling of individuals and staff across the agency to receive COVID-19 vaccines.



**Lenward Nealy** has been named regional operations director in Hagerstown and Cumberland. Originally from North Carolina, Lenward

has 25 years of experience in human services. He served in the U.S. Army as a staff sergeant and platoon leader in the Gulf War, earning many awards including the Good Conduct Medal and the Southwest Asia Service Medal with three Bronze Service Stars. After the military, he joined Vision Quest as chief administrator and managed programs for juvenile offenders in Maryland, Texas, Florida, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania.

## DEVELOPMENT NEWS

- Unified received **\$3,500 from the Civitan Club of Baltimore** to purchase iPads and the hardware necessary to create a virtual day program for the individuals in our Baltimore region during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Unified was awarded **\$60,100 from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission through the Maryland Emergency RELIEF Act of 2021** to purchase facial scan readers and air purifiers in addition to funding recruitment incentives to aid in the reopening of our programs.
- Thank you to the **Thomas and Nattans families for donating a combined total of \$13,000 to Unified's Residential Fund** that helps maintain Unified's 43 residential homes throughout Maryland.



# HOODSTOCK XVIII ENJOYED BY ALL IN NEW LOCATION AND RAISED \$84,000

Hoodstock XVIII was held in person at a new concert-friendly venue, The Winslow, where more than 200 people just said, "No to black-tie and yes to tie-dye," while enjoying an evening of great music, dancing, good food and drink. The hybrid event also had many virtual participants watching the show on YouTube. Our famous silent auction, raffles and "Be Cool" YETI Cooler of Cheer raffle rounded out the fun. Originally founded in 2004 as a neighborhood party, Hoodstock is now Unified's major fundraiser, raising more than \$890,000 to advance the independence of individuals with disabilities by supporting Unified's programs and services.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation by Baltimore Ravens Senior Advisor for Player Development and former Unified board member O.J. Brigrance of the Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award to Alice Ames, who has been with Unified for more than 20 years. Alice was honored for her strength and determination to fight cancer and her ability to stay positive.

President and CEO Amy Kreitz spoke of the resilience, especially during the past year, of our staff and the individuals we serve. She described Alice as a shining example of strength and positivity and a true example of how our individuals are defined by their abilities rather than their disabilities, noting that she is a true fighter.



Guests celebrate Hoodstock.



Roses n Rust wow the guests at The Winslow.

Showcasing the rock/folk music scene of the late '60s and early '70s, mixed with some contemporary music, Hoodstock featured music by Roses n Rust, the event headliner, and The Wafflers.

A special thanks to event chair Russ Causey and committee members: Kathy Bradley, Barry Brill, Lauren Bussard, Julie Carper, Migena Dilolli, Angela Lane, Nick Richardson, Carol Sholes, Emily Sutorius and Manette Zinkand. All of their hard work is what made the evening such a success. Amy Kreitz especially recognized Russ Causey for all he has done over the last 18 years to support Unified and the individuals we serve.

**Join us next year for  
Hoodstock XIX on Friday,  
November 18, 2022, at  
The Winslow.**



Hoodstock planning committee poses with guests and emcee Bill Romani.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

### Tie-Dye Diamond

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Melanie Dorsey, in Memory of  
Mary Elizabeth Beukema

### "Be Cool" YETI Cooler of Cheer Champion

Emily Sutorius, State Farm Agent

### Peace and Love Platinum

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# AROUND THE AGENCY



Hagerstown resident Bronson Stone vacationed in Cape May.



Frederick resident Gail Smith enjoyed a trip to Cunningham Falls.



Hagerstown residents (l to r) Mark and William had front row seats for a World Wrestling Entertainment event in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

## UNIFIED IS HIRING: SPREAD THE WORD

Unified Community Connections is currently hiring Direct Support Professionals for its various locations including Baltimore, Frederick, Hagerstown and Cumberland. Direct Support Professionals support and assist individuals with disabilities to live productive and meaningful lives. Unified offers generous benefits and provides opportunities for personal growth and professional development.

Visit [unified.org/employment](https://unified.org/employment) to apply today.



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## DSPs RECEIVE PROCLAMATION

In appreciation of our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) during National DSP Recognition Week in September, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services presented our operations team in Frederick a proclamation signed by County Executive Marc Elrich. We are honored by the recognition and would like to thank and recognize all of our DSPs. They are the heart of what we do—making positive and meaningful differences in the lives of the individuals we support day in and day out.

