

NASW-MD Chapter's 2022 Social Workers of the Year

We are pleased to announce our selections for this year's honorees for our social work month award winners. The winners will receive a plaque and be honored at an awards ceremony in June.

Social Worker of the Year:

Stacey Stephens, MSW, LCSW-C has led a transformative initiative offering individualized education, careful listening to community members, and advocacy for equitable health policies to improve the health of families. The B'more for Healthy Babies Promise Heights (BHB) was the brainchild of Stephens and Promise Heights founder and Director, Bronwyn Mayden, who recently counted Stephens as "the best possible leader for this important initiative." Stephens' energetic team of social workers and community outreach professionals work in collaboration with its community-based peer leaders to provide personalized support to families with children from ages zero to five. Her dynamic team offers doula support, breastfeeding guidance, and many other supportive programs. When the pandemic struck, BHB's team pivoted to provide virtual services to families who depended on this vital support. Ms. Stephens's leadership sets the tone and inspires her staff. BHB Peer Leader, Jameka Henson recently praised Stephens, saying, "I love how much she brings love energy to every meeting—she's full of life, and you just hear it in her voice. It's infectious! She seems driven to do whatever she puts her mind to accomplish." At a press conference last June, Baltimore community leaders celebrated Stephens's team for BHB's dramatic success. During the past decade, Upton/Druid Heights' infant mortality rate dropped by 75% to 3.8 deaths per 1,000 live births—a dramatically lower figure than in 2009, and well beneath the city's overall White infant mortality rate of 4.4% in 2019. Mayor Scott lauded Stephen's team, saying, "The work in Upton/Druid Heights is absolutely incredible! I want to thank Director Stephens and B'more for Healthy Babies for this measurable impact in this community, and subsequently in Baltimore as a whole..." Stacey Stephens has built a program that successfully eliminated a long-standing health disparity. She is an example of what our profession can do to improve communities, end injustice, and prevent the deaths of infants and children. It is with these achievements in mind, we have chosen Stacey Stephens for 2022 Social Worker of the Year.

Social Work Educator of The Year

Jodi Jacobson Frey, PhD, LCSW-C, CEAP is a Professor at The University of Maryland, School of Social Work where she chairs the Social Work in the Workplace & Employee Assistance Sub-specialization and the Financial Social Work Initiative. She is the Founder and Faculty Executive Director of the newly launched Behavioral Health

and Well-Being Lab (BHWELL Lab). She is also co-Chair of the University of Maryland Mental Health and Addiction Health Disparities Think Tank.

Dr. Frey's research focuses on workplace behavioral health, including the impact of employee health and well-being on productivity and safety. She studies the effectiveness of employee assistance, work/life, and related programs for working-age adults and working families. She has dedicated a significant portion of her research and advocacy to suicide prevention and crisis response in the workplace.

Recent articles have been published in JAMA, American Journal of Addictions, Social Work, J Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health, Research on Social Work Practice, and Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, and Harvard Business Review. Dr. Frey regularly presents her work at international conferences and she serves as Co-Editor-in-Chief for the Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health. She is also the Co-Founder of the award-winning International Employee Assistance Digital Archive, housed at the University of Maryland.

Dr. Frey co-chairs the Workplace Suicide Prevention and Postvention Committee where she helped write and now co-leads the dissemination of the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention. She is also a past chair of EAPA's Subcommittee on Workplace Disaster Preparedness and Response and her leadership on this committee was recognized when she received the 2006 EAPA President's Award for Excellence.

Prior to teaching, Dr. Frey provided workplace mental health and EAP services to NASA, Goddard Space Flight Center, where she was recognized with several awards for her service to employees and family members. She continues to fuel her passion for workplace behavioral health and support for working families through her research, teaching and service to the social work profession.

Lifetime Achievement Award:

Congratulations to **James Forte, MSW Ph.D** who is this year's recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. The depth and breadth of Jim Forte's contributions to the social work profession and community are truly outstanding. Since 1976, he has been working with vulnerable populations, the chronically mentally ill, the homeless, those struggling with disabilities, and the incarcerated. Dr. Forte began working at Salisbury University in 2003. Since then, he has positively impacted the lives of thousands of social work students and has made significant contributions to the University and social work profession. Forte's contribution to scholarly research is remarkable. He has published more than 40 scholarly articles and four books. He has also reviewed numerous articles and books for many professional journals and publishers. In 2020 alone, Jim contributed eleven reviews of scholarly articles to three different journals. He has also given around 100 presentations at local, regional, national, and international conferences. He

pioneered the interdisciplinary approach to theory application and teamwork. He developed “Practical Theorizing” and “Multi-theoretical Social Work” approaches to teaching theorizing processes in social work courses. James Forte’s scholarship is informed and enriched by his classroom experiences, which recursively informs his teaching. Also, his articles are used by faculty members worldwide, as indicated in citation reports from Academia, Research Gate, Slideshare, and LinkedIn. He was selected as the best reviewer for the Journal of Social Work Education from CSWE in 2016. Also, his textbooks (“Skills for Using Theory in Social Work” and “Models, Metaphors, and Maps”) are being used by social work educators in their course design. His scholarship strikes a clear balance between an emphasis on research-informed teaching and teaching-informed research. Indeed, his pedagogically grounded research has garnered great engagement from social work educators in developing their own knowledge base of social work teaching techniques. He served as a representative to NASW-MD and Influencing State Policy Organization and School spokesperson on Scholar’s Day. In particular, he worked very closely with NASWMD on the Annual Students’ Legislative Education and Advocacy Development Day (LEAD/Advocacy Day) as SU SSW representative since 2003. Jim also presented 17 total workshops at NASW-MD conferences and training events. He possesses a wealth of understanding about social policy, community practice, and legislative advocacy. His experience and enthusiasm in these areas helped students to have the opportunity to engage in advocacy and practice what they learned in class. The student participation rate for this event was consistently high compared to other social work schools in MD. Dr. Forte was honored by his professional community with the Maryland Social Work Educator of the Year in 2010. Throughout his professional career, Dr. Forte has been a committed advocate for multiple social causes. For instance, he has engaged in web-based advocacy for thousands of acts by sending daily petitions related to economic justice, environmental issues, gender justice, racial justice, and so on. Also, he was co-chair of the Project O.U.T. (Opportunity to Uplift Your Tomorrow) workgroup to plan a new agency for opioid addicts. He also served multiple nonprofit organizations (vice-president of a nonprofit Board of Directors for the Bahama Princess Condo Association). In addition, he consulted for Salisbury Neighborhood Housing and participated in Wicomico Partnership for Families and Children Committee and Middle State Diversity and Globalization Committee. In 2020, he served as a workshop facilitator for eight sessions of Democracy in the Nation. James Forte is a dedicated, talented, and respected member of the University and professional community who has made significant contributions over the past and current years. His contributions in teaching, scholarship, and social work profession are exemplary. James Forte is a dedicated educator and scholar and a positive role model whose contributions have enhanced the social work profession. We are so thrilled to honor you as our Lifetime Achievement Award winner!