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BJC TODAY

DECEMBER 19, 2016 • VOL. 19, NO. 24

The best gift of all



Precious little gifts, like Mason Lewis Evans, born at Parkland Health Center Dec. 13, will be going home in special wrapping from birth centers across BJC to celebrate the holiday season. | Photo by Ursula Warren

Cunningham named among nation's best mentors

BJC School Outreach employee honored with Outstanding Preceptor Award

by Patty Johnson

BJC ■ Dietetic interns who complete their community health rotations through BJC School Outreach and Youth Development know they're getting important training to further their careers. What they might not know is that they're training with one of the nation's top dietetics mentors.

Kristin Cunningham, BJC School Outreach curriculum specialist, who coordinates the department's rotations for Fontbonne University and Saint Louis University graduate students who are completing dietetic internships, recently was honored with the 2016 Outstanding Preceptor Award. Cunningham was one of just seven individuals nationwide chosen to receive the award from the Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Preceptors Practice Group and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation.

The award recognizes exemplary teaching, mentoring and leadership activities in dietetics education programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics.

"Kristin is a recipient of this honor because she



Kristin Cunningham

approaches mentorship thoughtfully, creatively and humbly," says former BJC School Outreach educator Camille Smith, RD, who along with Fontbonne graduate student Michelle Cheval nominated Cunningham for the award. "She is committed to fostering the growth of future dietitians, balancing a desire to enhance the integrity of the dietetics profession with a desire to nurture the young professionals she leads.

"Colleagues and students who work with Kristin recognize her humble yet assertive leadership style, one that values listening, communicating thoughtfully, conducting herself with integrity, and providing kind, honest, meaningful feedback," Smith adds. "The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation notes that recipients of this honor are 'truly the best of the best.'"

Cunningham received the award in October at the 2016 Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo in Boston and was featured at the Academy Member Showcase at the Expo. "I was extremely humbled to just have been nominated, and was incredibly surprised to have been selected as one of only seven recipients across the country," she says.

"I was presented the award by an esteemed dietitian, author and past president of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, whose textbook I used during my undergraduate education at Mizzou! I was glad to be in Boston to receive the award in person," she adds.

As a BJC School Outreach curriculum specialist, Cunningham ensures that the department's curricula align

with state and national education standards and provide the most creative and sound methods of delivering health information to young people.

She also works with the Fontbonne and Saint Louis University dietetic interns during their two- to three-week rotations — training, leading and mentoring them. She approaches this responsibility by focusing on "servant leadership."

"I was exposed to the concept of servant leadership through the BJC/Webster University MHA cohort, and it has really resonated with me," Cunningham says. "It involves empowering followers to grow and succeed through empathy, humility and integrity. I hope to integrate this practice more deeply with each intern I serve."

Cunningham adds that being a preceptor is a two-way street. "Serving in this role also challenges me to become a more effective leader and to be more willing to question my current practices," she says.

And she encourages the interns to learn as much as they can during the time they spend with those they're teaching. "My hope is that the interns learn the most by engaging with the young people in schools within our community — they are the most effective teachers," Cunningham says. "My role is simply to provide context and guidance to enable the interns to best meet the needs of the students we serve." ■

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Breaking ground on a long-cherished dream

by Marilyn Hart

BJC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ■ A cloudy, blustery day didn't dampen the spirits of members of the Friends in Action (FIA) Clubhouse, BJC Behavioral Health-Southeast staff and the community as they celebrated the groundbreaking for the new Friends In Action Clubhouse building Dec. 6. It had been a long 10 years since Clubhouse members and BJC Behavioral Health leadership began planning for this day. Trivia nights, art shows, car washes, calendar sales and other fund-raising efforts, plus a BJC Behavioral Health partnership with a local development company who will construct and lease the building, helped to slowly make this dream become a reality.

Friends in Action is a community center that offers people who have mental illness hope and opportunities to achieve their full potential. More than simply a program

or a social service, a clubhouse is a community of people who are working together to achieve a common goal. Under the leadership of Anna Portell, clinical supervisor, FIA received international accreditation in 2015.

FIA has outgrown its current location in Park Hills, Mo. A new facility will allow for an enhanced clubhouse program that would include:

- computer lab/resource center
- flower shop
- catering services
- wellness center
- art center
- vocational services
- dining area

Dan Rothery, BJC Home Care and Community Services president; Barbi Berrong, BJC Behavioral Health vice president; and Karen Miller, associate director of

BJC Behavioral Health-Southeast, all gave remarks at the groundbreaking, underscoring the effort it had taken to get to that point. Betty, a longtime member, said it best: "BJC Behavioral Health and Friends in Action gives us back our lives!"

The new building, at 657 Walton, in Farmington, Mo., will be located behind the BJC Behavioral Health-Southeast site and the Friendship House apartments, a HUD 811 Housing project that was a joint venture between BJC Behavioral Health and the East Missouri Action Agency (EMAA) that opened in 2014. When completed, the new Friends in Action Clubhouse will become a key part of this integrated health care campus.

Find out more about BJC Behavioral Health Friends in Action Clubhouse by visiting facebook.com/fiaclubhouse. ■

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Members of the Friends in Action Clubhouse, BJC Behavioral Health-Southeast staff and community members celebrate the groundbreaking for the new Friends in Action Clubhouse building Dec. 6. | Courtesy photo