

## **Cigna Employees Go Local to Improve Health of Their Communities**

BLOOMFIELD, Conn., 21 March, 2019 - Health improvement starts in the community and for the second consecutive year, a group of Cigna employees will be working in close collaboration with local nonprofit organizations across the country – and beyond – to help achieve that goal. Through Cigna's Community Ambassador Fellowship program, employees will partner with an organization of their choice to positively impact the health and well-being of people in their communities.

Introduced in 2017, the Community Ambassador Fellowship program offers eligible employees an opportunity to take a sabbatical-style paid leave from work to support projects that exemplify Cigna's mission. After a competitive application process, selected employees embark on a one- to three-month fellowship, while receiving full salary and benefits plus a stipend to support their community work.

"The Cigna mission doesn't have walls. We asked employees to think about how they could broaden Cigna's impact and help others if they could take time away from work, and we were incredibly impressed by the number of proposals from employees driven to combine their passion and expertise to serve their communities," said John M. Murabito, executive vice president, human resources at Cigna.

The program is consistent with Cigna's commitment to reach deep into communities to develop meaningful partnerships at the grassroots level, and to help make communities more vibrant and healthy.

The 2019 fellows and the locations of their projects are highlighted below.

**Kenya, Africa; Hellen Gatwiri Kiburi:** [African Institute for Health & Development \(AIHD\)](#) focuses on implementing evidence-based programming, conducting research, training and advocacy on health and development issues relevant to Kenya and the African continent. Kiburi will partner with AIHD to promote the "Be Beautiful, Be Healthy" initiative among local barbershops and beauty salons to educate people about prevention and control of high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu.

**National, United States; Gloria Barone Rosanio:** [March of Dimes'](#) mission is to lead the fight for the health of all moms and babies. With a recent \$300,000 grant from the Cigna Foundation, the March of Dimes expanded its Supportive Pregnancy Care program to provide prenatal care to women in a group setting where they receive social and emotional support from other mothers. Barone will work with March of Dimes to expand the reach of its Supportive Pregnancy Care program by meeting with participating women to document and share their stories to help encourage other moms to join. She will also create customized stories for March of Dimes families to read to their infants in Neonatal Intensive Care Units.

**Minneapolis, Minnesota; Richard Bonk:** [The Warrior's Path](#) is designed to empower veterans and their families as they pursue a future tailored to their individual experiences, skill sets and dreams. Many veterans suffer from chronic pain, stress, opioid and other substance abuse and may have few resources to help them. Bonk will partner with the Warrior's Path project to bring new stress, pain and symptom management techniques, including mindfulness and biofeedback, to veterans through the Minneapolis Veteran's Administration.

**Houston, Texas; Christi Bowers:** [Recipe for Success Foundation](#) works to make healthy food appealing and available to everyone, and through Hope Farms, provides access to fresh produce, cooking, gardening and nutrition education programs as well as job training for military veterans. Bowers will develop and launch opportunities for people to learn about how food is grown and gain nutrition and cooking skills that enable them to make life-long healthy food choices.

**Denver, Colorado; Christopher Graber:** [The GrowHaus](#) is a nonprofit indoor farm, marketplace and educational center in Denver's urban Elyria-Swansea neighborhood and provides residents access to fresh food and nutrition education. Graber will use his experience in consumer engagement to help the organization better engage the people they serve. Graber will also support the final phases of The GrowHaus renovation project, including a Teaching Farm, which is key to helping them meet their program goals.

**Chicago, Illinois; Katherine McDonald:** The [Lurie Children's program](#) at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago is working to increase the number of parents exposed to positive parenting skill building and health education. McDonald partnered with Lurie Children's to support pilot development, collect feedback about community needs, recommend intervention components and provided a framework for evaluating impact.

**Connecticut and Western Massachusetts; Samantha Merwin:** [Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation \(JDRF\)](#) leads the fight against type 1 diabetes by funding research, advocating for policies that accelerate access to new therapies and providing a support network for millions of people impacted by the disease. Merwin will partner with JDRF to strengthen local community outreach. This will include creating a resource and 18-month schedule of relevant education sessions and activities for local families impacted by type 1 diabetes to help them thrive.

**Wheeling, West Virginia; Colette Sanner:** [Youth Services Systems, Inc.](#) is committed to responding to the complex needs of youth at serious risk, and working to improve their physical and emotional well-being by addressing the effects of abuse, addiction and trauma. Sanner will partner with Youth Services System, Inc. to help area children and families impacted by opioid addiction through mentoring. She will help develop a Youth Mentoring Network campaign to recruit and train mentors and enhance youth outreach to help support the social, emotional and academic needs of children.

**Pike County, Georgia; Sheila Scott:** [Hygiene for Humanity \(H4H\)](#) promotes health among people in need by providing basic hygiene products locally and internationally. To continue these efforts, Scott will partner with H4H to implement the "A Better You" program in Pike County middle schools. Scott and the "A Better You" program will help at-risk students in grades 5-8 improve feelings of self-worth, school performance and health outcomes by teaching good hygiene habits and providing them with basic hygiene needs on a recurring basis.

**Nashville, Tennessee; Joseph Vacca:** [The Bridge](#) provides food and daily necessities to people in need in Nashville. Vacca will partner with The Bridge to identify opportunities to improve the organization's operations and further its ability to help those in need of food, shelter, emotional support and other services. He will aim to create an approach that could become a blueprint for other cities to follow.

**Wake Forest, North Carolina; Mbelu Walton:** [Envision Science Academy](#) is a STEM charter school in Wake Forest for elementary and middle school students. Walton will partner with Envision Science Academy to develop a program that creates a community hub for hands-on learning about the important role healthy food plays in everyday lives. The community outdoor learning space will collaborate with local experts such as garden designers, farmers, chefs, nutritionists, fitness trainers and others to promote and support community wellness.

To learn more about Cigna's community impact, visit the [Cigna Newsroom](#).

**About Cigna**

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