

2023 Employee Award Recipients

Dr. Slemmons Award: Kara Felder

This award goes to someone who has created improvements in his or her respective program through the power of ideas, technology, or previously unused methods.

“I am nominating Kara Felder for the Dr. Slemmons award because of her effective use of technology in creating health communication materials for the Health Education and Promotion team. Kara is always willing to cheerfully go above and beyond to create great looking materials that allow us to effectively promote our programs and educate our participants.”

The award is named after Dr. C.C. Slemmons directed the Kent County Health Department from 1910 to 1930. Dr. Slemmons initiated school and public meeting closures to halt the spread of illness during the Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1918, recommended the use of screens to keep flies from spreading disease, enforced quarantines, and initiated the Goiter Belt study that resulted in the addition of iodine to salt. Known to all as “The Health Man,” he also had the first telephone installed for use by public health nurse.

Dr. Prothro Award: Brendan Earl

This award goes to an employee who has demonstrated commitment to his or her field of work both on and off the clock. Nominees must be passionate about their respective fields of work and be committed to advocating on behalf of clients or educating the community about public health issues.

“I have had the privilege of working alongside Brendan for many years. The work in Environmental Health is not for the faint of heart. He has consistently worked through difficult situations with grace and empathy when working with residents and community partners. He is a mentor to his peers, interns, and team and genuinely cares about their wellbeing. Ultimately, what I appreciate most about Brendan is his kindness, humor, generosity of spirit, and drive to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right way.”

Dr. Winston Prothro was the Director of the Kent County Health Department in the 1950’s. He was instrumental in joining city and county health departments, testing of the Salk Polio Vaccine, and establishing the first outpatient alcoholism treatment center in the United States. An ardent promoter of healthy lifestyles, he used television to promote health with a regular program called “The Health of Our City.”

Dr. Delabbio Award: Tessa Burrell

This award recognizes an employee who has a servant’s heart and whose positive energy makes KCHD a more welcoming and valuable place in our community.

“There was a family of 4 that came into South Clinic for immunizations. The family came with their luggage as they had been kicked out of their home that morning and had nowhere to go. Tessa immediately jumped into action with the team calling various agencies and resources trying to find the family a place to stay. They had not eaten all

day, so Tessa even went to McDonalds and bought them whatever food they wanted using her own money. We finally got in contact with CPS who set the family up at a hotel. Tessa drove the family to the hotel personally and stopped with them at the store on the way helping them purchase foods with their WIC card to ensure they had something to eat. This was not an easy feat as the family did not speak English. This was an all-day undertaking and then some, and she truly thought of everything to help this family with two young children stay warm, fed and taken care of as much as possible even following up with CPS the next day. Talk about above and beyond customer service!”

Dr. Daryl Delabbio was the Kent County Administrator from 1996 to 2017 and a champion for customer service. Every member of the KCHD team serves internal and external customers each day. As public health professionals, it is important that we work with the heart of a servant. We must actively listen and show genuine compassion. We must help with a sincere interest for the customer.

Dr. Bora Award: Molly Perez

This award recognizes an employee who embraces these values and whose work demonstrates concern for all people.

“Molly Perez’s role as the Strong Beginning’s supervisor is to address health disparities for black and brown pregnant people in Kent County. To her, it’s more than just her job; it’s her passion. Molly guides her team of Community Health Workers to provide resources, education, and support their clients to be heard by their health care providers. When discussing how to address the health challenges in our community, Molly gently reminds us to speak and act with cultural humility and to look inward at our own biases to determine how they may affect our decision making. I am so grateful to have a coworker like Molly to encourage me to be more culturally competent; it has made me a better person and advocate for our community.”

Many public health problems are directly associated with social injustice. Lack of access to essential resources, discrimination, language barriers, and other social variables create considerable obstacles to health. This health inequity, in turn, further exacerbates negative forces which reduce the probability of healthy outcomes for future generations. Kent County has embraced inclusion and diversity as organizational values. KCHD understands that cultural competency and humility are critical elements to our ability to effectively respond to the important public health issues of our time.
