

SOLID GROUND'S 2020 EMPLOYEE AWARDS

ACCOUNTABILITY AWARD

OMAR CUEVAS VEGA

Policy & Field Coordinator

Omar continually inspires us with an unwavering kindness and ability to center voices of people most impacted by poverty, so folks are empowered to make changes they wish to see in their lives and in our community. Omar is thoughtful and brings a race and social justice focus to every interaction with coworkers, and in support of the union. If something seems awry, Omar speaks up gently but persistently, bringing great wisdom to Solid Ground's Anti-Racism Initiative Steering Committee as well – helping us all be more accountable to the communities we serve.

Nominees: Neo Mazur, Victoria Meissner, Khadar Mohamed, Rufael Serak, Yamila Sterling, Kari Ware, Alexandra Weeks



COLLABORATION AWARD

JALAYNA CARTER

Digital Media Specialist

Jalayna embodies Solid Ground's Collaboration value. Working in the hybrid space between Communications and Resource Development, she has expanded our donor campaigns from two a year to four and collaborated with program staff to infuse

these efforts with compelling stories and facts, helping us raise well over our goals. She's been an indispensable behind-the-curtains tech wizard, helping Solid Ground virtual events and workshops go smoothly. Jalayna's ability to collaborate is bolstered by her calm, purposeful demeanor, great listening skills, nondefensiveness, and powers of persuasion.

Nominees: Grace D., Grants Team, Shana McCann, Sidney Williams

COMPASSION AWARD

TAMARA BAUMAN

JourneyHome Case Manager

Tamara is incredibly compassionate toward all her participants. She knows that people experiencing homelessness deserve better, and she partners with participants to fight back against racism and oppression. She regularly witnesses housing discrimination, and it is part of her built-in practice to interrupt, educate, and hold offending parties accountable in alignment with her participants' goals. The nonjudgmental care and compassion she brings to her work is a huge contributor to participants' success.

Nominees: Esther B., Nicole Carbine, Barbara Hart



RESPECT AWARDS

DANIELLE CALDWELL

Benefits Legal Assistance (BLA) Social Worker

Danielle continually amazes us with her scope of knowledge, ability to easily navigate a frustrating complex legal world, and always above all else center her clients. She is steadfast and committed

to the larger systemic goals of BLA: not just supporting folks purely in a one-on-one client case methodology, but also lifting recurring issues and working with DSHS to adjust rulemaking to reduce barriers and eliminate punitive measures that persistently harm folks living in poverty – most often those from communities of color. Danielle centers respect for clients in a way that not only honors their experience but lifts them up as solutions to these issues, recognizing that their brilliance and resilience is the way forward.

AQUIBALON RUQUIYA

JourneyHome Case Manager

Aquibalon embodies Solid Ground's Respect value every day in her work with participants, colleagues, and the community. Believing people are experts of their own experiences, she consistently uplifts the importance of honoring leadership in the predominantly BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) communities that we serve and supports participants through that lens to reach goals on their own terms. To help our program better respond to the enduring racism crisis in our country, she suggested we prioritize getting participant input on program design, structure, and resources – one of many examples of how Aquibalon authentically lives into the value of Respect.

Nominees: Abdel Elfahmy, Michael Hawk, Melaku Zeleke



INTEGRITY AWARD

CORE COVID-19 WALLINGFORD TEAM

Kevin Barber, Mary Csontos, Nazim Haji, Barbara Hart, Mary Kay Olson, Shelly Parrish, Gordon Pun, Leslie Wallace

This team came together as COVID-19 became our 2020 reality to form an amazing and strong support group. Present in the Wallingford building at least 95% of the time since it closed on March 24, they worked together to provide significant external support for our coworkers, ranging from IT help to moral support, and countless 'hard' items in between. They listened to feedback from all corners of the agency and moved forward making informed decisions. This team truly defines Integrity!

Nominees: Joanna T., Arturo Velasquez

SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARDS

NAOMI NATSUHARA

Grant Writer

Naomi embodies social justice in all forms. She is acutely aware of who needs to be centered in her work: the community, the program staff, and those Solid Ground supports each day. From spotlighting BIPOC partner organizations' work, to championing empowerment language, to being adaptive to shifting understandings of the power that words can have – especially for persistently trauma-exposed communities – Naomi is simply the most adept at ensuring the communities we serve are spoken of with respect and a social justice lens.



BLACK AFFINITY GROUP (BAG)

Celestine Berrysmith, Markia Brinson, Danielle Caldwell, Jalayna Carter, Ellena Floyd, Charlann H., Dee H., Barbara Hart, Cynthia Linder, Sharran M., Neo Mazur, Yamila Sterling, Nadia Yeracaris

During a year when Black people across the US have had to face incessant reminders that our country devalues their lives and safety, BAG has shown incredible resilience, strength, and grit. Less than one month following the brutal police murder of George Floyd – and during a pandemic that disproportionately impacts Black and Brown people – they hosted a brilliantly powerful Juneteenth event on Black Liberation, simultaneously raising their voices, holding each other up, and gracefully creating a learning opportunity for all Solid Ground staff members. We are grateful for these gifts.

Nominees: Kelsey F., Chelsah R., Danthanh T., Nadia Yeracaris

ESSENTIAL HEROES & CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE AWARDS

BROADVIEW HOUSEKEEPING & MAINTENANCE

Abdali E., the late Antonio Medina, Sharran M.

From the very start of the pandemic, Sharran, Abdali, and Antonio (R.I.P.) increased their COVID cleaning efforts, schedule, and protocol, approaching their work with ease and grace.

BROADVIEW SHELTER & TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Broadview experienced a difficult year, including changes in leadership and several losses among staff, along with additional trauma from the pandemic and an international rise in domestic violence (DV). The team demonstrated incredible strength, courage, and cooperation to continue supporting residents and each other through the crisis, working long hours, taking on new roles, and remaining responsive to emerging and dynamic needs.

DAVID SELLERS

Solid Ground Transportation (SGT) Operator

David sanitizes vehicles and does a great job with a very pleasant attitude. No one has ever seen him discouraged, despite the added burdens posed by increased COVID-19 safety and hygiene protocols.



SOLID GROUND TRANSPORTATION (SGT) DEPARTMENT

Each and every person on the SGT team – from drivers to mechanics to dispatchers to supervisors to admin staff to the director – has had to make a tectonic shift during an extremely uncertain and dangerous time in order to continue to keep some of our most vulnerable community members safe. From food deliveries to extreme safety and hygiene measures, SGT staff have selflessly accepted personal risk to continue to help people in our community get critical needs met. Thank you, superheroes!

Nominees: Maia Ayoola, Celestine Berrysmith, Karen Ford, Stacey M., Solid Ground Transportation (SGT) Drivers, Statewide Poverty Action Network