



Exceptional Dedication, Work, and Achievement: 2024 ZSFG DOM Staff Appreciation Awards



Award winners Elizabeth Gutierrez, Mary Beth Moreno, Vanessa York, Wendy Ching, with Neil Powe, MD. Jillian Kadota Tomlinson not pictured.

On September 30, 2024, more than 150 faculty and staff members gathered at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital (ZSFG) Pride Hall to honor the exceptional contributions of staff within the Department of Medicine (DOM) at the annual Staff Appreciation Awards. This event recognized the dedication, hard work, and outstanding achievements of staff members who have gone above and beyond in their roles. Neil Powe, MD, Chief of Medicine at ZSFG, presented five celebrated awards, each reflecting the important ways in which staff contribute to the success and mission of ZSFG and UCSF.

Vanessa York:
Excellence in Administrative Service

Vanessa York, from the Division of

Experimental Medicine, was honored with the Staff Appreciation Award for Excellence in Administrative Service. Vanessa's role as the Operations Manager has been marked by her proactive approach and unwavering dedication to ensuring that Pride Hall is a functional and welcoming environment for all its occupants. Her efforts across divisions and departments, reflect her commitment to the wider research community.

Excerpts from Nomination:

Vanessa is someone who goes above and beyond



Vanessa York

in everything she does and always prioritizes the needs of others. With over 15 years of experience and her background in research wet laboratory management and operations, Vanessa wears many hats and has a wide range of skills. Vanessa demonstrates the true value of excellence in all that she does. She takes a proactive and "whatever needs to be done" approach to her work which often benefits the research community beyond our division. For example, Pride Hall does not have an established structure for resolving building-wide issues which are often unanticipated and urgent in nature.

Vanessa has also been instrumental in the formation of Pride Hall building and operational committees to create structure in resolving daily and complex challenges related to facilitating research in a newly operational building. She maintains a calm and positive demeanor even when faced with frustrating roadblocks. She takes pride in delivering the highest level of customer service to the research community at Pride Hall and has been a critical factor in day-to-day operations for all, which goes far beyond her Division of Experimental Medicine scope of work.

Wendy Ching: Excellence in Patient Care

Wendy Ching, the clinical director of the ZSFG Pulmonary Function Laboratory, received the Staff Appreciation Award for Excellence in Patient Care. Wendy has been instrumental in upgrading the pulmonary function testing (PFT) system, mentoring new lab members, and ensuring the highest standards of patient care.

Excerpts from Nomination:

Wendy has spearheaded the transition from



an outdated system of PFT interpretation to a now race-irrelevant, inclusive system. Despite multiple stakeholders, opinions, and obstacles, she has seamlessly implemented this new system into the new division workflow, always with a positive attitude and desire to make things better for staff, physicians, and most importantly, patients. She not only does this, but also directly communicates with patients regarding their appointments and does studies directly in our lab. She is the epitome of excellence and is a



Wendy Ching

role model to all with her work ethic and availability, even after hours helping us coordinate urgent bronchoscopies. For example, on a Monday holiday, we had an emergency foreign body removal procedure. Wendy, who was on vacation in Hawaii, provided detailed instructions via text and followed up to ensure the procedure went well and to check on the patient. Her dedication and availability highlight her commitment to patient care.

Jillian Kadota Tomlinson: Excellence in Research

Jillian Kadota Tomlinson from the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine was awarded the Staff Appreciation Award for Excellence in Research. Jill's leadership in high-impact tuberculosis (TB) studies and her role in mentoring new staff have been pivotal to the division's research success.

Excerpts from Nomination:

Jill has demonstrated scientific and programmatic leadership in several large tuberculosis research projects in Uganda. She simultaneously led protocol development, training of our local staff in Uganda, and developed data collection and data management tools that have been critical to the success of two independent randomized trials. As those studies evolved, she has taken on the development of sub-studies, authored manuscripts (PLOS Medicine, Lancet), and supported the training and career development of students and research staff in under-resourced settings; duties above and beyond her role as a data analyst.

Jill is always prepared and frequently able to efficiently lead international collaboration calls with her humor and warmth. Beyond her



Pride Hall Staff Appreciation Celebration

duties as a data analyst, Jill has also become a de facto program manager for a growing social determinants core within our research group. She organizes work-in-progress discussions and supports other team members in learning analytic approaches in health disparities research appropriate for the context of global health activities. Jill's leadership has spearheaded the design and development of a novel toolkit for the World Health Organization on providing social protections to tuberculosis-affected individuals and their communities. This toolkit is being deployed to over 30 high TB burden countries as a roadmap for how to implement and evaluate social and economic interventions in conjunction with biomedical diagnostics and treatments to address the root causes of diseases of poverty. Jill's leadership and work will improve the lives of many and elevate the profile of UCSF as a leader in global health disparities research.



Jillian Kadota Tomlinson

Mary Beth Moreno: Excellence in Research

Mary Beth Moreno from the Division of Experimental Medicine was also honored with the Staff Appreciation Award for Excellence in Research. As a Specialist and Lab Manager, Mary

Beth's dedication and expertise have been critical to the division's success, particularly in setting up the new BSL3 facility in Pride Hall.

Excerpts from Nomination:

Mary Beth serves as a Specialist and Lab Manager for the Ernst Lab as well as the Javid and Papa Labs. Serving multiple highly functioning research labs is not an easy task and Mary Beth does so with a level of dedication, professionalism, expertise, and consistency that goes far beyond her expected job duties. When our division moved into Pride Hall, Mary Beth stepped up to serve as a representative for our community on the 2nd floor. This role is voluntary and requires participation in countless hours of meetings which go beyond Mary Beth's scope of duties.



Mary Beth Moreno

More recently, Mary Beth took on the role of serving as the Manager of the BSL3/ABSL3 biocontainment facilities at ZSFG/Pride Hall and Mission Bay. This additional responsibility requires a high level of knowledge and the ability to anticipate problems so they can



The extraordinary music for the event care of Jordan Samuels, Tomoko Funaki, and Peter Hunt.

be prevented. She assures proper functioning of all equipment, especially the autoclaves that sterilize biohazardous materials before they can be discarded, and she assures adherence to all biosafety protocols. Due to these responsibilities, she was recently appointed to serve on the UCSF High Containment Laboratory Oversight Group, a multidisciplinary group commissioned by UCOP to assure safety and security in biocontainment facilities. Without her contributions, we would not be able to function in the efficient capacity that we are today.

Elizabeth Gutierrez: Excellence in Leadership

Elizabeth Gutierrez from Central Administration was recognized with the Staff Appreciation Award for Excellence in Leadership. As the Supervisor of the Medicine Coding Team, Elizabeth's exceptional leadership qualities have significantly contributed to the success and growth of her team and the broader organization.

Excerpts from Nomination:

As the Supervisor of the Medicine Coding Team, Elizabeth has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities that have

significantly contributed to the success and growth of her team and the broader organization. Elizabeth's leadership style is rooted in her deep care and support for her team members. Her focus on improving communication between the coding team and healthcare providers has optimized payments and minimized denials, directly impacting the financial health of the organization.

In addition to her focus on communication, Elizabeth proactively addresses the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare coding by facilitating discussions on changes implemented by payors and the implications for payable services. Her ability to keep her team informed and prepared for these



Elizabeth Gutierrez

changes has resulted in a more agile and effective team. Elizabeth's collaboration with the Clinical Practice Group and EPIC IT teams further exemplifies her forward-thinking leadership. By leveraging IT automation, she has streamlined processes that have not only increased efficiency

but also reduced the workload on her team, allowing them to focus on more critical tasks. Her work in this area has set a new standard for operational excellence within the organization. Elizabeth Gutierrez is more than just a supervisor; she is a leader who inspires those around her to strive for excellence.

Special Thanks

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our nominees and the nominators who submitted nominations for our incredibly deserving staff. As we look forward to another year of groundbreaking and influential work, we remain inspired by the remarkable achievements of our colleagues and their unwavering commitment to improving patient care, advancing research, and fostering a supportive and thriving community at ZSFG.

-Jenny Fowler

Editors: Neil Powe, Leonard Telesca, Ali Cunningham

SPOTLIGHT

You are the Difference. **VOTE!** Election Day approaches on Tuesday, November 5.

Congratulations!

Alicia Fernandez, MD, General Internal Medicine has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) this year, one of the highest honors in the field of health and medicine.

Oanh Nguyen, MD, MAS, will be the new chief of the Division of Hospital Medicine at ZSFG, effective November 1, 2024.

Binh An Phan, MD, Cardiology, won the 2023-2024 Maxine Papadakis Award for Faculty Professionalism and Respect in the Department of Medicine.

Call for Application:

Academic Senate [Community Building Fund](#) applications are due Monday, November 4.