

PROGRESS

CONNECTING
PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES
TO LIFE'S
POSSIBILITIES

A PUBLICATION OF UNIFIED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 2021

AMY KREITZ NAMED NEW PRESIDENT AND CEO



New President and CEO Amy Kreitz (l) with former President and CEO Diane Coughlin (r).

Congratulations to Amy Kreitz, newly named president and CEO of Unified Community Connections. "I am honored for the opportunity and committed to furthering the success of our organization for our individuals, their families and all of our team members," says Amy. Her first goal as president and CEO will be to reopen the day programs after COVID-19 closures

and move forward with the Community Settings Rule by providing individuals with opportunities to access their communities.

Amy brings more than 20 years of experience, the majority with Unified. She most recently served as chief operating officer and has also held positions as director of operations in Western Maryland and community services director; residential coordinator and recreational therapist in Frederick. During her tenure, she has prioritized fostering relationships between employees, so they work across zip codes to support each other. This teamwork has been invaluable during the pandemic.

"Amy has demonstrated over the years her leadership skills and her dedication to the individuals and families we support," says Unified Board Chair Ellen Milles. "I am excited to see how she will continue to grow our organization."

Among her many accomplishments, Amy believes her greatest contribution has been the creation of a disabilities awareness training program, where new employees experience receiving supports. "Employees learn firsthand how their actions impact the individuals we support," Amy explains.

She is also proud to have implemented technology across the organization. Amy says, "Unified was one of the first agencies in Maryland to have an electronic charting and communication system for staff that included medication administration. The increased accountability helped reduce errors and instantly allowed everyone to see in real time what was happening in our residential homes."

Former President and CEO Diane Coughlin says, "It has been a pleasure working alongside Amy during my 14 years at Unified, and I am thrilled to have been able to turn the reins over to her. I know she will take the organization to the next level and look forward to watching Unified thrive under her leadership."

NEW SERVICE FOCUS AT HAGERSTOWN CENTER

In our ongoing commitment to provide individuals with opportunities to access their communities, our Hagerstown Center is focusing on Community Development Services and no longer offering a facility-based day program. As COVID-19 restrictions relax, instead of participating in planned programming at the center, individuals will be out in their communities – choosing how and where to spend their time. The services will be tailored to each individual's interests. Some will be learning new job skills, and others will have paid employment or be volunteering. Many more will be out in their communities doing the same things we all enjoy such as shopping, going out to eat and visiting with friends.

"We are moving away from brick-and-mortar day programs and moving toward more community-based services, customized to the needs and preferences of the individuals we support," says Unified President and CEO Amy Kreitz. "These services will enable individuals to structure their days doing the things they want to do."



OUR MISSION:

TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN ACHIEVING
INDEPENDENCE, PRODUCTIVITY, AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE THEY SEEK.

ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC RETURNS

We enjoyed a beautiful spring day for our 15th Annual Golf Classic, presented by Dimensional Health Care Associates and hosted at the Elkridge Club in Baltimore. Thank you to the 67 golfers who joined us and the generous sponsors who gave their support. After having to cancel last year's tournament due to COVID-19, we were very happy to be back on the course and raising money to support Unified's programs and services. We know there are many organizations asking for support, especially during these challenging times, which is why we deeply appreciate all those who contributed to the success of our event. We could not have done it without our hardworking committee, including Jonathan Clark, Matt Lenihan and Scott Rodgville.



◀ Scott Rodgville; Director of Development
Lauren Bussard; President and CEO Amy Kreitz; Jonathan Clark and Matt Lenihan.

Golfers were ready ▶
to get on the course.



THANK YOU TO THE SPONSORS

of Unified Community Connections' 15th Annual Golf Classic

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Unified Board of Directors

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

CHRIS FORHAN

Chris Forhan brings 15 years of experience leading digital strategy, sales and marketing for some of the leading digital agencies in the Mid-Atlantic. He has managed new business consulting relationships with companies such as Audi of America, Absolut Vodka, Kaiser-Permanente and the American Lung Association. Chris founded Triple Double Digital, to work with early-stage startups, helping them with digital sales and marketing as well as custom software development. Previously, he worked in financial services at Legg Mason and E*Trade Financial. Chris holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Providence College in Rhode Island.

SARAH LIEB

Sarah Lieb brings more than 17 years of experience serving in financial roles. She is chief financial officer and partner of Prox Capital Group, LLC, where she directs merger and acquisitions projects, pre- and post-acquisition strategy and secures financing opportunities. She manages over 90 partnerships in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia and provides guidance to the marketing and acquisitions team on more than 500 companies. Sarah is a Certified Public Accountant and holds a bachelor's degree in finance and accounting and a master's degree in accounting and financial management from the University of Maryland University College.

JOANNE ODOM

Joanne Odom brings more than 20 years of experience as a human services professional with an extensive background in the nonprofit sector. She is the program administrator for Community Pediatrics of MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and leads the operations, strategic planning and implementation of community-based health care delivery programs. Joanne is a licensed social worker and holds a bachelor's degree in English and secondary education from Lincoln University, a master's degree in social work from Howard University and a graduate certificate in nonprofit management from Johns Hopkins University.

A FOND FAREWELL TO

DIANE COUGHLIN

Diane Coughlin arrived at Unified 14 years ago with a passion for improving the lives of individuals with disabilities. Before coming to Unified, she served under Governor William Donald Schaefer as director of the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities and then worked at the Department of Health as the director of the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

When she retired from Unified at the end of May, she left a legacy that will shape the organization for years to come. She created an organization that is financially secure and will survive well into the future. When asked about her greatest achievements, she was quick to respond, "I cannot say enough about our talented staff and management team. They made me look good and helped me achieve so many of Unified's accomplishments during my tenure."

"Diane's compassionate dedication to the men and women of Unified has allowed our agency to provide exemplary services and programs. Her strategic leadership and ability to motivate others has led Unified to become the provider of choice in the disabilities community," says Amy Kreitz, president and CEO of Unified.

Diane is especially proud of changes in the residential program, firmly believing that the homes "belong" to the people who live in them and not to the agency or its staff. During her tenure, numerous older homes were sold and replaced with newer, nicer homes that are fully accessible, warm and inviting.

One of Diane's major projects was the rebranding of the organization after it left national United Cerebral Palsy and became Unified Community Connections. This decision reflected the fact that the organization served more than just people with cerebral palsy, and it made economic sense by eliminating affiliation expenses and other barriers to expanding services.

"I have worked with Diane for more than 10 years as a board member. Over the past few years as board chair, I worked closely with her and saw her exemplary leadership and dedication to Unified. She will be greatly missed, and I wish her well in retirement," says Ellen Milles, Unified board chair.

Diane has seen many changes in the disability community, especially the trend to move away from congregate and isolating facilities. To this end, she grew volunteer, educational and employment opportunities for individuals at Unified and increased their experiences from trips to the beach, movies, baseball games and museums to Disney World and cruises.



Diane Coughlin (second from left) presents check during Unified's Annual Golf Classic.

▶ Diane Coughlin presents the 2020 Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award to Judy Crum with Rebecca Tucker.



Integrating individuals into the community requires transportation, and through MTA grants, Unified was able to purchase 18 accessible vans. This allowed the agency to achieve the goal of having a vehicle at every residential home, paving the way for spontaneous trips to the movies and restaurants as well as planned vacations and outings.

Unified's fundraisers have grown over the years with very successful Hoodstock events and golf tournaments, enabling Unified to provide added supports for the men and women in the agency.

"I am especially proud that we keep our overhead below 10 percent, allowing funds raised to directly benefit the individuals," says Diane.

Diane also fulfilled one of her major goals to strengthen quality assurance and risk management throughout the organization. She also instituted staff training for disability awareness and created a mentorship program for direct care staff to enhance retention of this critical part of the workforce.

"I was on the search committee which named Diane CEO. Over the years, Diane has proved to be a superlative leader, possessing great passion for Unified while simultaneously gaining the respect and admiration of all who have been fortunate enough to interact with her," says Unified board member Howard Kurman.

In retirement, Diane looks forward to enjoying time with her husband Dave and their six grandchildren and travelling. She is also an avid hockey fan and plans to enjoy many Washington Capitals games.

DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Thank you to **Melanie Dorsey who made a \$10,000 contribution** in honor of former President and CEO Diane Coughlin's retirement and for her many years of service and her contributions to Unified.

GET READY FOR HOODSTOCK XVIII

When: Saturday, October 23, 2021, at 6 p.m.

New! Where: The Winslow, 333 West Ostend Street, with an adjacent, free parking lot

Event Headliner: Roses n Rust

Admission:

\$40 in advance/\$50 starting on Oct. 22
(Price discount for groups of 6 or more)
\$10 for kids ages 6-12

For tickets, go to www.unified.org/hoodstock. Sponsorships from \$300 to \$15,000 are available.

Visit www.unified.org/hoodstock to download a sponsorship form. Email completed form to lbussard@unified.org or fax to 410-771-3235.

For more information, call Lauren Bussard at 443-449-2461.

Get your tickets for Hoodstock, the grassroots music festival where guests say, "No to black-tie and yes to tie-dye." For a modest ticket price, enjoy live music and dancing, good food catered by the Copper Kitchen, beer and wine, raffles and a silent auction. Hoodstock takes place this year at an exciting new concert-friendly venue, The Winslow. Dress is casual, and tie-dye, bell bottoms and peace necklaces are always welcome.

A highlight of the evening is the presentation of the Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award by Baltimore Ravens Senior Advisor for Player Development and former Unified board member O.J. Brigance to an individual we support in recognition of their ability, rather than their disability.

Showcasing the rock/folk music scene of the late '60s and early '70s mixed with contemporary music, Hoodstock features live music by Roses n Rust and other local artists. Hoodstock began in 2004 as a neighborhood event in the backyard of Russ Causey, former Unified board member, and wife Jennifer's home in Federal Hill. While staying true to its laid-back, family-friendly roots, it has become a major fundraiser for Unified, helping to support the programs and services we offer to people with disabilities.

Please note, all COVID-19 guidelines will be followed. The venue is large and spacious with two levels and plenty of room.



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AROUND THE AGENCY



Our residential homes held a "Vitamin D Day" this spring, and individuals were encouraged to go outside and enjoy the warm weather.