



WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

# Pediatric CARE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION FOR CLIENTS OF BAYADA AND FAMILY MEMBERS



BAYADA Pediatrics Nurse Mat Gunkel, RN

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## Two Pediatric Clinicians Honored as National Heroes of the Year

On Saturday, May 21, BAYADA's four National Heroes of the Year took the stage in front of thousands of attendees at our annual Awards Weekend in Washington, DC, **where they accepted their well-deserved recognition from CEO David Baiada.**

Established in 1999, the Hero Program recognizes care professionals who consistently demonstrate the BAYADA core values of *compassion, excellence, and reliability*. Each quarter, clients and peers nominate their local Heroes. From the local Heroes, divisional Heroes are selected, and ultimately, four National Heroes are chosen.

Two of the four National Heroes this year are clinicians who share their compassion and expertise with our youngest clients.

### Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Hero of the Year Kim Den Bleyker

CEO David Baiada presents the LPN Hero of the Year Award to Kim Den Bleyker.

LPN Hero of the Year **Kim Den Bleyker** was praised for making life better for children living with serious injury or disability.

Her mission to "love them up" and lighten their burden has made Kim a fairy godmother to her clients and families, sprinkling each child with her unique, magical, recipe for fun.

She has touched countless lives in her two decades with BAYADA, including **Jaxson** (Jax). The six-year-old was born with mitochondrial disease (occurs when the mitochondria in each cell fail to produce enough energy for the body to function properly), myoclonic epilepsy (causes the muscles in the body to contract), and microcephaly (small head size).

"When I started working with Jax, he wasn't walking or speaking well, and he was having about 150 to 200 seizures a day," said Kim, who turns each therapeutic activity into something fun, like learning colors, baking, or jumping on the trampoline. "Lately we've been having a lot of highs, and I'm so grateful for those because last year he was really sick."

Jax, normally so full of life, began to lose the skills he had worked so hard to learn, such as picking up a fork to feed himself. In the hospital, he couldn't even hold up his head. "I could see the panic in his eyes, and that was the hardest part," said Kim.

Thankfully, with a great deal of effort, Jax has come back stronger and is now the best version of himself that he's been. "Each little victory for Jax is so important. When he achieves something and you see that smile, it's everything," said Kim. "Because I show him love, he loves me back unconditionally. Knowing him makes me a better person."

Jax's mother, **Maria**, expressed her appreciation for Kim. "To have Kim in our lives is the best thing that could have ever happened to us," she said. "She's one of a kind."

Kim felt honored and overwhelmed to be named the National LPN Hero of the Year. "I would like to thank the children I have cared for and loved through the challenges they face every day," she said. "They have pushed me to do my very best on their behalf."

Watch what makes Kim a Hero at [bit.ly/LPN-2022](https://bit.ly/LPN-2022).

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### Physical Therapist Hero of the Year Michele Puzio

PT Hero of the Year Michele Puzio with her client Marissa during Awards Weekend.

Countless BAYADA clients know that with Physical Therapist Hero of the Year Michele Puzio on the case, therapy is something they never have to worry about. Her luminous smile and relentless optimism have helped clients achieve their full potential.

Michele inspires hope for clients like Marissa, who was born with a congenital diaphragmatic hernia, a birth defect that caused the displacement of some of her internal organs.

“In her mind, Marissa feels like she can do anything, but she has so much spasticity in her body that she can’t move the way the rest of us do, and that really takes a toll on her,” said Michele, who has cared for Marissa for 19 years.

According to Marissa’s mother Susan, there are days when her daughter can barely function. “I honestly don’t know what she does or how she does it, but Michele has been able to reduce Marissa’s pain,” she said. “Michele has also

modified every piece of equipment in the house. She’ll whip out a wrench and modify something just the tiniest bit to prevent bruising on Marissa’s back or hips.”

Marissa considers Michele both a friend and a part of the family. “When you walk in it brings joy to my life,” she said. “You make me smile every time I see you.”

Michele is also involved with GoBabyGo, a project started at the University of Delaware aimed at increasing mobility and improving quality-of-life solutions for children whose access to such may be limited during their early developmental years for a variety of reasons. At the latest GoBabyGo event, Michele helped distribute mobility cars to nine children with varying conditions.

**“Nothing has made me happier than my lifetime of work with my clients. It has been my absolute pleasure and privilege to help these children achieve their greatest potential. I believe that mobility is not only one of our greatest gifts, it is a human right,”**

Michele said as she accepted the award. “I am so proud to be a part of an organization that encourages and inspires me to be innovative in helping our children discover their independence, and the joy of living that it brings.”

Watch what makes Michele a Hero at [bit.ly/PT-hero-22](http://bit.ly/PT-hero-22).

## From Outstanding Student to Flower Girl, Emberly is Living Her Best Life

BAYADA client Emberly, 6, loves her toy doctor’s kit. She uses the stethoscope to care for her baby dolls, and if mom Katie, dad Esli, or little brother Arlo, 3, gets a boo-boo, Emberly is there with a bandage to make things all better.



While this type of play may seem typical, it’s quite extraordinary for Emberly.

Emberly as the flower girl at Danielle’s wedding.

Born with Down syndrome and a hole in her heart, she has low muscle tone and works extra hard to do things that come naturally for other kids her age. “Sitting in a chair all day at school and going up and down the stairs is exhausting for her,” explained Katie, who learned last year that her daughter also has celiac disease. “Celiac is triggered by foods with gluten. It can keep the body from getting the nutrients it

needs and cause damage to the small intestine.”

Katie is grateful for Emberly’s home health aide Danielle Troxell, who has been with her daughter for four years. Danielle cares for Emberly in her classroom, and before and after school. “We rely on Danielle to keep Emberly safe at school, monitor her diet, and let us know what’s going on,” said Katie.

Emberly’s favorite school activities are music and recess. She recently earned the Outstanding Student Award for the efforts she makes every day. “It wasn’t just a token award,” said Katie. “She worked hard for it, and it represents that she belongs.”

Danielle was thrilled when Emberly received the award. In fact, the bond they built is so strong that Danielle asked Emberly to be the flower girl at her wedding.

“We trust Danielle and appreciate the consistent care and love she gives to Emberly,” said Katie. “We are grateful to BAYADA for giving us that peace of mind.”

# Champions Among Us: BAYADA Client Hosts Powerful Home Visit with State Senator



BAYADA client **Kristen** and her mother **Sherry** recently welcomed North Carolina Senator and Deputy President Pro Temp Ralph Hise into their home. Throughout the visit, Sherry and the staff from the BAYADA Pediatrics office in Hickory, NC emphasized the value that home care has brought to the family's life and all of the happy memories that have been possible thanks to their nurses.



Kristen has multiple chromosomal anomalies, a seizure disorder, and experiences chronic respiratory failure.

BAYADA client **Kristen** and her mother **Sherry** welcomed NC State Senator **Ralph Hise** into their home.

She receives one-on-one nursing through private insurance and Medicaid's Private Duty Nursing (PDN) program. The nurses provide life-sustaining care such as suctioning her tracheostomy, managing her ventilator, administering food and medication through a G-tube, and managing her seizures.

"We are extremely fortunate to have the caliber of nurses that we do," said Sherry. "Even though Kristen cannot verbally communicate, her nurses are so consistent and have been with her for so long, they are able to detect when something just isn't quite right with Kristen and intervene, avoiding serious complications where we'd need to take her to the hospital."

Senator Hise is no stranger to home care. He supported his mother at home and as Senior Chair of Budget

Appropriations, he was instrumental in increasing rates for Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS). During his visit, Senator Hise learned more about the challenges families like Kristen's face every day.

**"Unless your family has been touched by the need for home care, it can be hard to grasp the magnitude of what families go through in accessing care, and just how greatly their lives are improved by the hard-working health care professionals that make home care possible,"** said Senator Hise. "As a lawmaker, it is my responsibility to give a voice to those who don't have one and to support programs that keep families together while being a cost saving to the state."

The home visit gave Sherry the opportunity to be a voice for the thousands of families like her. This kind of advocacy is so impactful as we continue to urge our lawmakers throughout the country to increase funding for programs that keep our clients safely cared for in their homes.

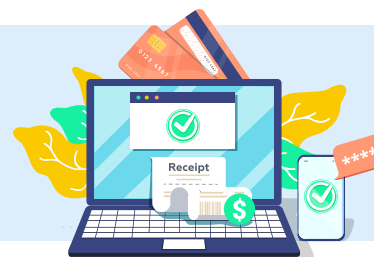


You can get involved in home care advocacy by attending meetings with legislators, sending emails, participating in events, or sharing your story with the media. For more information visit [heartsforhomecare.com](https://heartsforhomecare.com) or scan the QR code.



**Hearts for Home Care**  
A BAYADA Community Supporting Quality Care at Home

## Bill Payments Made Easier



As part of our ongoing efforts to improve your client experience with BAYADA, we are pleased to announce the development of our new online payment platform.

This new platform will allow you to easily and securely pay your BAYADA bill online, including private pay and insurance co-pays.

### No enrollment or registration is required

The user-friendly platform requires just a few clicks, and your payments will be easily processed. In addition, the platform

provides multiple ways for you to pay and communicate with our dedicated financial services staff.

### There are two options for accessing the online payment platform:

- Visit [bayada.com/paymybill](https://bayada.com/paymybill)
- Visit [bayada.com](https://bayada.com) and click on "Pay my bill"

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Content in this newsletter is provided as general summary information for our clients and is not intended to take the place of personalized medical guidance. We encourage you to seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care professional if you have specific questions about your care.

BAYADA provides skilled nursing, rehabilitative, therapeutic, hospice, habilitation, behavioral health, and assistive care services to people of all ages. Services vary by location.

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The online platform will not show billing details or history yet as this is the first step in our digital online payment journey.



### Autopay provides another option

Autopay is another option available to make paying your bill as easy as possible. Autopay allows you to preset automatic payments using your securely stored payment information on file. Enrollment is fast, convenient, and secure.

Please note that Autopay is not available through the new online payment platform. The only way to initiate or change Autopay is by phone.

If you have any questions about our new payment options or you are interested in enrolling in AutoPay, please call **844-494-1038** between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm ET and a financial services representative will assist you.

### Here's how it works:

- 1 Call **844-494-1038** to speak to a BAYADA financial services representative to complete the Autopay enrollment form.
- 2 Your bank account or credit card information will be saved in a secure payment processor system.
- 3 The securely stored payment data is used to process recurring payments automatically.

