



Circle of Courage Award 2011 Belonging: Keith Butler

“Salt of the earth” is how Keith Butler is most often described. He is a man who possesses all that is good. He is solid, grounded, and compassionate - a man of quiet courage who is ethical with a strong moral fiber.

Keith began his career at Cunningham in 1999 as a night cottage counselor for the boys in Laban Peck Cottage. He has twice been recognized as Employee of the Quarter – once in 2001 and again in 2007. With his usual humility, Keith accepted his awards graciously, but commented that he wished the employee of the quarter recognition was not for the individual but for the team as it takes everyone working together to be successful.

Keith is a person who is easy to be around. When it comes to ping pong and other games, he pretends to be competitive, but ends up letting the boys win every now and then. He playfully “trash talks” and then allows the youth to defeat him. It is a huge ego boost for the boys to beat Keith. He shows them how to win and how to handle defeat.

Keith is always seeking activities and ways for the youth to be involved with staff, each other, and the world around them. He really dislikes having the youth sitting in front of the TV or playing video games. He is constantly seeking new and different ways to engage the boys.

He wants our youth to experience all the world has to offer them. This might mean taking the boys on a fishing trip or an overnight to the cabin at Lake Mattoon. Or, it might mean a dress-up evening at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts to listen to the symphony.

Keith is always focused on the young man he is working with at the time and is always looking for better ways to connect. When he has a “strained” interaction with clients, he asks for advice and guidance from his co-workers. Keith will reflect on his interactions and will apologize to a youth when he realizes that he could have handled a given situation better. He is always willing to try new approaches to help improve his relationships. The futures of the young men he serves matter deeply to him. Keith strives daily to build better relationships with these young men.

Soon after experiencing a tragic personal loss, Keith was back on duty at the Kendall Gill Boys Group Home. Because there had been many recent changes for the kids and staff, Keith felt it was important to return to work as soon as possible because he wanted to do his part in keeping the milieu stable. He wanted to be at the group home, because at that point in time, just like our youth, that’s where he belonged.



CUNNINGHAM

Children's Home

Congratulations Keith, you are a 2011 Circle of Courage Award recipient.



**Circle of Courage Award 2011
Mastery: Nancy Bellmore**

When Nancy Bellmore joined Cunningham in 1991, she was part of the “bookkeeping department.” And, the “bookkeeping department” was “Jo and Nancy.” They were responsible for all the financial records, accounting, and payroll functions of the agency. The agency had 75 employees and a budget of a little over a million dollars. Today we have over 250 employees, a budget of \$14.5 million, and an accounting department with four full-time professionals.

During these 20 years of unprecedented growth and change, Nancy has been self-motivated and driven by her personal commitment to the kids at Cunningham to fine tune her technical skills. She has provided compassionate, stable leadership within her department by setting the standard for excellence as our accounting requirements have become ever more sophisticated and complex.

Nancy’s primary responsibility as lead accounting assistant is accounts receivable. She manages all the billing and collection. She is well versed in the billing preparation and submission processes. Her competence is demonstrated by the error free billing percentage that is reported each month.

Her mastery of the billing process assists the agency in its cash flow with prompt submissions and minimal to no errors. Consistently, because of Nancy, Cunningham is paid in a timely manner for services rendered. Nancy is knowledgeable, flexible, and understanding when working with staff during the billing process. She is friendly, outgoing, and has a natural talent for looking at the positive. She has a strong sense of how others are feeling and takes action to solve problems and conflicts in a direct, respectful manner which brings joy to the workplace.

Along, with sharing her technical skills, Nancy has helped instill the Cunningham culture within her co-workers. In the spirit of generosity and with a focus on our kids, it was Nancy who suggested that the accounting department forgo their annual Christmas gift exchange and give their gifts to help a Circle Academy family. A tradition the department continues to this day.

Nancy goes about her daily work staying true to the Cunningham mission. As a true leader, Nancy often reminds others that it’s not about the money; it’s about the money making good things happen for the kids. We honor Nancy for the mastery she brings to her work. We embrace her for the spirit in which she does it and for sharing her gifts and graces with all of us.



Congratulations Nancy, you are a 2011 Circle of Courage Award recipient.



**Circle of Courage Award 2011
Independence: Amanda Hamilton**

Amanda Hamilton keeps things “real.” Amanda is very consistent in her interactions with everyone! Her authentic interactions make the young adults in the Transitional Living Program feel safe around her. She is unique and genuine. The youth know that she will be honest with them and that she expects the same in return.

Our young people know that they can talk to Amanda about literally anything and she will carry on an honest, adult conversation with them. While being fair, the youth know that Amanda will hold them accountable. They know that there will be consequences for not adhering to the expectations of the program. Amanda respects and treats them like the young adults they are, but, as one youth put it, she will tell you “straight up when you are acting like a kid.”

Amanda has demonstrated a strong degree of professionalism, stability, and compassion while assisting both youth and staff during times of extreme crisis. During the last two years, one young woman has had three very serious suicidal episodes. Amanda has been able to remain calm and keep her wits about her while keeping the young woman safe – turning a crisis into a learning opportunity for newer staff and a positive growth opportunity for the young woman. Amanda’s ability to stay calm in extremely risky situations while still showing appropriate wit and humor is one her many strong suits.

Amanda Hamilton began her career at Cunningham as a substitute cottage counselor in 2002. She settled at the Girls Group Home and is now a Night Site Educator in the Transitional Living Program. Amanda was recognized as the Employee of the Quarter in 2008.

One young woman said, “Amanda, never changes! She is the same from when I knew her on main campus, to when I came to TLK. She is real. What you see is what you get. She is going to tell you how it is, for real. She ain’t gonna play no games. She makes you feel safe, cause you know what to expect from her. Even when you screw up, she will agree with you that what you did was dumb, but she will let you talk and let you know she still cares about you.”

The youth in the Transitional Living Program are 17 to 21 years of age and are looking for their own sense of autonomy, self-identity, and independence. By sharing her knowledge, her wit, and her work ethic, Amanda Hamilton provides the guidance to empower the young people she works with to trust themselves enough to confidently take the next steps to independence



Congratulations Amanda, you are a 2011 Circle of Courage Award recipient.



**Circle of Courage Award 2011
Generosity: Jamey Bailey**

Jamey Bailey is always willing to lend a hand and is known to embrace that line on his job description that says “other duties as assigned.” With a smile, open mind, and generous heart, Jamey says, “Bring it on.”

When Cornerstone was without a Milieu Coordinator for three months, Jamey readily performed duties outside of his regular responsibilities. And, when the unit was without a case manager, he did the same stepping up once again.

Being a therapist in the residential program presents its own challenges in regards to time management. It’s often hard to find the time to get all the things done that must get done; adding on extra duties required Jamey to stretch his time management skills and then some. Whether it was making phone calls to parents, going to court, attending psychiatric appointments, helping out on the unit, taking clients off campus, or doing whatever his supervisor asked him to do – Jamey did it with a smile on his face and a bounce in his step.

During this period of transition within the Cornerstone Unit, Jamey demonstrated leadership and was instrumental in making sure that important tasks were completed. Not only did things get done, but he ensured they were completed in the same professional, competent manner that he applies to his regular duties as Cornerstone’s therapist.

Jamey is a team player who works well with direct care staff, parents, DCFS workers, legal personnel, and other members of the Cunningham team. During the time when he had many extra responsibilities, Jamey could be counted on to advocate for youth, maintain connections with family members, and represent Cunningham in a professional and positive manner.

Jamey is there to support our youth whether on his current caseload or a youth from the past. When one former Cunningham youth was struggling after getting out of prison, Jamey helped coordinate a “care package” to get the young man some clothes, a few basic items, and a bicycle for transportation to and from work. In addition, he drove twenty miles to where the young man lived, took him out for a meal, and had a brief informal therapy session and basically showed the young man that he is not forgotten, his life matters, and his Cunningham family still cares.

Since joining Cunningham in 1998, Jamey has been willing to grow and accept new challenges. Whether it is the role as night cottage counselor, shift leader, case manager, or therapist, during the last 13 years, Jamey has willingly shared his skills and his kind, gentle spirit with us all.



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