



December 2020



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From the Desk of Our President



Sharese Hogan
BCBSM LDA President, 2020-2021

Greetings BCBSM LDA members,

This year will surely go down in history with a long list of firsts. Like, the first in my lifetime that wearing a mask in a bank was acceptable, people admitted to running out of toilet tissue, and the most relevant to many of us, wishing we were in traffic driving to work. I hope this made you smile because this is the season to find cheer, despite all that is happening around us.

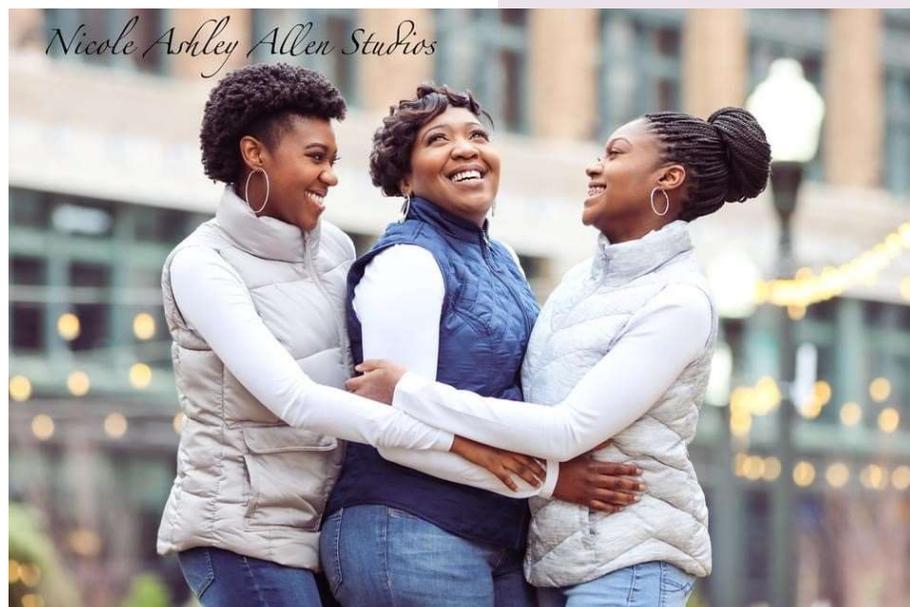
In a typical December message, I would have said thank you to all who have contributed to the BCBSM LDA for the first six months of the term, but this is not a typical December. So, I would like to use this time to wish you hope, ask that you embrace new traditions and encourage you to create an opportunity to be lighthearted.

Happy Holidays and a great New Year!

From my family to yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharese Hogan".

Sharese Hogan,
2020-2021 President ■
BCBSM Leadership
Development Association ■
Chapter #141



New Member Corner

Welcome OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS



*Aji Abraham
 Lori Aronson
 Stephanie Graves*

As a member of BCBSM LDA you are now a part of a great group of leaders, striving to live out our theme, "Leading Outside the Box." We encourage you to connect with our members and learn something new about the organization.



Member Benefits

- Networking through monthly meetings and mixers
- Professional development through workshops and "lunch and learn" sessions
- Community involvement through events like Bowl for Kids' Sake, walks for cures and causes, Adopt-a-Highway and more!

We have many upcoming events to begin networking and meeting other BCBSM LDA members. Check them out on the *Calendar of Events* page.

We also perform various community involvement services throughout the year. We'd love for you to take part.

For more information about all other upcoming events, please visit BCBSM [LDA's site.](#)

We look forward to seeing you at the next event!

Get Acquainted

December Monthly Member Meeting

By Michelle Banaszak – communication specialist



Guest Speaker

Reverend Faith Fowler
Executive Director,
Cass Community Social Services

If anyone knows how to lead outside the box, it's Reverend Faith Fowler, who led our virtual December BCBSM LDA member meeting. She is the pastor of Cass Community United Methodist Church in Detroit, and the Executive Director of Cass Community Social Services, a nonprofit agency that provides food, housing, medical, mental health and employment programs for people living in areas of concentrated poverty.

Rev. Fowler said because of a lack of financial and human resources, she and her team have had to think outside the box to serve people in the community who need help. Their mission began with a food plan. They wanted to provide meals for the homeless and underprivileged people of Detroit. They started with about 7,000 meals a year, but COVID-19 has made that number skyrocket. Since March, they've also been delivering free groceries all around the city.

As poverty and demand have grown over the years, Rev. Fowler knew her team needed more help. The first idea she thought of was fundraising, although she said traditional fundraisers wouldn't work for Cass Community. They didn't have the resources for dinners, auctions or other main fundraising events. So, they had to think outside the box again.

One way they were able to fundraise was by making meals for others to generate funds for the free meals they provided. Rev. Fowler got in contact with a local prison, and her team began making around 1,200 sandwiches a day for the detainees. "We even made them during a 10-day blackout with no electricity. You always have to be able to think on the fly."

When the recession hit in 2007-2008, Rev. Fowler knew of so many in her community that needed jobs. Many of the adults in the area had developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, a history of substance abuse, physical restrictions or had formerly experienced homelessness, war or prison. That's why she started looking for ways to create jobs. She got an idea from a Native American tribe to make mud mats out of illegally dumped tires. She hired several homeless people to do this originally, and it grew from there. The mud mats are still being sold on [Cass Community's website](#).

Since that idea worked so well, Rev. Fowler thought more about linking together jobs and the environment. She came up with Green Industries, which not only helps to employ adults in need, but also helps the environment by repurposing and recycling materials that would otherwise end up in a landfill, the city incinerator or remain part of the garbage on vacant lots in Detroit. The team even started creating solar powered generators.

While cleaning up the city and using recycled materials and solar energy was a great start, Rev. Fowler and her team realized they could do more. A constant problem remained: People were still homeless and out of work. Cass Community had already been housing the homeless in shelters, and the new increase in work was giving some job opportunities.

But those who had the job opportunities would work with Cass Community for a while, leave for another job, and return more depressed and defeated. The return usually had to do with hours being cut or being completely laid off. "They were doing everything right, and it still didn't work. That was the genesis of the Tiny Homes program."



December Monthly Member Meeting

Continued

Since 2016, Cass Community has built 24 tiny homes, and their 25th will be finished next year. Each home is built by a general contractor on a 30 x 100 foot lot. Once the home is built, volunteers manage all the finishing jobs, including tiling, drywalling, painting and building decks. Each home has a porch or deck, full appliances, all furnishings, landscaping, a security system and solar-powered electricity. Rev. Fowler said, “When others hear about the program through volunteers or residents, they want to help.”



She talked about contractors donating materials and knowledge, and the security system company, who offered them a very low rate. When she called the company to find out why the rate was so low, the man on the phone said he used to deal with substance abuse and wanted to help with such a great cause.

Residents also have access to services on Cass’ pedestrian campus, which offers a food program, computer lab, literacy classes, counselors, outdoor parks and more, all within walking distance. Rev. Fowler said, “We wanted to give them the opportunity to have economic mobility, and we wanted people to be proud of their homes.”

Some residents can “rent then own” the tiny houses. To own the home, residents need to make between \$7,000 and \$15,000 a year. Rev. Fowler explained that this program is for people who might be ready for a home but wouldn’t qualify for a mortgage.

Residents pay \$1 per square foot, so if a home is 300 square feet, they’ll pay \$300 per month. They need go to a homeowner’s group once a month, where they’ll learn the ins-and-outs of homeownership. They’ll also have a personal financial coach to help them learn how to be smart with their finances and discover ways to make more money.

Lastly, everyone in the homes has to volunteer by building the neighborhood. They don’t actually build homes, but they help out in the community by cleaning up, helping their neighbors and even setting up events like trick-or-treating. This allows them to get to know their neighbors and build a real community.

After seven years, residents who have paid their rent and participated in the required steps will have the option to own their house. Rev. Fowler mentioned that shelters and alternative homes have so many guidelines. People living there can’t choose when they want to eat or shower, and they have rules about guests and overnight stays. But renting and owning a tiny home gives people the freedom to live how they want to live. “If you want to eat dinner at midnight, or have your girlfriend or boyfriend spend the night, you have the freedom to do that.”

In the future, Rev. Fowler’s team will continue to build more tiny homes, and they’re also getting ready to start building a commercial strip for the community. Based on history, it’s doubtful the team will stop there, and we can’t wait to see what they come up with next.

To learn more about the work Cass Community Social Services is doing, visit casscommunity.org. You can also purchase Rev. Fowler’s book, *Tiny Homes in a Big City*, at ccpublishinghouse.org.

[Watch the recording of the December Monthly Member Meeting](#)





CALENDAR of EVENTS

January
14

Networking Virtual Coffee Hour

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Link to the virtual meeting will be sent prior to the session.



January
21

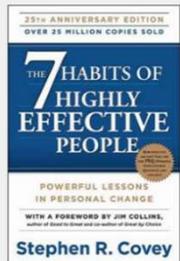
LDA Book Club Meeting

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

We'll be starting our discussion of Habit 4: Think Win/Win. Link to the virtual meeting will be sent prior to the session.

Facilitator:

Charles Schultz, LDA VP of Professional Development



February
16

February Monthly Member Virtual Meeting

(no January meeting being held in 2021)

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Speaker:

Tonya Allen, President and CEO, Skillman Foundation

Join us 15 minutes before the meeting for a time of virtual networking! Watch your email in January for more details!

Link to the virtual meeting will be sent prior to the session.

Coming in March: Save the date!

March 31: BCBSM LDA Annual Speech Contest

4:30 p.m.

Watch your email for registration details.

Having Courage, Wisdom and Strength

By David Shelby Jr. – coordinator

Here we are, the end of 2020. Like you I am anxiously awaiting the end to what has been a tumultuous year. We have watched film after film of what life would be like in a pandemic and yet we still are learning as we go. Real life is nothing like the movies and no screenwriter could have written a better script. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world.

Thankfully, we have reached the first sign of the end of this national nightmare; the vaccine has been made and is in process to be distributed. No, it does not mean end social distancing, it just gives us a plan that our current reality will soon be over.

I want us to recognize the tremendous work that we have done as people. Wherever you are reading this, know that it took courage for you to be here today. You weathered the storm of a trying pandemic. You made it through an array of constant negativity. Here you are in this moment stronger and more fortifiable. It is also vital that we remain courageous during this second wave and serve as a point of confidence to our communities. This vaccine has arrived but will not be easily accessible until at least spring 2021. Social distancing efforts are still required, but now that we can see the finish line, let's have the courage to finish the race.

While focusing on closing this horrible chapter in world history, let us also think on the positives. Not only are we here, but we are fighting a trying pandemic from inside our homes, still employed. We have a financial blessing that comes to us every other week. In our positions, most of us can work from home. There are a few of us who still make the journey to the office daily. Either way, we are gainfully employed, we aid first responders and support millions of people who count on us. Yes, there are challenges, but with positive thinking we recognize the honor bestowed upon us to help end this pandemic and serve our community as helpers and leaders. The wisdom in positive thinking during this pandemic is that you don't let your problems or challenges define you. You are defined by the work you do to solve problems and create solutions.

The most important thing for you to remember about 2020 is that you had the strength to finish. If you have social media, you know that the coming weeks will be filled with stories about how individuals were able to accomplish their goals, go beyond their limits, break expectations and do amazing things in the midst of a pandemic, real or fake. Those stories are going to come, but they shouldn't minimize your accomplishments. Just getting through to the finish line of 2020 with all the challenges that came with it is an accomplishment that requires strength. You are here reading this article. That is an indication of your strength and ability to conquer. Everyone has their own set of goals and although you may not have had an opportunity to meet yours, who's to say you won't in 2021? You may have such an amazing year in 2021 that you even impress yourself. Do not get lost in the comparison game. You have lived and earned the experience muscles that you've developed. The strength you have now will serve you well in the future. For the few short weeks we have left in 2020, remember to be good to yourself.

you are
stronger
than you
know



You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, "I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along."

~ Eleanor Roosevelt



Happy Holidays from the BCBSM LDA Board!



The BCBSM LDA Board sends you—our treasured members—their warmest wishes this holiday season. May you find and embrace the true spirit of the season and may it fill your heart with joy. Whatever is beautiful, whatever is meaningful, and whatever brings happiness, may it be yours this holiday season and throughout the coming year.

Bon Voyage!

To those members who have accepted a Voluntary Separation Offer, we would like to thank you for being a part of BCBSM LDA. You will be greatly missed! We wish you the best in the next phase of your journey, that you continue to develop on a professional and personal level. Remember to reach out and keep us in the loop about future successes. This association would not be possible without members like you.



December Virtual Mixer – Praise often, self-care and believing in yourself

by Ju Fonda Overton, senior analyst

Our December virtual mixer hosts were Quinta Williamson and Jason Loep. Qunita Williamson, Director of State Accounts and Special Servicing, has been part of the Blues for more than 24 years. She is also a licensed and ordained minister. Jason Loep, Director of Customer Analytics, has been part of the Blues since 2008 and loves everything hockey.



Qunita Williams, Director
State Accounts and
Speciality Servicing



Jason Loep, Director
Customer Analytics

At the beginning of the mixer, the hosts were asked several questions about important topics. The first topic had to do with praise at work.

Qunita started off by saying, praising often doesn't cost a thing. Praise is one powerful tool a leader can use. She suggested that when we see employees thinking outside the box, give them cards that say, "level up." That will let the employee know they have gone above and beyond, and they are recognized. It's a fact that employees who receive regular praise will produce more results.

Jason said that praising often has a positive impact on a person's brain. Use words such as *great* and *amazing* and compliment their efforts. Make it a habit to praise rather than condemn and people will be willing to help out.

Qunita gave some tips on self care:

Emotional: Cope with difficult emotions. Use yoga, meditation and deep breathing.

Physical: Stay active with exercise like walking or virtual Zumba and eat well.

Mental: Use positive affirmations and take care of your mind. Examples of Christian affirmations: I can do all things through God who strengthens me. No weapon against me shall prosper.

Social: Participate in Zoom meetings or small socially-distanced events.

Spiritual: Nourish your soul with virtual religious meetings and worship.

Practical: Reduce stress with relaxing experiences like massages and pedicures.

Professional: Make use of Blue Talent, take virtual classes or find a virtual mentor.



Some of Jason's favorite self-care tactics:

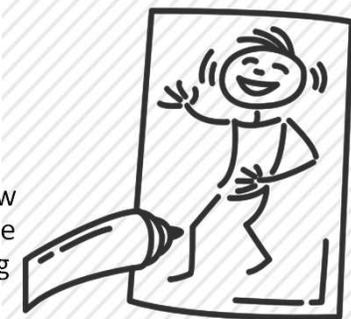
Use a smart watch to help with breathing techniques.

Watch and listen to inspirational speakers on YouTube or through podcasts. He enjoys listening to [Shannon Cohen](#).

Crank up the music and have a good time. Jason especially enjoys listening to Broadway shows, including the [Hamilton soundtrack](#).

Check in with yourself. How are you doing? How is your mental health? Use micro moments; take two minutes before a meeting or ten minutes on the way to work.

The December mixer ended with a fun round of virtual Pictionary. Qunita and Jason drew items on the screen and the group had the opportunity to guess what each item was. We hope you'll join us for our 2021 virtual mixers – keep an eye out for an email announcing the next date!



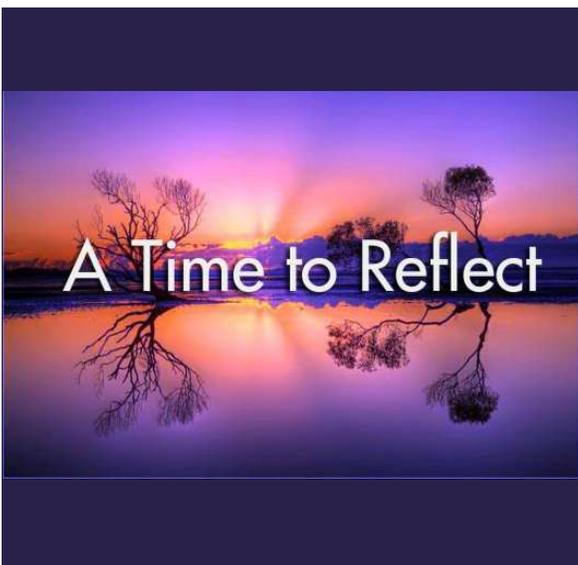
PD Exchange

2021 Professional Goals – Preparing for the New Year

By Kaitlyn Bradley, Management Week Chairperson & PD Exchange Author

Normally, December tends to be a remarkably busy month for many people. Our agendas are usually packed tight with shopping, baking, large family gatherings, gift exchanges, holiday work parties and so much more. But, in typical 2020 fashion, December probably looks a bit different this year. If nothing else, I believe 2020 has given us something incredibly important: The time to reflect.

Although your shopping may be online, your baked goods might be made in smaller batches, your work and family gatherings might happen via Zoom, and your gift exchanges may involve porch drop-offs, you can still enjoy the year-end activities and use your extra time to reflect on what happened in 2020. Use this information to help shape your goals and mindset for the new year ahead. Here are some things you can think about:

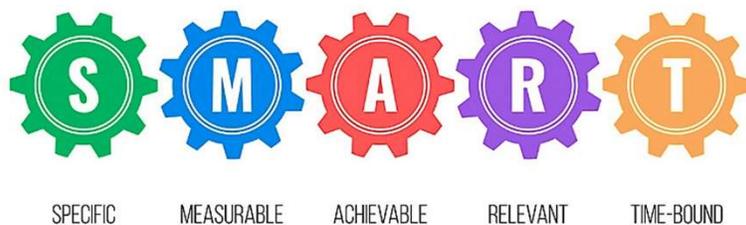


- What went well? Think about all the positive things – both planned and unexpected – that happened in 2020. What accomplishments are you most proud of?
- What do you wish you would have done differently? Maybe you wished you had spent more time learning new skills or meeting new people. Perhaps you wish you hadn't been as affected by the pandemic. Think about how you can change your goals and priorities in the new year to accomplish these things.
- What roadblocks did you encounter? COVID-19 might be the source of many obstacles but identifying those barriers can help you find creative solutions to avoid them in 2021.

The insights that you gather from your reflections should provide a solid starting point when defining your 2021 goals. Your new goals can help you expand upon your accomplishments, achieve those things you wish you had done, and learn from the roadblocks you encountered in 2020. Remember to set S.M.A.R.T. goals – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Whatever you chose to focus on in 2021, it will be worthwhile to set aside reflection time and position yourself for a successful year ahead.

I challenge you to make the commitment to invest in yourself in 2021; you are worth it!



BCBSM LDA Professional Development Committee Networking Event

The BCBSM LDA Professional Development Committee hosted its first networking event on December 10. The session offered LDA members a chance to immerse themselves in a new networking experience. By utilizing WebEx breakout rooms, members were able to connect on a more personal level. The discussions were a mixture of fun and professional development-related topics. Many of our attendees were enthusiastic about their plans to travel post pandemic, and some of the attendees shared their accomplishments for 2020. Thank you to all those who participated!

If you missed out on the last professional development networking session, we will be hosting another session on January 14! For January, we will be doing a morning coffee break to accommodate our early morning members. Our discussion will be both fun and productive. We look forward to seeing you there!



BCBSM LDA Code of Ethics

- I will recognize that all individuals inherently desire to practice their occupations to the best of their ability.
- I will assume that all individuals want to do their best.
- I will maintain a broad and balanced outlook and will recognize value in the ideas and opinions of others.
- I will be guided in all my activities by truth, accuracy, fair dealing and good taste.
- I will keep informed on the latest developments in techniques, equipment, and process. I will recommend or initiate methods to increase productivity and efficiency.
- I will support efforts to strengthen the management profession through training and education.
- I will help my associates reach personal and professional fulfillment.
- I will earn and carefully guard my reputation for good moral character and good citizenship.
- I will promote the principles of our American Enterprise System to others, by highlighting its accomplishments and displaying confidence in its future.
- I will recognize that leadership is a call to service.

Statement of Principles

BCBSM LDA is dedicated to managerial excellence, personal and professional growth, and leadership development. The following principles identify Blue Cross LDA's core beliefs and provide the basis for the Association's Mission Statement.

- We believe in the highest standards of personal and organizational integrity and respect for the individual.
- We believe in lifelong learning, continuous improvement, and the development of a workforce capable of sustaining a competitive posture in the global economy.
- We believe management is a creative, dynamic, and essential process enabling people to achieve personal and organizational objectives.
- We believe that managerial responsibility is shared among all individuals at all levels of the organization and that leadership is critical to management success.
- We believe that individuals and organizations have a community and civic responsibility.

blueprint team

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NMA National Mission Statement

NMA offers leadership development products and opportunities that maximize the potential of our members, sponsoring organizations and communities.