Sheila Manuel-Ascano is a passionate advocate for the needs of immigrant professional health care workers. An immigrant herself, she helps nurses at The Johns Hopkins Hospital who are from other countries transition to their new environment at the hospital and even outside of work. She has accompanied them to obtain Social Security cards, helped them access other resources, and taken the time to understand immigration laws regarding employment for immigrant health professionals.

Manuel-Ascano organizes and hosts gatherings to introduce new Filipino nurses to other immigrant nurses who have lived in the U.S. longer. This establishes a support system while the nurses adjust. She even organized a GoFundMe campaign for a nurse from the Philippines who was diagnosed with cancer.

Manuel-Ascano is described as someone who treats “everyone with respect and professionalism, especially us who were new in Baltimore,” and many health care workers who are immigrants say her support was needed to successfully transition to the new workplace and environment. With her guidance, they felt prepared and comfortable starting their first day at The Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Maria Sheilla Membrebe chairs the education council of the Philippine Nurses Association, Maryland chapter. During the pandemic, she has tirelessly worked on initiatives to help Filipino nurses and their families cope with the challenges created by the pandemic. Filipino nurses have suffered a disproportionate COVID-19 toll — about 25% of nurses who died in the U.S. during the pandemic were Filipinos. Membrebe was instrumental in putting together webinars, training and community activities to promote wellness and well-being. In 2021, the Philippine Nurses Association honored her with its educator of the year award.

Whether as an individual or while leading volunteers, Membrebe is always looking for opportunities to serve the community. She volunteers at several shelters including the Weinberg Housing and Resource Center and the My Sister’s Place Women’s Center, and she has delivered meals for Moveable Feast. Membrebe also helped deliver meals to front-line workers during the height of the pandemic, and she helped promote community awareness of COVID-19 by working on a FAQs brochure from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Membrebe used her knowledge as a nurse to educate the community about getting the COVID-19 vaccine, and she worked in the Hopkins vaccine clinics.
Benton Ng, MD
Pediatric Cardiologist
Johns Hopkins All Children’s Hospital

Benton Ng is a pediatric cardiologist at the Heart Institute at Johns Hopkins All Children’s Hospital and has been instrumental in developing a care system for patients with single ventricle physiology. This system includes home monitoring for patients with the highest risk, as well as engagement of families of those in medical assistance facilities and development of a long-term multidisciplinary clinic for the population as they age.

Dr. Ng undertook the incredible task of understanding the institute’s cardiac surgical programs outcomes based on race and ethnicity. After sharing his knowledge with the institute, Dr. Ng organized monthly discussions among the cardiologists to help them recognize their unconscious bias, with the goal of understanding how the bias plays an intricate role in daily patient interaction.

Phuoc Tan Nguyen brings joy to every shift he works at Sibley Memorial Hospital, and he always looks for opportunities to help his team members. On several occasions, and without being asked, Nguyen volunteered to distribute meals to departments for employees who couldn’t pick them up, through the Foundation program. After meal distribution, he has cleaned up and sought employees who needed an extra meal.

Nguyen enjoys sharing his culture and traditions with staff. During this year’s Lunar New Year celebration, he taught colleagues what the year of the tiger means, and what their birth year signifies. Also, he always takes the opportunity to ask about the cultures and traditions of others. Colleagues say Nguyen makes “working as a part of the JHM/Sibley team easy and enjoyable.”
Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Achievers Awards

FINALISTS

Jonathan Espenancia, RN, BSN
Assistant Patient Care Manager
Carol Ball Medicine Unit
Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center

Jonathan Espenancia is described as very knowledgeable and a good resource in his role as a charge nurse. He's always helpful to staff, works to improve his unit's quality of work and has done much to institute procedures to improve patient safety. In the community, Espenancia is the pastor of his church, and his family is very active in the church.

Anu Mullick
Executive Director,
Regional Clinical Programs,
National Capital Region
Johns Hopkins Health System

Anu Mullick is a member of the board of directors of the Washington English Center. The center's mission is to provide affordable English-language instruction and workforce programs for adult immigrants, using volunteers. The Washington English Center supports a diverse community of people, including Asians/Pacific Islanders — its work has included helping to provide English language services for Afghan refugees. Mullick not only serves in her official capacity as a board member, but she also hosted a fundraiser for the center last year at her home.

Kristen Pruski, vice president, Sibley Memorial Hospital, describes Mullick as an amazing colleague who is thoughtful and knowledgeable and who leads with integrity.