February 19th, 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought extraordinary challenges to all New Yorkers. Families have grappled with the devastating impact of the virus, and businesses and workers have faced financial distress. In many respects, the crisis has brought out the best in New Yorkers as they step up to make a difference—whether in a hospital intensive care unit serving patients, in a restaurant kitchen making meals for front-line workers and the elderly, or in a research laboratory seeking vaccines and treatments to battle Covid-19.

Today, Empire BlueCross BlueShield is honored to recognize 50 Whole Health Heroes who unflinchingly have fought against the unseen enemy, often sacrificing their own health and personal comfort to help others. These New Yorkers, who hail from the health care sector, the business world and the nonprofit field, have displayed extraordinary leadership, dedication, empathy, and remarkable compassion to help ensure the safety and wellness of all New Yorkers during this unprecedented crisis.

As a company dedicated to whole health, Empire selected these honorees because they reflect its own mission: to improve the health and well-being of all New Yorkers, not just its 4 million members. Read more in our press release surrounding the Whole Health Heroes initiative, plus, click here to read about an event in their honor, which took place on Thursday, February 18.

These profiles show the diverse ways one can be a true whole health hero. They serve as an inspiration and a reminder that leadership and collective action truly matter.
Davon Russell has committed himself to serving children and families in the South Bronx for the past 23 years. Russell took the Covid-19 crisis head-on. He mustered the resources of the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation’s mental health, social work, case management, Head Start, youth education, and home-based child care programs to distribute supplies and information to program participants so that they could safely quarantine at home and access services remotely. Russell even hand-wrote notes to accompany grocery store cards for families. WHEDco has raised and distributed $180,000 in grocery store cards to more than 800 families and distributed 35,000 meals and snacks to families most in need of emergency food support.

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