

# National Social Workers Month

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Announcer, Mary Beth, Ashley Biggs

### Announcer 00:02

This podcast is brought to you by the Maryland State Library Agency. The MSLA podcast features presenters from Statewide Youth Programs, as well as learning opportunities for library staff and resources for patrons of the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled.

### Ashley Biggs 00:21

Welcome back, everyone to another LBPD Guest hour. My name is Ashley Biggs and I am the marketing and outreach librarian. And I'm here with Mary Beth DiMartino. Did I say that correctly? You did. Awesome. DiMartino. And we are here to discuss social workers and all the details that go with that. Mary Beth is a seasoned and innovative social worker, child advocate and therapist with nearly 30 years of experience in the field. For the majority of our career, Mary Beth has served as the program director of Pressley Ridge, Wesley, Maryland, a therapeutic foster care mental health clinic and Family Preservation Program in Cumberland, Maryland. In that position, she created and secure grant funding for a statewide service line to preserve and restore families affected by substance abuse, socio economic challenges and mental health issues. A graduate of West Virginia University of Social Work and Frostburg University State University, Mary Beth is certified in trauma focused cognitive behavioral therapy homebuilders, Center for Mind and Body, Mind and Body medicine excuse me and treatment for life support life space crisis intervention, she has been cited for her unique ability to successfully assess the needs of the community and create sustainable programs and partnerships to meet those needs. She resides in Frostburg, Maryland with her husband and two sons. And she is part of the National Social Workers Association here in Maryland. So it's

### **Mary Beth 01:58**

been about a year now.

### **Ashley Biggs 02:02**

I'm so excited to have you here. You know, what kind of got you into social work, because it sounds like based on your based on your biography, and based on our conversations before recording, you really have a passion for this.

### **Mary Beth 02:17**

I do. I have always had a heart for people and wanting to help people, especially children and young people, and wanting to help make lives better for kids and their families. That's always been my heart and my passion. You know, working with kids and their parents and their families has always been something that meant a lot to me. And in my new role at NASW. It's a privilege and an honor to not only be able to help and support the social workers who do that important, wonderful work, but to work in the General Assembly and do other things that help with the regulations and the laws and all those great things. But it's been an amazing, wonderful career of social work. It is never the same job every day. It's new, exciting each and every day. And it's an honor and a privilege to do this incredible work.

### **Ashley Biggs 03:18**

Social workers I know are trained professionals who typically work with vulnerable persons groups, communities, to help them build a better life. But would How would you define social work?

### **Mary Beth 03:31**

Yeah, I mean, I think what you've said is, is is very close to that. I think for me, I don't know how others would define it. But for me, it's always sort of been a sacred calling. I feel like it's something it's it's a really spiritual and sacred event to go into the lives of someone else to be in someone's life when they're going through a challenging time or a difficult time. I feel like it it is very delicate work and to to be able to be with people when they're having a struggle because we all struggle. And I think our job is not to do things necessarily for them, but to help them be empowered to do things for themselves to help them access their own inner strength, their own inner wisdom and to help people to become who they are and want to be we all struggle we all have challenges and I think it is a very sacred and special thing to be able to tread into the lives of others and so yeah, I think it is a calling it is something that we have to do delicately and and, and with deep honor and respect.

### **Ashley Biggs 04:55**

That's fairly deep.

### **Mary Beth 04:58**

Yeah, and but it's it It's important, it's it's it's really powerful. I think, you know,

### **Ashley Biggs 05:05**

the same reason, you know, I became a librarian, you know, was because I wanted to ensure everyone had the right to read.

### **Mary Beth 05:13**

Absolutely.

### **Ashley Biggs 05:14**

So I feel that passion, I feel like connection like coming through the computer. I'm like, Oh, I know, I totally get where she's coming from. Now you are a licensed clinical social worker. But that's not the only kind of social worker out there. Can you tell us a little bit about what a licensed clinical social worker is and what it is not? Sure. So

### **Mary Beth 05:36**

I am, I am a master's level social worker that has my clinical license. But there are different levels of licensure and different levels of education and experience, you know, some people just choose to get their bachelor's degree and practice as a bachelor's level social worker, and that's awesome. There are lots of amazing bachelors level social workers who do incredible work and work with, you know, people in that capacity, you know, and just choose to do case management type things, maybe working in nursing home or work with children in case management, or maybe work, you know, in a school, or one on one with with children and child welfare. So there's, there's lots of different levels of social work, licensure and education and lots of ways to be a social worker. And then the next, you know, if you do decide to go on and to get your Masters, then you can also then study or work under a licensed clinical social worker for a couple of years and get supervision hours to sit for your clinical license, if you want to do administrative work or clinical work, like therapy or things like that. So it just depends on what you want to do with your career, what kind of work you want to do, what level of licensure you pursue, but all levels are something that you can do, and you can have an amazing career at doing. So, you know, there there are many social workers who do incredible work at all those different levels.

**Ashley Biggs 07:24**

And they go on to work at hospitals, mental health facilities, you know, humans,

**Mary Beth 07:33**

all those different places are unnecessary. And there's a shortage of them right now. So we need lots of more people to go into social work, because it is one of the most in demand careers right now in the country. Why is that? Well, what you may have heard, even from President Biden in his State of the Union address or in the media, we are in a mental health crisis right now, as a nation, it was something that was happening pre COVID. But COVID has kind of turned up the heat on mental health needs in our country right now. Young people, especially our youth are experiencing an increase in anxiety and depression. suicidality is on the rise in our country, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, people are really feeling more isolated. feeling like they don't have those social connections that they they need. People are really struggling financially, emotionally. And they're just really is a mental health emergency in our country right now. And social workers are the number one provider of mental health services in the nation. We really need more social workers. We need more people of color, we need more people of diverse backgrounds and languages to go into social work. We really have a state of emergency in our country and need more people to go into social work

**Ashley Biggs 09:13**

is all social work based on mental health?

**Mary Beth 09:16**

No, although there is some components of mental health of course, to all social work that we do. And social work is a unique field where we're kind of trained in a way that looks at mental health, but we also look at the entire family system we look at the entire person were some other trainings for other mental health professions kind of focus on the individual social work looks at the whole system, where you look at you know, all the different things that go into a person's well being in terms of, you know, their their, where they live, where they work, social workers, for example. If you have someone come in that's experiencing, say, financial struggles, and they can't get their diabetes medicine, and that's impacting their mental health and their depression, a social workers going to make a referral and get that diabetes medication addressed where if you went to a regular mental health person, they might not take care of that need. So social workers address that whole system, that whole issue in a way that other mental health providers may not address that. So social work, kind of addresses the whole root cause the whole person in a way that's kind of unique, it's a viewpoint that that we're trained in to look at that whole system of a person rather than just the one symptom they might be expressing.

### **Ashley Biggs 10:56**

You know, my initial thought is that all social workers deal with mental health exclusively. But it sounds like you could have a social worker who focuses on helping you get to the right contacts for low cost medication, you could have a social worker who can help point you in the direction for financial stability classes. They may not teach you themselves, but they they act as a referral system, almost exactly.

### **Mary Beth 11:23**

Connections and resources supports, they would assess who your connections are, where are there gaps in your life that are, you know, making it difficult for you so that you treat the root cause of symptoms or things you might be experiencing, where other other mental health things might look more at your psyche or your trauma, or your, the way your mother talked to you, or whatever social work does look at that, too. But it's not the only thing. We look at the whole person in their environment in their system.

### **Ashley Biggs 11:58**

So when you have, you know, we see in the media, we see social workers, as quote, caseworkers, typically, like on shows, like law and order or, or, or things like that you have a caseworker who's typically a social worker. And they are typically shown as overworked, empathetic, but tied down, highly underpaid. So is there Is there truth to that? Or is that just a Hollywood myth?

### **Mary Beth 12:30**

Wow, that's that is such a great question. Yeah, I will tell you that, that is something that is talked about so frequently in Social Work circles. But yes, the media has portrayed social workers as these people who just take people's kids away, are frazzled. And, you know, grumpy, and yeah, all those things. You know, and social workers are traditionally not paid extremely well, sometimes, that is something that we at NASW are working hard to address. We know the value of social workers, we know how hard they work. And we know that that society is better when we have more social workers, social workers are everywhere, social workers really do make a difference. You know, when you are in a hospital, and you have a loved one or a parent that you know, needs extra care, or social workers are the ones that figure that out and do those transition plans or, you know, social workers are in your children's schools and helping your kids solve problems with money in terms of lunch, you know, making sure that they have support and working things out with their friends and, you know, things like that social workers are everywhere, and solving problems everywhere, in places you may not see, or no library, public libraries or your knees or in the courts, or in the prisons, or everywhere, social workers are literally everywhere. And they do work very, very hard. And they make a difference where they are. And they really are there to help people. They're there to solve problems. They're there to help bridge the gaps that people don't often see or know. And so, social work is very powerful and social workers do amazing things. You

know, I've talked to so many people who, you know, work with the homeless, help feed people help get people clothing, help people get medicine, you know, so many important things that social workers do.

**Ashley Biggs 14:50**

You know, it sounds like you have to have really good communication skills, a lot of good you know, a lot of empathy, critical thinking and organization No skills. And I'm assuming you have to take care of yourself because you're dealing with vulnerable persons that's got to tug at the heartstrings.

**Mary Beth 15:09**

Absolutely, yeah, you're absolutely right. And, but I think that's what keeps us coming back everyday to is that we know that people depend on us, I will tell you, you know, after over 30 years in this career, social workers are some of the best people I know. And I will tell you, I mean, you know, in my job, I can tell you, you know, we just have social workers do what it takes, you know, there's times where people have just stopped what they were doing and, you know, held and took care of a baby that needed to be taken care of, or they found a family Thanksgiving dinner, you know, so that their family would have Thanksgiving dinner, or, you know, they just problem solving go the extra mile, to get whatever is needed to make sure people have what they need. I've seen school teachers get winter coats for people, kids who don't have coats I've seen, you know, people do the right thing for people and social workers are just some of the most beautiful people I know.

**Ashley Biggs 16:16**

There's a lot of people in this world who are unemployed or underemployed. And they may be considering a career in social work. What would be the first steps for them looking at a career in social work?

**Mary Beth 16:33**

That's a great question, I would start at your community college. And, you know, you can start with a two year degree in Human Services at a community college and start there. And there are lots of ways to get involved with human service agencies, there are so many, you know, places that you can help if you don't want to, you know, go all the way through, there are lots of ways that you can be involved. You know, if you want to help with transportation, or supervised visits for children in foster care, or, you know, there's just so many ways you can be involved. And you can start by just, you know, going to a two year community college and get involved there, or, and then and then go on to a four year degree, you just start where you are, and there are just so many ways to be involved. And, you know, contact our office, we will be happy to talk with you and help you learn more about careers in social work. You know, we have a mentoring group, and on our one of our committees, we have people who are happy to share and talk to folks about that. So, you know, feel free to reach out to us at our office, and we will, we will help you with that, and give you information about that.

### **Ashley Biggs 18:03**

What would you say to what would be your advice to someone who is looking at a career in social work, they they know that they're going to they heard you about going to a two year college to get the Human Services degree. Or maybe they're they're looking at busting right out into that bachelor's degree, what would be your advice to them, you know, that they should digest, you know, over the next five years, something that I know that when I was a young librarian or getting started, I was given some advice. You're gonna bring it home? Bring it home. And that's okay. Just just have a just have a way to let it go. What would your advice be to someone who is new to the profession?

### **Mary Beth 18:59**

That's a great question. I love that question. I think the most important thing is to make sure that you have a community, you have a support system. I will tell you this is wonderful, wonderful work that you absolutely get to see people change and grow and thrive. And it's so it's so rewarding. But it is hard sometimes. And it is challenging work. And you're right, you have to have a support system. And I will tell you, I you know, I wish I knew about NASW decades ago when you know I was starting out. You know you can join NASW as a student for just a fraction of the cost of membership. It's so cheap to join as a student. And there's such a wealth of knowledge. There's so much experience and other social workers there. Whether you want to learn from the audience. Find forums and, and, you know, join the online support groups or if you want to join our committee meetings and our mentoring and our support that way, but there is just so much support and resources within the NASW chapter, there are so many people who can encourage you and help you. And you know, even if you want to staff a case, with our ethics committee, or our private practice committee, or you're struggling, you don't have to be alone, you don't have to do this work in a silo, by yourself. So I really think connection and friendship and belonging to a group is really important. And so that's what I would tell people is, you know, join up with your fellow social workers, and, you know, follow people online, you know, don't do this alone. There are lots of people out there to help with this, with this work.

### **Ashley Biggs 21:07**

When you were first getting started, did you find yourself quickly overwhelmed? And you turn to the National Social Workers Association, or did you find them later on in your career?

### **Mary Beth 21:22**

I found them later in my career, but I had some I was fortunate enough to have some really good mentors, and people to, to teach me and, and be a support to me. And, you know, I did have some people teach me about NASW, and connect me with them. And so I'm very grateful for that. And I think

that, you know, belonging, and being a part of a group like that is so helpful, and really important. But I it took me a while to learn about those resources and to learn about those, those connections. But you know, I think if you can join as a student and have that, for life, throughout your career, it would be amazing to have

### **Ashley Biggs 22:17**

now the website for the Maryland chapter is N A, S, W dash md.org. I'm going to repeat Yes. N as in Nancy, a, as an apple, s, as in Sam, w as and Walter dash. M, as in Mary, D, as in dog.org. And their telephone number is 410-788-1066. Again, 410-788-1066. It's important to the community that the Library for the Blind serves to know that these resources are out there. If they had questions about finding a social worker, like I want to know, what kind of social worker I really need. Can they call?

### **Mary Beth 23:17**

Absolutely, we get calls like that all the time, and I'm happy to help folks that need help with those kinds of things. We can we can help, we can put it out to some of our resources within the chapter and we can help get them connected with someone who can assist. So yeah, if if someone needs a social worker, we know quite a few.

### **Ashley Biggs 23:42**

I'm sure you do. I've been to your annual conference.

### **Ashley Biggs 23:53**

As you know, March is National Social Workers month. Yes. You know, that that has gotten me thinking, How do social workers put out that they are out there? How do how do people find them? Because, yeah, you know, I'm lucky enough that I built I had a chance to make a connection with Jennifer and you give me the last couple of years. So I know that if I needed somebody, I can just like send you all text. But if How does social workers put out put out their shingle so to say? Yeah, that's

### **Mary Beth 24:32**

a great question. Well, internally within our in our chapter, you know, we have an internal message board that people put out a lot of information through if you're a member, you'll get our E News and our your new daily Internal news. So you'll get information that way. People advertise internally, all the time, but if you're not a member People do, you know, put out their shingle a little bit on some of the social media pages and things like that, but it's a challenge and insurance companies will vet you and put you



on their pages and things like that. But it is it is a challenge sometimes to get the word out but being a part of an organization like NASW is a really good way to let people know who you are and and that you're there. It does make it easier to let people know where you are to be a part of an organization.

**Ashley Biggs 25:36**

That is amazing. Thank you so much for being here with us today.

**Mary Beth 25:41**

It is my pleasure and I hope you know to hear from your listeners and and I'm happy to answer any questions that folks have.

**Ashley Biggs 25:49**

All right guys. We're gonna wrap up and say that this is the end of LBPD Guest our for March. And remember it is national social workers month so go up and high five a social worker. And if you are interested in becoming one definitely check out the National Association of Social Workers Maryland chapter. They are good people I can vouch for them personally. I hope you all have Maryland

**Announcer 26:17**

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