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COLLEEN BARRETT

SERVANT LEADER & SUPERSTAR



WHEN THE ADMIN AWARDS WAS LAUNCHED IN 2012, WE SAT DOWN WITH COLLEEN BARRETT TO ASK HER FOR HER THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSION. HER ANSWERS FROM THAT SEPTEMBER INTERVIEW, EDITED FOR BREVITY; ARE BELOW:

INTERVIEW

WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A SECRETARY?

I like to serve so you have to start there. I loved to solve problems. And I loved to give exemplary or positive customer service delivery on behalf of whomever I was working for. Life is all about relationships... you have an opportunity in the administrative group to form more relationships than probably any other position — even much higher up on that so-called ladder because you are very often that first point of contact with the outside world or the customer... life is just one big grassroots campaign as far as I’m concerned.

WHAT DID YOU LIKE THE LEAST?

I didn’t like anything that was routine. I loved to master projects, but, for example, filing was only interesting to me because I loved to be able to find anything that anyone was looking for... I’ve never liked rote work. (But) there’s some that goes in every job no matter what position you’re in.

WHAT WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF SERVING HERB KELLEHER?

Being a nanny for 45 years for a man who has always thought he was 17 regardless of any year that was added to his personal calendar! He was a great servant leader. He loved life and you almost couldn’t be around him and not catch that love of life and love of people.

AND THE BEST ASPECT?

It was truly feeling his egalitarian spirit and appreciating the fact that he valued my judgment and thinking as a team member.

DID YOU EVER THINK YOU WOULD RISE FROM SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT AND COO OF SOUTHWEST AIRLINES?

Quite honestly it wasn’t something I wanted, and I never wanted to be COO—and I made that very clear to the Board— that isn’t my strength. My strength is customer service and people and everything that touches people, and, honestly, being President and COO wasn’t my favorite position at Southwest...my favorite position was Executive Vice President- Customers. Customer to us means employees, passengers, and shareholders, so I could really touch everything. I could touch every department. And as President... I had to do a lot more external things... I did them... I can’t say I hated them... (but) I like to get down and dirty and really roll up my sleeves.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR ADMINS?

Love. Everybody. Just love. It’s a word that corporate America doesn’t use very much... always remember where you came from — so that you know how far you’ve come...I don’t think most of us start out thinking we’re going to be the President of the United States or the CEO of a company... and I think... be humble and appreciate what you get. To me psychic satisfaction is 10 times more important than pay or title.

“Be Authentic. Be Real. Remember Who You Are”



COLLEEN BARRETT AWARD FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE

WINNER



SIMONE LE

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, BIOGEN

“There is no one like her,” said her President. Simone Le is the quiet power behind Biogen North America’s success, a woman whose precision, strength, and heart have carried one of the world’s most complex organizations forward. As Executive Assistant to the President, Simone is the model of discretion and foresight, the person who delivers clarity when others see only confusion. She’s widely regarded as the “gold standard” among admins - a phrase used by several nominators, setting the tone for professionalism and integrity across the entire organization. She flawlessly manages the logistics behind Biogen’s most visible leadership and investor events. Before joining Biogen, Simone spent nearly 30 years in biopharmaceutical sales, giving her an unmatched understanding of the business she now helps lead. A widow and devoted mother of three daughters, she has built a career and a legacy on care - care for her leaders, her peers, and her people.

Finalists



MARY DOMINGUEZ
Takeda Pharmaceuticals



SUSAN MCCOLLIN
City of Boston



AMY NGUYEN
Takeda Pharmaceuticals



BRENDA TOOMEY
Spencer Technologies



HOLLY EVERS
AVEO Pharmaceuticals, Inc



Above the Call: Celebrating Janine Ballaera

A Force of Nature. A Strategic Partner. A Cultural Cornerstone.

At SBI Growth Advisory, excellence has a name – Janine Ballaera

For over 33 years, she’s been the heartbeat of executive excellence by combining precision, professionalism, and purpose. Janine isn’t just an Executive Assistant; she’s a strategist, problem-solver, and culture builder who makes every leader better.

Described by SBI’s Executive Chairman as “a force of nature wrapped around a kind heart, sharp wit, and unmatched attention to detail,” Janine sets the standard for partnership and performance.

Congratulations, Janine, on your well-deserved recognition! Your impact inspires us all.



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ACHIEVER AWARD

SOANI VARGAS

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT MANAGER, ROBERT HALF

“Why doesn’t she deserve this award?” asked her Regional President. In eight years, Soani went from a temporary receptionist to Operational Support Manager for two major regions leading teams, driving excellence, and making everything she touches better. She earned Robert Half’s top Excellence Award and received 100 Everyday Hero recognitions in a single year. Calm under pressure, creative in chaos, she led DEI initiatives, streamlined operations, and pulled off massive logistics feats like onboarding 75 employees in a single project. Her team says she makes them feel like the number one priority - even with a thousand things on her plate. Soani is proof that consistency, courage, and care define true achievement.



Finalists

	SHIJEANA DAVIS Spaulding Rehabilitation Network		NICOLE DE VOE Brigham and Women's Hospital		COLLEEN FRASCARELLI Salesforce
	LAURA JOLIN Analog Devices		SHAMIKA SEALEY Dana-Farber Cancer Institute		MELINDA SPENCER Lexington Recreation & Community Programs



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2025 ADMIN AWARD NOMINEES!

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**Congratulations to all of our
Admin Awards nominees**



2025

- Amy Nguyen | R&D GI² TherapeuticArea Unit
- Barbara Aldrich | R&D Data, Digital & Technology
- Jennifer Kuzmich | USBU PDT Sales Operations

- Mary Dominguez | RDBU Congress & Sponsorship
- Orea Nicolls | Global Oncology Patient Value, Policy & Access
- Whitney Benson | Global Oncology Business Unit

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THE ABOVE THE CALL AWARD

WINNER



JANINE BALLAERA

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CEO, SBI GROWTH ADVISORY

“Janine is a force of nature wrapped around a kind heart, sharp wit, executive pedigree, and unmatched attention to detail,” said SBI’s Executive Chairman. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Janine began her administrative career at just eighteen and over the next three decades would go on to support C-suite leaders at JP Morgan, Eagle Pharmaceuticals, and Greenberg Traurig before bringing her mastery to SBI Growth. Today, Janine supports the CEO and Executive Leadership Team, managing high-stakes board meetings, leadership summits, client initiatives and Sales. Yes, you heard that right, she is also adept at sales, lauded as SBI’s “#1 Business Development Rep!” When SBI launched new business-development efforts, Janine built her own tracking system, scheduled up to twenty-five executive calls a week, and opened doors with partner firms. The CEO’s verdict? “Crushing it.” Janine models SBI’s highest values every day, balancing excellence at work with devotion to her husband and two children.

Finalists



NICOLE CHARETTE
C-4 Analytics



JANICE LEONE
athenahealth



MICHAEL MACHADO
Weber Shandwick



MONICA MELO
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SARAH MILNE
athenahealth



YVONNE PARNTER
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LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Congratulations to our amazing Robert Half nominees and all the Boston and New England Region Admin Awards nominees! We are so proud of you and all the great work you do!



Chrissy Dupre



Soani Vargas



ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

WINNER



SUSAN MCCOLLIN

ADMINISTRATIVE & PROJECT COORDINATOR, CITY OF BOSTON

“She is fearless, compassionate, and unstoppable,” said her Director. As Administrative and Project Coordinator for Mayor Michelle Wu’s Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, Susan is the heartbeat of Boston’s most inclusive and impactful events. She leads the city’s beloved Boston Gives Back: Winter Wonderland, which in 2024 served over 3,000 families, coordinating more than 70 vendors and hundreds of volunteers. When a Nor’easter threatened deliveries, Susan personally rented a U-Haul to make sure toys, coats, and essentials reached families on time. And when children couldn’t attend, she delivered gifts herself - on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning. From signature events like “Ode to the Black Woman” to ensuring every gathering is accessible because, as Susan says, “Access to language is access to dignity.” Her thoughtful details and steady leadership transform city programs into powerful expressions of care and belonging.

Finalists



CHRISTINE KING
Brookline Police Department



SARA MCDONALD
Stryker



MARIA PESOLA
Greater Lawrence Community
Action Council



LEADERSHIP AWARD

LILIA MASELLI

SENIOR EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, ANALOG DEVICES

“In all my years of leadership, she stands out head and shoulders above the rest,” said her Vice President. For more than 30 years, Lil has made leadership look effortless. At Analog Devices, she supports the Vice President for Emerging Business and Innovation and was instrumental in launching the company’s New Venture Lab, organizing the space, technology, and systems that turned a concept into a thriving innovation center. Her influence extends far beyond her executive. Lil founded a regional network for administrative professionals that now connects, educates, and inspires dozens of admins across ADI, creating a culture where partnership and respect are standard operating procedure. Known for her calm under pressure, her ability to read a room, and her unique ability to sense of what matters most, Lil is the kind of leader who makes everyone around her better.

WINNER



Finalists



PATTY BOLAND
John Hancock



PREETHA KINGSVIEW
Massachusetts Institute Of Technology



JACQUELINE BARLOW LOVOI
Texas Instruments



VANESSA VINING
athenahealth



LOYALTY AWARD

WINNER

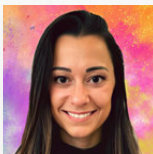


BARBARA JONES

SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, JOHN HANCOCK

“Nearly forty years, and still the heart of this place,” said a longtime colleague. On October 1, 1984, Barbara Jones walked through the doors of John Hancock - and she’s been walking the talk of dedication ever since. From her early days in Group Pension Systems to her current role supporting U.S. Tech Services and Operations, Barbara has spent four decades turning reliability into an art form. She manages large-scale meetings and budgets with quiet precision and keeps an organization of thousands running smoothly. But Barbara’s real legacy is the way she makes people feel. She decorates the office for every holiday, shows up with treats when spirits are low, and checks in on teammates facing challenges. Outside of work, she leads church fundraisers to help first-year college students reach their dreams. Her career is a masterclass in loyalty and heart—proof that consistency, care, and kindness can move mountains.

Finalists



DANIELLE CICCARELLO
athenahealth



LAURA DONEHUE
Dunad Therapeutics Ltd.



CHRISSY DUPRE
Robert Half



STEFAN REED
Vertex Pharmaceuticals



PATTY WHORISKEY
PTC

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THE SPIRIT AWARD

LAUREN DISTEFANO

SENIOR EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, ATHENAHEALTH

“Lauren makes work fun again!” say her colleagues. Known as the “Mayor of EAs” at athenahealth, she’s also the heartbeat of it. As Senior Executive Assistant to the Chief Sales Officer, Lauren powers a 500-person sales organization with joy, energy, and connection. She helped lead athenahealth’s return-to-office initiative, ensuring that every space – Boston, Austin, and Atlanta – felt like home again. When recognition moments needed a lift, Lauren made them unforgettable - turning routine events into celebrations, designing game shows, and crafting award experiences that made gratitude contagious. Her creativity and heart have reshaped the company’s culture, one event at a time. The first to cheer someone on, the one who creates connection and makes sure everyone feels seen, Lauren reminds us that spirit isn’t something you have, it’s something you share.



Finalists



JANELL AKOI
John Hancock



BARBARA (BARBE) ALDRICH
Takeda Pharmaceuticals



TANIQWAH BURTHWRIGHT
FamilyAid



PAMELA LESKAR
DraftKings



HEATHER COLLINS
HYCU

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And, many more...





THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AWARD

WINNER



WHITNEY BENSON

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT, GLOBAL ONCOLOGY, TAKEDA PHARMACEUTICALS

“I feel completely confident with Whitney at the helm,” said her executive. “She’s an exceptional strategic partner who manages every high-stakes moment with precision and heart.” At the highest levels of one of the world’s largest biopharmaceutical companies, Whitney Benson exemplifies what true strategic partnership looks like. As Executive Assistant to the President of Global Oncology, she supports a business spanning the U.S., Europe, and Japan – overseeing billions in revenue and life-changing therapies for patients worldwide. Whitney is trusted to manage the most sensitive and high-stakes initiatives, from board meetings and business development efforts to critical product launches that shape Takeda’s future while also preparing her executive for every scenario. Whitney is described as the emotional center of a complex global team and the ultimate role model who makes everyone better.” Whitney Benson redefines what it means to be a strategic partner at the highest level.

Finalists



MANDY JOHNSTONE
athenahealth



OREA NICOLLS
Takeda Pharmaceuticals



CHRISTINE PETERSEN
TRIANA Biomedicines, Inc.



CORTEZ PICKENS
DraftKings



THE TEAM ACHIEVER AWARD

THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

SANOFI

“They are the backbone of an entire organization,” said one Sanofi executive. Sanofi’s Administrative Leadership Team – Renee Lurie, Kim Carmona, Kristine Pedersen, and Mary Walker – is redefining what partnership looks like between administrative professionals and senior leadership. Formed to empower Sanofi’s 200-plus admins nationwide, this team has built a movement of confidence, capability, and collaboration. Through mentorship programs, a digital resource hub, newsletter communications, professional development, and celebrating wins publicly, the ALT has unified Sanofi’s admin team and elevated the visibility of their work across the company. Since the team’s launch, executives across business units have recognized the Admin community as a critical professional group – even inviting ALT representatives to leadership meetings and strategic planning sessions. That visibility has changed everything. It’s opened doors, deepened respect, and established a new model of partnership where administrative voices are not only heard but sought out.

WINNER



Team Names

KIM CARMONA

RENEE LURIE

KRISTINE PEDERSEN

MARY WALKER

GOOD AS GOLD WINNERS



Good As Gold Outfit Winner

Brenda Toomey
Spencer Technologies

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Team Spirit Winner - Spencer Technologies

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