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## Georgia Southern senior companion coordinator recognized at Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities meeting

October 31, 2018

As coordinator of the Senior Companion Program at Georgia Southern, Deb Blackburn is constantly helping people. Earlier this summer Blackburn was recognized for her work by being named Community Collaborative Champion at the Second Annual Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) Region 5 Regional Community Collaborative Celebration.

Blackburn was nominated by June DiPolito, executive director of Pineland Behavioral Health/Developmental Disabilities, which is a public, not-for-profit, community-based organization that helps children, adolescents, adults and seniors who have a mental illness, developmental disabilities or addiction challenges to live more full and productive lives.

“(Blackburn) is the best partner anyone could ever ask for,” DiPolito said in her nomination. “She is not only actively involved in the Pineland area Community Collaborative, but you will find Deb volunteering her time and talents in every worthwhile community initiative. She was an initial member of our Pineland Community Collaborative and has not missed a regular meeting.”

Blackburn, who was surprised she was selected for the award, said she is appreciative of DiPolito’s nomination.

“The language (DiPolito) used made me feel good,” Blackburn said. “It’s nice to be recognized because I work really hard, and it was by someone I didn’t expect it from. I’ve been to meetings with her before so it’s not uncommon for me to go. She asked me to send a resume, but I didn’t know what it was for. I was like ‘Wow that’s how she feels about what I do for the community.’”

Blackburn has recently been working on an electronic resource guide, which she said is an information resource that has many applications for social workers in our community, those in need, or their family and friends.

“I volunteered to be on the committee for the electronic resource guide because I know how important mental health is,” she said. “I can always be certain that mental health is a part of the community, and it’s important to make sure that’s part of our efforts.”

DiPolito said Blackburn is one of the most dependable people she has worked with.

“(Blackburn) has a pure public servant’s heart and has dedicated her life to service to mankind,” DiPolito said. “She is a true hero in her commitment to the community collaborative. When you need someone to champion any cause to help others, you can call on Pineland’s Community Collaborative Hero — Deb Blackburn.”

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research institution founded in 1906, offers 141 degree programs serving more than 27,000 students through nine colleges on three campuses in Statesboro, Savannah, Hinesville and online instruction. A leader in higher education in southeast

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