

THE  
**BOISE**



OCTOBER 2023

**FRONT**

*The official newsletter of the Boise VA Medical Center*

**WHEN WITCHES  
GO RIDING, AND  
BLACK CATS ARE  
SEEN THE MOON  
LAUGHS AND  
WHISPERS 'TIS  
NEAR HALLOWEEN!**



# National Compliance & Ethics Week

## November 6-10, 2023.

During this week, we celebrate the value of compliance and ethics in achieving VHA's missions through its theme of "[Awareness, Recognition, Reinforcement.](#)" Our goal is to improve employee awareness of compliance and ethics, recognize incredible efforts to uphold our integrity, and reinforce our dedication to compliance and ethics in service to America's Veterans. The resources here are available for you to access during and after the week.

An employee stuffs away a bag of medical supplies into a backpack at the end of the day. Or the numbers on the latest procurement receipt are not adding up with what came in. What do you do?

Stories of fraud, waste, and abuse at VA make Veterans lose trust in our institution's integrity. By being compliant to the laws, policies, and procedures that regulate our organization, we help maintain Veteran trust in VA.

A grateful Veteran offers to buy you dinner as thanks for great treatment. Or a contract involving your cousin's business comes across your desk. What do you do in these circumstances?

Each VA medical facility and VISN has a dedicated Integrity and Compliance Officer available for you to contact – [Steven Waltari](#) is the ICO for BVAMC

Veterans and the public expect that we, as VA employees, serve ethically. VHA Ethics Advisors, who are ICOs trained by the Office of General Counsel and present at many facilities, are a resource for your tough questions on [government ethics](#).

The [current list of Ethics Advisors](#) is available. Note that not all medical facilities have a dedicated Ethics Advisor; if your facility lacks one, then please reach out to [your appropriate regional ethics mailbox](#).

# COMPLIANCE CORNER



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# BOISE is HIGHLY RELIABLE

## HRO PRINCIPLES & VALUES

THEME OF THE MONTH  
Respect for People

November 2023 | National Safety Poster



### Giving Time Back and Embracing Employee Whole Health

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#### CONTEXT

The VHA Office of Quality and Patient Safety (QPS) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee was formed in 2021 to cultivate an inclusive work environment that respects and empowers individuals. This staff member-driven committee designed programs reinforcing HRO Pillars, Principles and Values and emphasizing Whole Health.

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#### ACTION

The Committee helped implement multiple 90-day challenges to enact change. One change creates operational efficiencies aligned with VHA's Reduce Employee Burnout and Optimize Organizational Thriving (REBOOT) Task Force. As a result, supervisors have shortened or reduced the number of meetings, offering employees the opportunity to re-purpose more than 3,400 hours of time previously spent in meetings for enhanced productivity.

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#### RESULTS

Additionally, supervisors reassessed and removed repetitive or lower priority meetings, reducing burnout and increasing efficiency, engagement and satisfaction. The DEI Committee's dedication to listening to staff members and helping alleviate some time management stresses demonstrates Respect for People by prioritizing individual health and well-being, thereby enabling exceptional service and care for Veterans.

“By prioritizing the health and well-being of staff members, we create a welcoming and sustainable workforce that can provide exceptional health care.”

*Amanda Reilly  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Chair  
Office of Quality and Patient Safety*

# If you feel unsafe...

## Help is available.

### If you are experiencing:

#### Mental Health Crisis

Veterans Crisis Line  
Call 988 (then press "1") or text 838255  
[www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

#### Medical Emergency

Dial 911

#### Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence

National Domestic Violence Hotline  
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)  
[www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)

#### Sexual Assault/Abuse

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)  
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)  
[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

#### Human Trafficking

National Human Trafficking Hotline  
1-888-373-7888  
[www.humantraffickinghotline.org](http://www.humantraffickinghotline.org)



For additional information and resources,  
scan the QR code or go to  
[www.va.gov/stop-harassment/helpisavailable.asp](http://www.va.gov/stop-harassment/helpisavailable.asp)  
Para información en español, escanear el código QR.  
o ir a [www.va.gov/stop-harassment/helpisavailable.asp](http://www.va.gov/stop-harassment/helpisavailable.asp)

If you feel unsafe, use  
**THIS HAND SIGNAL**  
to let a VA staff person  
know you need help.  
Someone will  
speak with you  
privately and  
discreetly.



**UNIVERSAL SIGN  
FOR HELP**

### For on-site emergency:

Contact the VA Police  
**(208) 422-1122**

# KNOW THE SIGN FOR HELP

**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration





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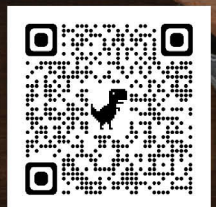
# HOLIDAY SPONSOR PROGRAM

The Veteran Holiday Sponsorship Program is open for sponsors and veteran nominations now through December 8.

The program is limited to 250 people. Gifts will be available for pickup or delivery the week of Christmas. If you would like to sponsor a veteran or nominate yourself or another veteran please contact Tammy at (208) 422-1175

Completed forms can be dropped off at Voluntary Service or emailed to [boivoluntaryservice@va.gov](mailto:boivoluntaryservice@va.gov)

Application forms can be found at the Boise VA Information Desk and online at:  
[www.va.gov/boise-health-care/work-with-us-/volunteer-or-donate/](http://www.va.gov/boise-health-care/work-with-us-/volunteer-or-donate/)





# Celebrate **National Family Caregivers Month** with your Caregiver Support team!

You're there to support your Veteran, we're here to support you.

National Family Caregivers Month (NFCM) is celebrated every November and is observed to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country.

Throughout November, CSP will celebrate caregivers of Veterans by hosting a series of events, activities, discussions, and more.

Please consider joining our 2023 celebration of NFCM with a community of caregivers and Veterans at an event near you.

## For Local Event Information, Contact Your Local CSP Team

From NOVEMBER 9th: 9:00AM-2:00PM

At BOISE VAMC Mt Cove Gym

## National Links

 <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs>

 <https://www.instagram.com/deptvetaffairs/>

 <https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs/>

 <https://www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs>



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U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs







**VA**

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THE BOISE VAMC INVITES YOU TO CELEBRATE

# DIA DE LOS MUERTOS DAY OF THE DEAD!

3 Ofrendas/Altars will be placed on campus  
between October 30th and Nov 3rd.

1. Bldg. 77 outside of the Canteen by the elevator
2. Bldg. 54 waiting room/main entrance
3. Bldg. 116 mental health/sleep lab

Please stop by and place a picture or small offering (no  
monetary value) to celebrate your family and friends who  
have passed on.

If you are unable to stop by feel free to email a picture to the  
Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager Maritza at  
[maritza.lorenzana@va.gov](mailto:maritza.lorenzana@va.gov) and it be added to one of the  
Ofrendas.







Andrea  
**Watlington**

Employee of  
the Month  
**SEPTEMBER**



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There are so many examples that I could use in which Andrea has displayed most or all of the ICARE values, but I am going to focus on one in particular that covers all of them. Without be asked, Andrea created an extremely useful resource for her Co-workers to use. This resource includes all sorts of useful guides and tips for getting our Veterans taken care of in a timely and effective matter to help our Veterans have the best experience while they are visiting the Boise VAMC. A lot of the questions employees may have while helping a Veteran can get answered by the employee insuring they have Andrea's guide brought up. Even with the ever-changing VA policies and procedures, this guide is great because she is able to keep it up to date all while helping our Veterans by doing her Advanced Medical Support Assistant duties. Andrea is the AMSA for the Orange team, which means she is the teams initial go-to person for any questions that any of her administrative co-workers (and sometimes even clinical co-workers) may have. When she is not assisting a Veteran with their administrative needs, or co-workers with their questions, she is working on some sort of project to help make sure Veterans who are seen by the Orange Team and the Boise VAMC are able to do so with as little amount of stress as possible. Also, making sure the Veterans leave our hospital happy with their experience with us as possible.





**Madison  
Keller**

**Employee of  
the Month  
SEPTEMBER**



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Madison Keller is one of our Registered Dietitians and she has gone above and beyond her role for our Veterans and her fellow staff. In Madison's main role, she meets with Veterans to discuss their nutrition needs related to their overall health and wellbeing, and she also is the facility lead for the Healthy Teaching Kitchen (HTK). HTK is a nationally offered class to learn more about healthy decisions with nutrition and learning healthy recipes. Additionally,

Madison has added on to her role by teaching an employee-facing Healthy Teaching Kitchen offered the 3rd Wednesday every month, supporting VA's strategic goals of employee Whole Health. Thanks to Madison's efforts of coordinating with Veterans Canteen Service, we've partnered with the Mobile Farmer's Market open to Veterans and employees on Wednesdays during summer to increase access to fresh produce. Finally, Madison is member of a food security taskforce, advocating for Veteran needs regarding their social determinants of health for access to quality nutrition for their wellbeing. She is a great team player with a positive attitude.

Our Veterans and staff benefit from Madison's efforts! Madison demonstrates I CARE values by:

**Integrity:** Supporting VA's curriculum with local HTK classes

**Commitment:** Going above and beyond her role by leading an employee HTK and coordinating to begin the Mobile Farmer's Market

**Advocacy:** Advocating for food security task force needs

**Respect:** Demonstrating a positive attitude in interactions with fellow staff

**Excellence:** Providing quality care to Veterans and employees with HTK class series



Esperanza  
**Mechelhoff**

Employee of  
the Month  
**SEPTEMBER**



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Just wanted to give a shout out to Espy Mechelhoff and her assistance in giving platelet rich plasma injections (PRP).

She has stepped up and really provided great help. There are a lot of layers to getting these injections coordinated, planned and prepared. She has helped make this process seamless. The veterans that have had these injections have far exceeded expectations and they are happy with the outcomes.

Without Espy's help, it would be difficult otherwise to offer the service. Please consider her for Employee of the Month.





**Kristy  
Gempler**

**Supervisor of  
the Quarter  
FY23 Q4**



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I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for Kristy's exceptional dedication and prompt action in resolving a critical issue that significantly impacted the working environment for both our Stepdown Unit (SDU) nurses and the ICU crew. Her recent intervention in installing a light at the corner SDU nurse charting station has truly made a world of difference and has fostered a much-needed atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration between our teams.

The installation of the light at the SDU nurse charting station has proven to be a game-changer for our SDU nurses and the overall workflow in the shared ICU-SDU space. Her keen attention to detail and her understanding of the unique challenges faced by both teams have made it abundantly clear that she is a leader who genuinely cares about the well-being of her staff and the quality of patient care we deliver.

The circumstances that led to the installation of this light were complex and demanding, and her ability to navigate through this challenge with grace and empathy is truly commendable. As many are aware, the ICU-SDU collaboration was marred by a recent conflict regarding the lighting situation. Her thoughtful approach of finding a middle ground that respects the needs of both ICU and SDU while ensuring patient comfort and efficient workflow has proven to be an exemplary model of effective leadership.

By allowing the ICU crew to turn off the big light at night to facilitate ICU patients' rest while simultaneously providing adequate lighting for SDU nurses to carry out their charting duties, Kristy has struck a delicate balance that benefits all parties involved. This not only addresses the immediate concerns raised by both teams but also sets a remarkable precedent for resolving potential conflicts and fostering a harmonious working environment moving forward.



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## Carpentry Shop

Unit of the  
Quarter  
FY23 Q4

The 2MS team would like to nominate the maintenance and carpentry staff for Workgroup of the Quarter. These employees work tirelessly to ensure the Boise VA has everything they need to ensure safe veteran care.

Prior to and following the grand re-opening of 2MS, this group was inundated with work orders from installation of various equipment, to keying doors for safe medication storage, hanging signs, etc. Along with these work orders, the group still worked hard to complete orders placed throughout the facility. This increase in workload was trying at times, however, these employees always showed up with a smile on their face and willingness to do what was needed on our unit.

The maintenance and carpentry staff demonstrated the ICARE value of Commitment as they generously fulfilled their responsibilities to our organization to ensure the 2MS unit had what they needed to open a safe, workable unit for both staff and veterans.

They demonstrated Respect by remaining patient and displaying positive attitudes during periods of heavy workloads. They completed tasks respectfully and followed up with staff to ensure everything was done correctly.

This team demonstrated Excellence as they strived to provide the highest quality work consistently. The carpentry department took extra care to build cabinets for office areas that needed extra storage. The cabinets were built beautifully with excellent craftsmanship. When on 2MS to complete a work order, the team was more than happy to go above and beyond to work on something else emergently before leaving the unit.

We are so thankful to have such talented and hardworking maintenance and carpentry staff here at the Boise VA. We truly could not have opened a more beautiful unit without their help and expertise. Their kindness and patience during this time was appreciated by everyone on 2MS. We feel they deserve to be recognized for their commitment to the Boise VA.



# Congratulations BVAMC HRO HeROs!



## Diana Crumb, RN

A Montana enrolled Veteran called VIRS Coordinator, Diana Crumb, to report that he was stranded in the Walmart parking lot in Idaho Falls, as he was unable to get his power wheelchair into the van due to the failure of the ramp.

Diana contacted the Salt Lake City VA, as the Veteran was physically located in their catchment area, to request assistance, and was referred to the Montana VA. Instead of directing the Veteran to call the Montana VA, Diana notified the Montana VA of the Veteran's situation which allowed coordination to correct the issue.

In this situation, Diana exemplified Sensitivity to Operations and Deference to Expertise. She did not rely on usual care processes despite the physical location or enrollment status of the Veteran. Diana felt empowered to use her contacts within the VA to locate the team that could assist the Veteran.

## Erin Berreth, Dr. Jeff Dingman & Dr. Moe Hagman

The Operating System was scheduled to go down, leaving ER and In-patient teams without access to CPRS and other critical programs needed to ensure safe and high-quality medical care.

This team was instrumental in helping to develop alternatives to ensure continued access to the needed patient care programs and tools during the planned outage. They verified access, printed out step-by-step instructions, and distributed them to those areas that would need to use the alternative routes of computer access.

Because they were willing to anticipate risk (pre-occupation with failure) and work with a broad array of other teams and departments (deference to expertise), they were able to support the work of front-line staff and create workflows that minimized the disruption of care and lowered the risk of error for the patients (sensitivity to operations).

# Congratulations BVAMC HRO HeROs!



## Registered Nurses: Penney Huffman-Cook, Julie Newton & Kacey Davies

This team of nurses had concerns regarding documentation tracking requirements for a new medication patch used to treat pain and/or opioid dependency. One nurse researched and found a policy from another VA about monitoring these patches.

The team brought these concerns to management, as well as a proposed process and policy change to adopt tracking documentation for these patches. This proposal was approved by the appropriate committees and led to a policy and practice change at our facility.

These nurses demonstrated Preoccupation with Failure by anticipating risk. They did not wait for a near miss or adverse event, thus preventing potential harm to patients and staff.

Visit the [HRO Share Point](#) site to learn more

## Jennifer Bonhome

Batteries in the generator building overheated, creating a safety hazard, and could not be replaced until they were cooled down, neutralized, the battery acid cleaned up, and the batteries removed.

FMS Staff coordinated with Jennifer to safely remove and dispose of the batteries. Jennifer consulted multiple subject matter experts to safely remove the batteries to allow for installation of new ones.

Jennifer and FMS Staff used Preoccupation with Failure to safely perform a new and potentially dangerous task. This was an unusual situation that required problem solving and coordination with subject matter experts in a time-sensitive operation to ensure critical emergency equipment functionality.





# HELLO'S & GOODBYES



THE BOISE VAMC  
WOULD LIKE TO  
WELCOME OUR NEW  
EMPLOYEES WHO  
JOINED THE TEAM IN  
OCTOBER 2023

**Elizabeth Garrison, Physical Rehab**  
**Tamara Jamison, Canteen**  
**Cristal Moffis, Primary Care**  
**Hallie Davis, Physical Rehab**  
**Hannah Walbuck, Nursing**  
**Kord Ketchum, Sterile Processing**  
**Korina Osornio, Primary Care**  
**Kortney Heffelfinger, Nursing**  
**Luke Coleman, Mental Health**  
**Marissa Smith, Primary Care**  
**Stacie Hagood, Nursing**  
**Zachary Williams, Imaging**  
**Joshua Thomas, Education**  
**Makenna Craig, Education**  
**Alaina Pooley, Facilities Management**  
**Clarence Wieting, Facilities Management**  
**Emily Hammond, Primary Care**

# HELLO'S & GOODBYES



THE BOISE VAMC  
WOULD LIKE TO SAY  
GOODBYE TO THE  
EMPLOYEES WHO  
LEFT THE TEAM IN  
OCTOBER 2023

**Cristian Gomez, Speciality Care**  
**Amy Decker, Nursing**  
**Makayla Velez, Nursing**  
**Alejandra Whyman, Nursing**  
**Michael Rainey, Primary Care**  
**Elwood Robertson, Supply**  
**Saul Lopez, Health Administration**  
**Rebecca Hammon, Nursing**  
**Kirk Bauer, Nursing**  
**Fairlee Frey, Nursing**  
**Amber Oatman, Nursing**  
**Lisa Chateau-Salas, Nursing**  
**Rebecca Gonzalez, Primary Care**  
**Matthew Flory, Connected Care**  
**Ashley Kuarock, Connected Care**





# ***EMPLOYEE FLU SHOTS***

Remember, per VHA Directive 1192, all VHA employees are required to submit a 10-9050 with flu shot documentation or exemption by November 30th!

## **Where Can I Get My Flu Vaccine?**

Employee Health (T122) from 8 – 9AM and 11:30AM-1PM M-F and Fridays from 2PM - 3PM or by appointment – [schedule online here](#)

- Inpatient & Clinical Areas from a vaccinator
  - From the Flu Cart – schedule coming!
- Off-Tours: Emergency Dept. from 7PM - 7AM
- CBOCs: At flu clinics or from clinical vaccinators
  - In the community at a local pharmacy
  - Need egg-free or a nasal spray option?  
Check [www.vaccines.gov/find-vaccines](http://www.vaccines.gov/find-vaccines)

Please submit your [10-9050 form](#) and proof of vaccination to [VA Employee Occupational Health Update System](#) if vaccinated off station.

If you are unable to use the link you may email your 10-9050 and proof of vaccination to [BOIEOHVaccines@va.gov](mailto:BOIEOHVaccines@va.gov)  
One person's forms per PDF attachment, and please include your FIRST & LAST name.

Thank you.

Lindsey J Robinson, BSN, RN