THE BOISE FRONT
THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BOISE VA MEDICAL CENTER

The Boise VAMC Now Equally Represents Hispanic Women in its Workforce!

Two years ago, the Boise VAMC employed 56 Hispanic women and underrepresented Hispanic women by 12. Due to the recruitment and hiring of Boise VAMC selection officials and the special marketing and emphasis of our Special Emphasis Program Manager for Hispanics Ms. Maritza Lorenzana, LCSW, Social Worker, the Boise VAMC now employs 83 Hispanic women! This milestone means the Boise VAMC now equally represents Hispanic women in its workforce. This is a very important accomplishment and furthers the Boise VAMC mandate to be an Equal Employment Opportunity employer. When the Boise VAMC equally employs a race, it demonstrates inclusion, equity, and diversity. The direction to equally represent originated in our United States Constitution. The Equal Protection Clause is found in the 14th Amendment and states all flesh is equal before the law. The Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 further instructs that it is prohibited by law to discriminate in employment based on race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), and national origin. For more information as to how our Boise equal representation is calculated and our current representations, please visit the Boise VAMC EEO SharePoint site found at this link: https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VHABOI/Director/SitePages/EEO-%26-ADR.aspx

The Boise VAMC would like to express its sincere thanks to Ms. Maritza Lorenzana for her dedicated work. Ms. Lorenzana held several educational events and observances and provided material to increase the awareness and understanding of Hispanic men and women!

Caitlin **Sommer**

Employee of the Month **OCTOBER**

Boise VA Medical Center

Caitlin Sommer started her employment with the VA at the Caldwell CBOC two years ago as a fee-based audiology health technician. The Audiology Telehealth program was new, and there was no guarantee it would succeed. Over the last two years, she has helped build this program through tenacity, specialized training, and commitment. She is now an official VA employee. As a VA employee and as a fee-based contractor, she experienced functional issues with the telehealth equipment. She coordinated troubleshooting sessions with experts from BIOMED and the telehealth equipment manufacturer. Her commitment to the program extended beyond her regular duties. Some of her time working to get the equipment functioning was unpaid since she was a fee-based employee, but she remained committed to keeping the program successful, knowing the importance of her role. She is now a full-time employee at the Caldwell CBOC, working in a very busy, successful telehealth program. Recently, a representative of the VA National TeleAudiology Program reached out, wanting to spotlight our site as having a "dynamic telehealth program."

Dedi
Seme

Employee of the Month
OCTOBER

VA | Boise VA Medical Center

Dedi Seme is our newest Eye Clinic Medical Support Assistant. In the 3 months that he has been here, he has received multiple compliments from both patients and coworkers. He demonstrates exceptional customer service skills and is an invaluable member of the team. On October 11th Dedi made himself available to assist our local Operators when they had a severe shortage. He stepped up when we only had 2 operators and no experienced back-ups. Dedi's experience with heavy phone traffic allowed him to seamlessly handle the traffic on phones as well as being on Eye clinic phones. His quick ability to assess the needs of the Veterans was a great asset to our Operators. HAS was very appreciative of Dedi's wiliness to assist in an area that was outside his normal duties provide additional help during a critical shortage. His efforts ensured that there was no disruption in service to Veterans. He has also received a PATS-R compliment from a patient and was in the weekly highlights for his excellent customer service skills and positive attitude. Because of his adaptability and teamwork his supervisor would like to nominate him for employee of the month.

Timothy **McCarty**

Employee of the Month **OCTOBER**

Boise VA Medical Center

Timothy McCarty has been a Boise VA employee for over 5 years, utilizing his nursing expertise on 2MS, SDU, 2P, and now TRC. He exemplifies the ICARE value of Excellence by being a continuous problem solver at the VA.

As a TRC nurse, he looks for ways to ensure seamless communication as he exhibits his commitment to improving processes within the department. Recently, the TRC group discussed ways to allow care team members access to add and edit the TRC Veteran appointment list. The process at the time created potential communication gaps as messages went through multiple people to provide updates to these appointments. Timothy jumped right in with a solution to provide care members the ability to access, set, and make their own appointments, thereby decreasing the risk of communication gaps and errors. He created an Excel spreadsheet in Teams which included the appropriate Dom sheet for nursing communication and report on one side, and appointment lists on the other. This process change enabled all members of the team to edit the sheet at the same time, as well as ensuring correctness of information. Over the last few weeks, he has graciously accepted feedback from staff to continuously improve the sheet with the most important and valuable information for the team. His go-getter attitude and dedication to improving processes has been incredibly beneficial to the TRC team. His talents have been extremely valuable on TRC and we feel he deserves to be recognized for his commitment to Excellence at the Boise VA.

Thank you to everyone who donated to the VA Food Pantry!

705.4 lbs of food were collected this year and will support veterans in need throughout the holiday season!

2MS collected an amazing 212.6 lbs of food and will be getting a nacho bar in the near future!

CLC/Hospice: 75.6
RNOD/Float Pool: 21.0
SDU: 203
ICU: 42.8
2P/TRC: 98.8
ED: 51.6

You all did an amazing job supporting our veterans!

14 Principles

ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

1. **MAINTAIN PUBLIC TRUST:** Public service is a public trust, requiring you to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. **AVOID CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** You shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. **PROTECT NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION:** You shall not engage in financial transactions using non-public Government information or allow improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. **DO NOT ACCEPT GIFTS:** You shall not, except pursuant to exceptions provided by regulation, solicit or accept any gift or item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by your agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by performance or nonperformance of your duties.
5. **NO UNAUTHORIZED PROMISES ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT:** You shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purported to bind the Government.
6. **PERFORM YOUR JOB:** You shall put forth an honest effort in the performance of your duties.
7. **OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT AND ACTIVITIES:** You shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with your official government duties. When in doubt seek advice:
8. **REPORT WASTE, FRAUD, ABUSE ANDCORRUPTION:** You shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
9. **DO NOT USE PUBLIC OFFICE FOR PRIVATE GAIN:** You shall not use your public office for private gain.
10. **DO NOT DISCRIMINATE:** You shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunities for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.
11. **OBEY THE LAW AND PAY YOUR TAXES:** You shall satisfy in good faith your obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those such as Federal, state, or local taxes that are imposed by law.
12. **NO PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT FOR PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS:** You shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
13. **PROTECT FEDERAL PROPERTY:** You shall protect and conserve Federal Property and shall not use it for other than authorized activity.
14. **AVOID APPEARANCE OF VIOLATING ETHICS LAWS:** You shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that you are violating the law, or these ethical standards.

When in doubt seek advice: Boise VAMC Integrity and Compliance Officer Kaysha Weygandt 208-422-1000 extension 1267 kaysha.weygandt@va.gov
CBI Helpline 1-866-842-4357 vhacbihelpline@va.gov
Office of Regional Counsel OGCPacificEthics@va.gov
Report Fraud, Waste, or Abuse : OIG 1-800-488-8244

COMPLIANCE CORNER

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HRO HeRO Award

Jennifer Hawkins, RN

HRO Principles & Values: Reluctance to Simplify & Duty to Speak Up

A veteran was discharged after a recent suicide attempt using prescribed medication. Following discharge, the veteran requested a refill for this medication. The medication renewal request was sent to a covering provider, as the veteran's PCP was out of town. The covering provider, seeing that the veteran was previously on this medication and not knowing the history of suicidality, placed the medication order.

RN Hawkins noticed the Rx renewal and **spoke up to express her concern** and immediately notified the covering provider of the veteran's history. The covering provider quickly discontinued the order and any other "expired" orders to prevent future renewals.

As a result of RN Hawkins' quick actions, the veteran was not accidentally issued the medication that he had used in past suicide attempts. Even though this veteran's medication request was not sent to RN Hawkins, **she didn't hesitate to speak up when she noticed the concern**. Despite being at the end of her shift, RN Hawkins took the time to investigate her concerns and **get to the root cause.**

High Reliability Organization (HRO) (sharepoint.com)

HRO Team HeRO Award

Scott Paul & Tim Beams

HRO Principles: Preoccupation with Failure & Sensitivity to Operations

During recent hot weather, one of the large chillers on an important patient care building, was not running as expected. Scott and Tim responded to check on the equipment and found an unusual situation where an electrical line and refrigerant line were rubbing together, wearing the insulation off the electrical line, and creating a hole in it.

In identifying the issue, Scott and Tim were able to fully shut down and isolate the equipment to make repairs safely while adjusting and repairing the equipment lines, so this situation does not happen again.

Scott and Tim's actions avoided a potentially dangerous situation for staff working on the equipment, and prevented more significant damage to a chiller, allowing them to fix it in hours, and avoiding substantial impact to patient care.

High Reliability Organization (HRO) (sharepoint.com)

Team HRO HeRO Award

Erin Wood, Tiffanie Torgensen, Kori Keyes, Ryan Tucker, Josh Maus & Chloe Mathewson

HRO Principles: Deference to Expertise & Commitment to Resilience

A patient admitted to the Step-Down Unit (SDU) was prescribed a new IV medication, known to initiate an inflammatory response in first time uses. It requires close observation, vital signs & frequent nursing assessments during initiation of the medication. This medication had not been administered on the SDU and requires pre-medications. When Tiffanie went to administer the infusion, she took the patient's blood pressure and noticed it did not meet parameters.

Tiffanie stopped to look up the medication and found that it's traditionally used along with chemotherapy. Tiffanie was uncomfortable with the situation and stopped the line and held the medication. Kori Keyes, a Chemo-certified RN, was assigned to the patient. After confirming the infusion order RN Keyes initiated the administration of the medication and expertly addressed the patient's reaction by notifying the provider and requesting additional orders.

The following morning, the oncology pharmacist, Ryan Tucker, spent time with SDU nursing personnel reviewing the patient's previous medical records are providing applicable education including how to address reactions to the medication. He strongly advocated for this medication to be ordered during business hours and when the oncology pharmacist is available to support. Josh Maus, RN, Chloe Mathewson, RN from the infusion clinic, and Erin Wood, RN from the ICU worked together to get the medication infused at a slower rate with the appropriate pre-medications. Ryan, Chloe, Josh, the nurse managers, and charge nurse, did a quick safety huddle to ensure that the plan for administration was well thought out. The staff's questions were answered and the plan for safe administration was shared.

HeRO
High Reliability Hero

Boise VA Medical Center

HELLO'S & GOODBYE'S

The Boise VAMC would like to welcome our new employees who joined the team in November 2024:

Chandra Blood, Nursing
Eric Nelson, Primary Care
Joseph Sanchez-Piotrowski, Nursing
Kyoung Keen, Nursing
Leonya Nasso, Primary Care
Michael Porter, Nursing
Trevor Aguiar, Specialty Care
Johnny Sandoval, Chief of Staff
Charles Karnstedt, Facilities Management
Nathaniel Vice, Canteen Service
Michelle Allison, Primary Care

Boise VA Medical Center

HELLO'S & GOODBYE'S

The Boise VAMC would like to say farewell to the employees who left the team in November 2024:

Owen Forrey, Nursing
Shanna Lusk, Nursing
Bonnita Powers, Nursing
Alexandra Ameen, Nursing
Dwayne Millward, Specialty Care
Mark Baradziej, Surgical Care

We pay special tribute to the current and past employees who passed during this month.

Stuart Dempster

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Veterans Clean Slate Law Legal Clinic

At this clinic, Veterans who want to shield one criminal record from public view (under the Clean Slate law) can meet with an attorney for assistance. To qualify, eligible veterans will have either a nonviolent misdemeanor conviction or a felony drug conviction, and have had more than 5 years since the sentence was completed. **To register to attend contact (208) 971-7292.**

17 DEC 2024
1600 - 1900

Boise VA Medical Center, Bldg. 114

VERBAL DE-ESCALATION IN HEALTHCARE

Presented By:

The Veterans Affairs Law Enforcement Training Center

Sign up via TMS CLASS NUMBER 4668239

Pending request for 7 hours CME/CUE

Verbal De-Escalation in Healthcare is an 8-hour class providing a multi-disciplinary approach to educating participants in verbal de-escalation techniques. This course utilizes classroom presentation, multi-media and role-playing scenarios to provide students with the means and capabilities to effectively communicate with disruptive individuals, set appropriate boundaries and gain voluntary compliance. The goal of this course is to increase both customer and employee satisfaction and to reduce the potential for violence and injury.

Dates: 1/21-1/24, 2025 (4 classes) Time: 8:00am—4:00pm

Your facility POC is: Wayne Nicholson (208) 422-1553

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HOLIDAY SPONSOR PROGRAM

The Veteran Holiday Sponsorship Program is open for sponsors and veteran nominations now through December 6.

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 or Justin at (208) 422-1176.

Completed forms can be dropped off at Voluntary Service or emailed to 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/

Online Alzheimer's Association® Early Stage Support Group

Support groups create a safe, confidential, supportive environment or community, offering participants a chance to develop informal mutual support and social relationships. They also educate and inform participants about dementia and help them develop methods and skills to solve problems.

- Early stage support will be offered entirely online.
- Early-stage support groups provide emotional, educational, and social support for individuals in the early stages (or beginning stages) of Alzheimer's disease or dementia, as well as for their care partners, regardless of age.
- The support group will run for 9 weeks, on Tuesdays from 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm, with a ***tentative start date*** of January 21, 2025.
- A phone screening is required for both the diagnosed individual and their care partner.

The Early Stage Support group will be facilitated by Julie Robinson, LMSW, with Seasons Care Management and Marcy Croffy, LCSW, with VA Caregiver Support.

Screening and registration are required for all potential early stage support group participants. To register, please call (208) 722-2521.

VA Caregiver Support

SEASONS CARE MANAGEMENT
Providing compassionate care for the aging, mentally ill and disabled.

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION®
Greater Idaho Chapter

For more information or to register please call (208) 722-2521.