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Column: Great employees make a great team



I know I have written many times about what great employees we have at Highland Rivers Behavioral Health. I not only have the privilege of overseeing great employees, but also a great team – and that makes all the difference in the world.

I can say this because the past two years have presented unprecedented challenges. And yet, during the pandemic, all of our facilities remained open – because the Highland Rivers team is committed to ensuring that individuals in need of services can continue to receive the help they need. We cleaned more, we increased our use of telehealth, we used Zoom, and instituted new check-in procedures, but we were open for business. Helping people is our business and our staff are committed to that.

More recently, we have integrated two agencies into the former Highland Rivers Health – Haralson Behavioral Health Services and Cobb County Community Services Board – and rebranded ourselves as Highland Rivers Behavioral Health. Certainly, while integrating the back-office operations was complex, integrating the culture of three different agencies into a new, 1,000-employee enterprise could have been fraught with dysfunction.

But instead of battles over fiefdoms and “how we’ve always done it,” staff at all three agencies have embraced their new team members – often glad for the extra help new staff bring – and all our team members have begun to wear the banner of Highland Rivers Behavioral Health with pride, as well they should.

Toward that end, each year Highland Rivers Health would recognize team members who have gone above and beyond. We recently did this for the first time as Highland Rivers Behavioral Health (HRBH), and with recognition of employees from both Haralson and Cobb. And I wanted to use this opportunity to share with you the names of these extraordinary team members and give them some extra recognition.

One of the awards our agency gives is the Trudy E. Casey Award for Customer Service. Trudy was a longtime employee of Highland Rivers Health who unfortunately left us too soon. But while she worked for Highland Rivers, she would do whatever needed to be done – always – whether for one of her coworkers or for the individuals we served. Caring was in her heart – and she cared about everyone. While there was only one Trudy Casey, the award given in her name shows her spirit still lives in our agency.

This year, five employees received Trudy Casey awards – the variety of their jobs shows not only that staff who don't work directly with individuals receiving services go above and beyond, but that we have exceptional staff all over our agency. So congratulations to:

- Hope Crawson – case manager, Haralson Clinic
- Megan Dallas – human resources specialist, HRBH
- Liz Jenkins – vehicle coordinator, Polk County Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) program
- Rachel Robinson – administrative assistant, Cobb County operations
- Robert Wiley – fleet administrator, HRBH

We also instituted a new award this year, called the Hope Holder award, to recognize employees whose work gives hope to those who trust us to help them. For being Hope Holders, I want to congratulate:

- Terry Hayward – LPN, Cobb Clinic
- Tyler Smart – director of crisis services, HRBH

Finally, we recognized three employees whose work has such a large impact, that we honor them as Employees of the Year, and I want to congratulate three:

- Dawn Baumgardner – IT manager, HRBH
- LaTasha Hogan – deputy director IDD services, HRBH
- Kristi Robinson – front office coordinator, Haralson Clinic

I want to give a special thank you to these 10 employees – for giving your all, every day. And to all employees of Highland Rivers Behavioral Health, thank you too – we really do have the best employees and the best team. You are what makes Highland Rivers Behavioral Health great.

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https://www.northwestgeorgianews.com/calhoun_times/opinion/columns/column-great-employees-make-a-great-team/article_6c93f1a0-e044-11ec-bdcb-1b98ad08a775.html