

RESIDENT STANDOUT

By Noël Walker



When I think of hard worker, I think of **Tia Hayden**. Tia told me, “I never thought getting my HiSET was something I could even do.” But, here we are. She is halfway to her goal. By the time she leaves here in January, she hopes to be even closer. She tackles each obstacle that comes her way gracefully, with intelligence, perspective, and unfailing positivity. Despite working overnight shifts in a mentally and physically demanding field, she has prioritized her mental health and future success, even seeking out extra classes and meetings to improve her foundation. We all know it is easy to get bogged down in TODAY. However, Tia has her sights set on TOMORROW, and I respect her greatly for that.

NEW HONORS MEMBERS

Congratulations to these two gentlemen for being accepted into the Honors Program! Residents are encouraged to apply for Honors. Applications are at the forms counter.

Requirements are: Phase 3 and completed 120 days; 90 days with no Class II's, and 60 days with no more than one Class III.

Honors members can put outings to community locations up to 3 hours, 3 times per week, on their schedule rather than taking a pass. They can also request extended pass times for special events. West Bank Park is an authorized location for Honors members only.



Mark Freer



Devin Braulick

Your Emotional Well-Being

Tidbits from Robin

Quick Activities to Improve Your Emotional Well-Being

- **Be active**—Take a dance break! Lift weights. Do push-ups or sit-ups. Or kick around a soccer ball for a few minutes.
- **Close your eyes**, take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- **Write three things** you are grateful for.
- **Check in with yourself**—take time to ask yourself how you are feeling.
- **Laugh!** Think of someone who makes you laugh or the last time you laughed so hard you cried.
- **Find an inspiring song** or quote and write it down (or screenshot it) so you have it nearby.



Robin Castle
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor
455-9333 robin@gfprc.org

Connect with Others to Reduce Stress

Having meaningful relationships can create a sense of belonging. A feeling of being cared for, valued, and supported can help us become more resilient. This is called social connectedness. Connecting with others can help us cope with stress and become more resilient. Here are some ways to reduce stress by connecting with others:

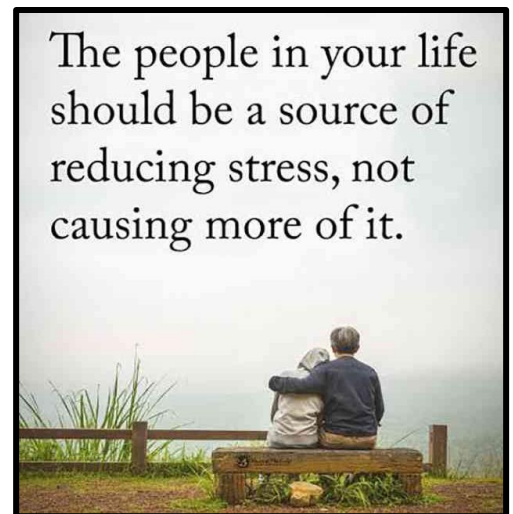
- **Reach out** to your community, family members, or friends. Talk with someone you trust about your feelings or any concerns.
- **Make time** for cultural, spiritual, or religious activities.
- **Volunteer** with organizations that interest you. Giving back to others can help you, too.
- **Get outside** with others, connect with nature, and explore green spaces.

Check out the Center for Disease Control website www.cdc.gov for tips to

- improve your **emotional well-being**
- explore the topics of **afraid, angry, lonely, sad, stressed, worry, and grief**
- take care of **your body**



The people in your life should be a source of reducing stress, not causing more of it.





Shout out to Staff Cook Dawn Pierce for bringing the spirit of Christmas to the Women's Center. She encouraged everyone to decorate their doors and with the help of her inmate workers they made Christmas dinner a special event.



Amber Burnette & Valene Wing-Skjold





Creative Writing Session



EDUCATION



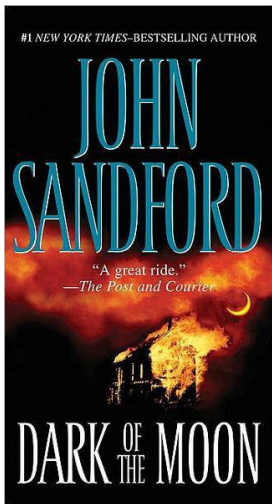
Noël Walker
EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Many have heard the saying, “The pen is mightier than the sword,” and it’s true. History itself was recorded by those with the words to tell the stories. Since people joined forces to live in communities, decisions were made, wars fought on the strength of words. Words literally were the largest source of power and domination. That leads to the question, who is in control of your story? Who fights your fight? If you said “me”, I’d challenge you to come join me in the **Education Center Tuesdays at 7pm (1900), starting January 23, 2024**, for a new weekly creative writing session. Here we will explore the words that shape the stories told to us and the stories we tell others. Hopefully, we will grow as writers together and work to sharpen the greatest weapon at our disposal.

We will look at different types of writing, play with different creative writing prompts, look at how word choices and motives play into things like advertising, share and give respectful feedback for those wanting to share ongoing writing projects, and explore the ways in which writing offers us a tool to better understand our past, present, and future. **You are not required to share anything**, but if you want to, this would be a great platform to do so in a group of like-minded people.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me at noel@gfprc.org or at my extension, 346. My direct line is 406-455-9346.

BOOK CLUB—FEBRUARY



I’m looking for a few good men...or women. Well, readers, really. Okay, I am looking for people who like to read and like to talk about what they have read. And, I am looking for an excuse to have snacks. So, if any of that appeals to you, February’s selection will be *Dark of the Moon* by John Sanford. This is the first book in the Virgil Flowers series, all available for free on the website www.readanybook.com. You can find a free copy online at <https://www.readanybook.com/ebook/dark-of-the-moon-594897>.

I am open to suggestions on time. Right now, I am thinking **1400 on Fridays, starting February 16 in the Education Center**. If that day doesn’t work for you, and we can reach a consensus on a better day, let me know. **You can email me at noel@gfprc.org or call me at my extension, 346. My direct line is 406-455-9346.**

"A book club is not only about books. It is a way to socialize, make friends, and network."
-Diane Sanfilippo



A **BOOKCLUB** is like group therapy without the depressing stories

Staff Door Decorating Winners



Congratulations to Noël Walker for winning the door decorating contest at the West Campus (Left), Ruth Coles for the CO Door in the Women's Center (Right), and the East Campus CO door which I missed getting a picture of.



Tim Schultz is big into color organization.

Professional organizers use color coding. There are many reasons to organize by color:

• Our brains often remember color as a main identifying feature of an item.

• It provides visual calm by grouping different colors together rather than having them in a scattered chaotic pattern.

• It's easier to find a specifically colored item.

• It provides visual cues for you that instinctively lead you to what you're looking for.

• It provides logical cues for you to find what you need.

Color Organized Files

Organizing document files by color works exceedingly well for most people.

Use colors that make sense to you. For example,

- Use green for financial files.
- Use red for bills that need to be paid or important documents.
- Use a folder the color of your car for automobile documents.
- Use a folder the color your house or front door for your home-related documents.



PRE-RELEASE PRESS
Editor: Brenda Demers



Residents: You are encouraged to submit something for the next newsletter - a drawing, poem, song, article, quote, advice, etc. Please turn it in to the CO desk with your name or contact **Brenda 455-9323** brenda@gfprc.org. Any suggestions are also appreciated.

Resident Achieves CNA Certification

By Brenda Demers



Nicole Webster became a Certified Nursing Assistant last October. She said she has always been someone who likes to help people and make them feel better. True to her Virgo sign, she has a desire to see the best in people, she is unfailingly kind, and is always willing to help others. One person told her, “You know how people make you feel good just being around them? You are definitely one of them.”

Last year when Nicole first came to Great Falls Pre-Release she landed a job as a resident aid and found that she really enjoyed it. In the midst of her time here some past legal issues emerged, so she had to leave for a few months. Upon her return, she had to restart the program but wasn’t required to redo any classes, so she decided to take advantage of the extra time to get her CNA. Education Coordinator Allen Heisler, steered her in the right direction. Through the Job Service and Opportunities, Inc., she applied and was awarded a scholarship for the CNA course. Nicole said the course wasn’t hard; it was everything she already did at work. However, the course did help make sense of why things are done a certain way and helped her excel at her job.

Nicole considers the residents at the care home to be her family away from home. Helping others helps her stay sober. Nicole was surprised to learn that one of the residents at the care home had been in Narcotics Anonymous and sponsored people all over the country.

Nicole explained to me that not all of the people she cares for are elderly; some have physical or mental disabilities. She said she just has to be open minded and understanding. Nicole shared that she herself has always struggled with mental illness. “I was diagnosed with all kinds of things and have been medicated for all of it, so I have a pretty good understanding.” Now she is off all of her meds and finds other ways to cope.

Since Nicole is a caregiver, I reminded her that she needs to make caring for herself a priority. She said she does that by taking the time to do things she enjoys, which includes puzzles, working out, reading, and nature. She keeps her relationships healthy by setting boundaries. She said, “It’s getting easier. I have to be firm and I won’t tolerate certain things.” Nicole doesn’t give in to peer pressure and strives to be a good example. She tries to be a positive influence and encourage others. “I’ve been through it all. I’m just trying to show that there’s a better way. It’s planting seeds and pulling weeds.”

Here are some coping methods Nicole uses for her physical, mental, and physical well-being:

- ❖ Listening to music: Nicole said that music therapy is used to treat people with dementia and Alzheimer’s. It helps people process their emotions. Some people get stuck in their depression and if they use music it helps them feel the emotion so they can move on.
- ❖ Working out: Researchers are learning that *exercise has profound effects on brain structure itself, especially in regions most affected by depression and schizophrenia. It also provides other, more subtle benefits such as focus, a sense of accomplishment and sometimes social stimulation, all of which are therapeutic in their own right. Even modest levels of physical activity, such as a daily walk, can pay big dividends for mental health.*

Resident Achieves CNA Certification - continued

- ❖ A higher power: Nicole found her faith as she struggled with losing her kids and being away from her family. Nicole commented, “My faith is a big thing. I’ve been baptized three different times symbolizing a fresh start.”
- ❖ Puzzles: Research shows that *working on a puzzle reinforces connections between brain cells and improves mental speed. Puzzles increase the production of dopamine, a chemical that regulates mood, memory, and concentration. Dopamine is released with every success as we solve the puzzle.*



I asked Nicole what she has learned in her struggles. She responded, “I found a purpose being positive and encouraging to others and showing people love and kindness. The world needs a lot more of it, and people need to know they aren’t alone. I got bad into my addiction when my husband got arrested and then two days later they took my kids. Taking care of my family was all I knew, so when I lost that I went off the deep end. Since then I found my identity outside being just a mom and a wife.”

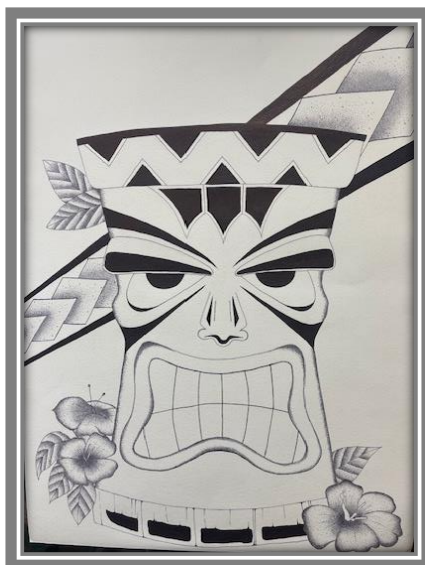
Nicole is blessed to have such good relationships with her family members. She is looking forward to August when Nicole, her daughter, and her sister will see a Pink concert in Missoula! December 13th marked 2 years of sobriety for Nicole, and that’s the day her sister purchased the tickets. Nicole said the fog is gone now that she is off the medications. She admitted she was using them as an excuse. When Nicole finishes pre-release, she plans to return to Helena. She has a passion for veterans and would like to get a job at Fort Harrison where her dad, a veteran himself, works. Nicole may even pursue becoming a Licensed Addictions Counselor.

Congratulations, Nicole, we are proud of you!



Ryan Baier ordered a kit and built this guitar!

Resident Talent



Drawings by Derrick Scott



2023 Commitment to Excellence Winners



Dave Van Hovel, Compliance Officer Supervisor, received the most nominations of any staff member.

Dave does everything he can to ensure that the center and CO staff are always put first. He has gone above and beyond to help CO's become better at their jobs. He can always be counted on to lend a hand wherever needed.

Dave goes out of his way to make sure that the safety, health, and the well-being of the residents and staff members are a top priority.

His professionalism is clearly evident and appreciated.



Brandy Burton is a Compliance Officer who was nominated for the outstanding job she does with the residents. She sets a great example for both her co-workers and the residents.

Brandy has been with us for 8 years and has proven to be very hard working and dependable. She often mentors new CO's because of her patience and her knowledge of the policies and procedures.

Brandy is a very consistent CO who treats all residents with respect and fairness with the motto, "If you do it for one resident, you then have to do it for all residents."



Beginning with his first day here, Disciplinary Hearings Officer **Charlie Martin** has displayed a commitment to helping the center. After a long, successful career with P&P, he has quickly proven himself to be a valued member of the GFPRC team.

He does all of the screening for state residents and has completely reworked and improved the disciplinary process.

Charlie is always available to staff and residents to answer any questions or to listen to their concerns.

Charlie is a role model as he is always friendly, professional and caring.

Have you ever done something kind for someone else and you felt good after doing it? Chances are you were probably experiencing helper's high. Did you know that helper's high is more than just feeling good about doing good? As you perform an act of kindness for someone, your brain and the rest of your body respond positively due to chemicals released in the brain. Helping others benefits human survival.

Reasons Why Helping Others Makes Us Happy



1. Releases Endorphins: Endorphins are hormones that have pain-relieving properties. Think of it as your body's natural morphine.

2. Releases the Love Hormone: Studies have shown that altruistic acts also release other hormones like oxytocin. Oxytocin is sometimes called the love hormone because it plays a part in trusting others and forming bonds.

3. Produces a Calming Effect: Our brain releases serotonin when we help others. Serotonin helps regulate your mood by producing a calming effect.

4. Reduces Stress: Your body's stress response is regulated by the hormone cortisol. High levels of cortisol can lead to blood sugar imbalances, decreased bone density and muscle tone, high blood pressure, and increased abdominal fat. The hormones, (like oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine), that are released when you help others work together to block cortisol in your body. In turn, this lowers your stress.

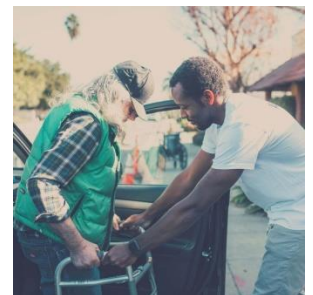
5. Improved Immune System Function: Because being charitable reduces stress, you can conclude that it also promotes a healthy immune system. This allows your body to fight off infection better.

6. Better Health: With the release of these helpful hormones and the blocking of cortisol, you experience secondary effects. These include better weight control, lower blood pressure, relief from depression and chronic pain.

7. Live Longer: With better health and less stress comes a longer life. People that help others have a 44% likelihood of dying early, which is less than those that don't help others.

8. Feeling of Satisfaction: When you help someone, dopamine is released in the brain. Dopamine is another hormone that helps with mood evaluation. You help someone. You get the high. This encourages you to help someone else to feel the same feeling again.

9. Change in Perspective: Ultimately, improved health and happiness causes a change in your perspective. You begin to look at the world more positively. Instead of negatively judging someone's situation, you see them as someone you can help. Moreover, you've removed your focus off of yourself and placed it on someone else. Your problems become lighter compared to those that you've helped.



Favorite Sport Shirt Day



Gail Orchowski



Bob Dompier



Mike Scott & Shellie Babinecz



Ryan Konekney & Jillian Sanchez



Karen Workman



Noel Walker



Heath Reed



Rob Russin



Alexis Meyers



Cheryl Haynes & Ray McClelland

Alluvion Health will be at GFPRC



Alluvion Health Prevention Services Team will be here for HEP C and HIV testing, harm reduction kits, vaccinations, condom packs, and other incentives. They are available to answer any questions you may have, so please take advantage of these opportunities.

Women's Center: Wednesday, January 17th from 1300 - 1500

West Campus: Wednesday, January 24th from 1300 - 1500

East Campus: Wednesday, January 31st from 1300 - 1500

Women's Center: Wednesday, February 14th from 1300 - 1500

West Campus: Wednesday, February 21st from 1300 - 1500

East Campus: Wednesday, February 28th from 1300 - 1500

FUN & GAMES

Winter Word Scramble

Instructions: Unscramble the letters to find the words from the list below.

| | |
|----------|-------|
| gdelsidn | _____ |
| loeshv | _____ |
| wons | _____ |
| farsc | _____ |
| ttiensn | _____ |
| nsigki | _____ |
| drazzibl | _____ |
| newrit | _____ |
| docl | _____ |
| woamnns | _____ |

WORD LIST

| | |
|----------|----------|
| blizzard | skiing |
| cold | sledding |
| mittens | snow |
| scarf | snowman |
| shovel | Winter |

