

# TRANSITION TIMES



**VOLUME 20, ISSUE 3**

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## NEW POSITION CREATED AND FILLED

Since its inception in 1984, Great Falls Pre-Release Services, Inc. has grown from a staff of 13 to 75. Thus, management and the board of directors grasped the importance of developing a human resource position. Doris Hernandez assisted in formulating the position and in searching for the right fit with the goal of finding an individual with expertise in union contracts. It is with great pleasure that we announce the fulfillment of this position by **Dan McLaughlin**.



Dan brings over 28 years of human resource experience with him, including time with Buttrey Food and Drug as the Director of Labor Relations and Personnel until its sale in October of 1998. Directly following that, Dan was hired as Vice President, Director of Human Resources, to create a Human Resource Department for D.A. Davidson. In 2013 Dan was asked to start up D.A. Davidson's Community Relations division and was promoted to Senior Vice President, Director of Community Relations.

Dan is a graduate of Montana State University-Northern and holds a bachelor's degree in Business Management. Dan is also a Vietnam Era Air Force veteran. He worked as a jet engine mechanic at our very own Malmstrom Air Force Base; at Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Japan; and at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota.

Dan and his wife Diane have been married for over 38 years and have 3 grown children and 5 grandchildren. In his spare time Dan enjoys spending time on the Oregon coast with his family, golfing, and helping his neighbors with their yard work. Dan is also a seasoned marathon runner. He is a veteran of 14 marathons and qualified for and ran in the Boston Marathon 3 times!

**Why I wanted to work at GFPRC:** Due to the nature of the industry and mission of the Center, the job presented a dramatically different work environment that offered unique challenges and rewards. The "start-up" of a department can be fun, albeit from the HR perspective, the HR framework here at the Center was impressively in place.

**Why I like working at GFPRC:** After close to 30 years of extensive work traveling with overnight stays and many times across the country, it's incredibly nice to know I can be home every night. The warm welcome I've received from the staff has made for an easy and comfortable early adjustment, and the benefits are really swell!

**My goals for the position:** I want to continue to build and evolve the human resource framework as it relates to on-boarding, recruiting, benefits, and employee and labor relations. Perhaps I can identify streamlining opportunities to consolidate typical HR functions and hopefully ease some of the work loads of those currently handling some of these duties. I want to do my best to contribute to continue making the Center a great place to work!

## Unsung Hero



**Keith Davies'** co-workers agree that he is a joy to be around. Staff voted him as the person they believe does more for the betterment of the Great Falls Pre-Release Center and its mission than anyone, and rarely, if ever, receives credit. Keith's supervisor noted that he goes above and beyond what is required and steps in to work overtime whenever coverage is needed. He brings a positive attitude when morale is low. Keith is just a good guy and is fun to tease, but he can dish it back, too. He had this to say, "I try to be a jerk and then I do something nice."

## Visit from Representative Kim Dudik

Representative Kim Dudik traveled to Great Falls to visit with staff and board members over lunch recently. Items of discussion included criminal justice reform, the former "Booter" program, the Veterans Reentry program, and the possibility of forming a program between incarceration and freedom to accommodate eligible offenders.

Kim has been serving in the House of Representatives for the past 8 years where she advocates for victims of domestic violence and has been involved in reforming the criminal justice system. She serves as chair of the Legislative Finance Committee. Kim previously worked as Assistant Attorney General and is now running for Attorney General.



(Left) **Board member and former Senator Trudi Schmidt**  
(Right) **Representative Kim Dudik**



## Bolstering a Fellow Staff Member

Fellow staff members presented Kathy Pitkanen with several scarves and a quilt that Brett Blasdell handmade. Kathy has had some setbacks in her fight against cancer, yet she continues to have an amazing attitude.

You have been assigned this mountain to show others it can be moved.

## RESIDENT SUCCESSES

### Ribbons and Stars



**Nakita Martin** is living up to the meaning of her name, “victory of the people”. Nakita is nearing the completion of a one year extended stay at Great Falls Pre-Release. She was disappointed when she found out she would be required to stay in the program 6 months longer than residents typically do. However, Nakita has found many advantages to being an extended stay resident. She has been working full time as a personal caregiver and loves her job. *I found that my passion is to help people that aren't so independent.* The residents tell her she brightens their day every time they see her. They know when Nakita is working she will put their needs before her own. *I like to give people hope and make them happier.* The job has taught her patience, and she learned that it means a lot to the residents when she takes the time to talk and listen to them one on one. Nakita’s extended stay has provided her with the opportunity to save up a good sum of money for her release.

Nakita has 13 blood siblings, including a twin sister. It was their dad’s idea for them to get tattoos on the side of their faces to tell them apart. The tattoos are the same – stars and ribbons, but one sister’s is on the left and one is on the right. *A ribbon can never be torn apart, and you can reach for the stars; there is nothing you can't conquer.*

Nakita received her official acceptance letter to the University of Montana and was awarded a full scholarship. She also completed the Certified Nursing Assistant training program provided by Benefis Spectrum, studied hard, and passed the testing and clinicals to obtain her certification. Nakita will pursue her nursing degree at U of M.



### A Chance for Change

Former resident **Christopher Ballenger-Brooks** is proof that Great Falls Pre-Release has made a positive impact on his life and gave him the structure he needed to succeed. Chris has moved up the ladder to management at the same restaurant where he was employed as a resident. We often focus on the residents we see come back to the Center time and time again, but we tend to forget about the majority that move on and become successful citizens.

## New Staff and Staff Promotions

We are pleased to welcome **Corey Hoskins** back as a Compliance Officer. **Chris Larouche, Vanessa Petersen, Samantha Silva,** and **Maranda McFadden** have joined us as Compliance Officers. We welcome **Dawn Pierce** as our new staff cook. **Jay Warehime** was our part-time Maintenance Coordinator Assistant for the past year. He was chosen to fill the vacant Maintenance Coordinator position. Compliance Officer **Keith Davies** was selected to be the UA Lab Assistant.

## Employee Milestones



### 5 Years: Correctional Treatment Specialist – Shellie Babinecz

Shellie came to Great Falls at the age of 4 when her father was stationed at Malmstrom. She is not new to the military way of life, as her husband of 35 years has served in the Air Force throughout their marriage. Other places Shellie has lived include Wichita, Kansas; Minot, North Dakota; and Fairfield, California.

After college Shellie worked as a civil process server, a short order cook, and managed a private security firm. She then spent 22 years as a Montana Highway Patrol State Trooper. Shellie and her husband raised one son and twin daughters and have moved on to being grandparents.

Shellie enjoys reading, golfing, and playing pickle ball. She likes working at GFPRC because, “Every day presents something new that requires critical thinking and some imagination to problem solve. Since working here I have learned a great deal about people and the different perspectives on life they have because of their backgrounds. I have worked hard to develop more patience and develop new ways to motivate others.”

### 20 Years: Chemical Dependency Counselor – Robert Kemp

When Robert was 11 years old his dad was hired to help build the federal building in Bozeman, so his family left Rapid City, South Dakota and moved to a small ranch in the Four Corners area. Robert found his love for fishing on the Gallatin River. He earned the title of State Champion in wrestling his senior year. In 1970, fresh out of high school, Robert was drafted for the Vietnam War and served in the Army for 2 years.

Robert’s next phase in life was as a union iron worker building bridges and buildings all over the state. He was in Superior building a bridge when he met the love of his life and now wife of 37 years, Therese.

October 10, 1995 was a life changer for Robert. He was helping to build the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge here in Great Falls and lost his footing as he walked a plank. He plunged into the Missouri River -- but that was after his body collided with the barge the crane was sitting on. His days of iron working were over.

Robert had already turned his life over to God prior to the accident, so he asked Him what he should do. The answer came that he should help others. Robert focused on obtaining his degree to become a Licensed Addiction Counselor. He was then hired by Benefis Health Systems to provide addiction counseling services to the residents at Great Falls Pre-Release. And the rest, as we say, is history.



## 25 Years: Community Assistance Specialist, PREA Liason, Volunteer Mentoring – Sheena Jarvey

*Editor's Note:* Because Sheena has a knack for writing, I asked her to compose an article about herself in recognition of her 25 year anniversary working here. Typical Sheena, she chose to share her passion for helping others rather than focusing on herself. Sheena sincerely cares about every individual that walks through these doors and will never turn anyone away that needs a listening ear. I have observed her treat each resident with respect and watched those residents gain the dignity, confidence, and desire to make some type of change in their lives. One of my favorite quotes sums up Sheena, **“They may forget what you said — but they will never forget how you made them feel.”** —Carl W. Buehner



First of all, a huge thank you to everyone I work with – working as a team is the best. Also, to our remarkable volunteer staff for showing all of us what true service looks like and what giving from the heart can accomplish.

Re-entry work is a complex profession. The skill set required and the variety of duties is endless, as the care and custody model involves proficiency in all aspects of human behavior. Re-entry work encourages individuals to be stable and successful, while protecting the community, but there is nothing simple about this equation. The other thing is that re-entry work is largely hidden from public and media view, but in reality the re-entry period can often be the most challenging and critically important correctional phase.

My motivation for my job is driven by what I can contribute; it is proactive. It would be pointless to approach it any other way. It's simple: I choose this profession because I like working in a capacity to help people have better lives. An essential factor is getting to know each person as an individual and to offer understanding, respectful help, through struggles and successes. This is an opportunity to have a meaningful, purposeful and interesting career and I consider it a privilege to be a positive part of people's journey and interact and learn from all the people I come in contact with. I see people moving forward with their lives every day and this is inspiring. It's a practical approach as the wellbeing of the residents, the wellbeing of the staff and the wellbeing of the community are connected. Also, I want to do my small part to continue to make correctional re-entry work professional and productive.

Referencing *tikkun olam*—the Jewish concept of “repairing the world”—Bruce Springsteen observed: “We’re repairmen, repairmen with a toolbox. If I repair a little of myself, I’ll repair a little of you. That’s the job.” That’s my job, too.

Sheena has a MA in Human Services/Criminal Justice and previously worked for the John Howard Society of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, Canada. Her proudest accomplishment is raising her two amazing kids: her daughter Yessenia who is talented and beautiful and her son Antonio who is a nationally recognized teenage musician.



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**TRANSITION TIMES**

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

Great Falls Pre-Release Services, Inc. provides a cost-effective alternative to incarceration for offenders through a variety of community-based correctional treatment programs. Great Falls Pre-Release Services, Inc. is dedicated to public safety and trust through professional, quality services which facilitate personal growth through positive change and individual responsibility of assigned offenders.



gfprc.org

**Vision Statement**

Dedicated to providing resources and opportunities that safely and successfully restore offenders into society.

**Statement of Values**

- *Motivation:* A desire to help others reach their full potential.
- *Professionalism:* Maintain proper interactions with staff, residents, and the community.
- *Accountability:* Take ownership for successes and shortcomings, to ourselves and others
- *Equality:* Ensure equality by expressing, in attitudes and actions, respect for all.
- *Dignity:* Model behavior in a respectful manner to instill a sense of self-respect and to bolster a positive self-image.
- *Community:* Develop a positive environment that facilitates healthy change as the residents integrate into the broader community.