

# TRANSITION TIMES



**VOLUME 22, ISSUE 2**

**2nd QUARTER 2021**

## Administrative Professional of the Year

By Sheena Jarvey

**Brenda Demers**, Great Falls Pre-Release Executive Assistant, was awarded the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce Administrative Professional of the Year for 2021. The ceremony took place on April 21, 2021, in the West campus of the Pre-Release with staff and Brenda's husband Marco in attendance. The staff was unaware of the award until the ceremony, making it more of a wonderful surprise. Shane Etwiler, Chamber of Commerce President, accompanied by other Chamber personnel, presented the award to Brenda. Brenda, gracious and humble as always, thanked all of the Board and staff for all of their contributions and thanked the Chamber for the amazing surprise award.



**Shane Etwiler**, Great Falls Chamber President  
**Brenda Demers** and husband **Marco**  
**Alan Scanlon**, GFPRC Executive Director

Executive Director Alan Scanlon nominated Brenda for the award and Brenda was chosen from a very competitive field of Administrative Professionals in the city. In his nomination, Alan Scanlon wrote:

"The Great Falls Pre-Release Center is very lucky to have Brenda Demers as our Executive Assistant. Brenda helped the Center through a very difficult transitional period as we lost our Executive Director, Paul Cory, who had been with us for 30 years. Brenda helped keep spirits raised and she was instrumental in helping many staff members through this difficult time. Helping an organization to overcome the death of a long time leader is not listed in a job description, but Brenda took on this duty with a smile and a desire to help all employees. When I became the Executive Director I would have been lost without Brenda. I became so impressed with her that I began including her in management meetings and assigning leadership tasks to her, and she has exceeded all expectations. Brenda Demers is our Executive Assistant, but she is so much more than that title and I am honored to nominate her as the Administrative Professional of the Year."

Brenda's skills, talents, dedication and sheer hard work do indeed make her a standout. In addition to her 'normal' duties (which is pretty much everything) Brenda is the editor of the "Pre-Release Press" and the "Transition Times" to which she also contributes numerous articles. Brenda is also known for her understanding of people and her ability to connect with both staff and residents. Whenever a new committee is formed, staff always says, "We need Brenda on it!"

Reaction from staff and Board Members was swift and congratulatory. Board Member Kevin Heffernan summed up our thoughts: "Very well deserved – Awesome job, Brenda."

## Employee Milestones

By Brenda Demers

### Heath Reed – Correctional Treatment Specialist - 5 years



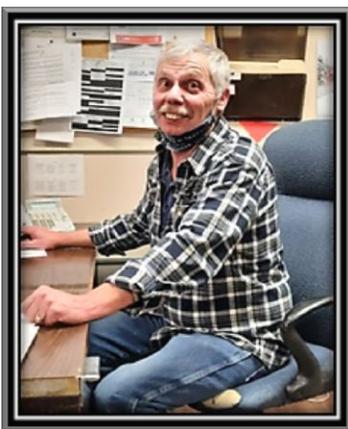
A little bit about Heath: He loves basketball (and I hear he's pretty darn good at it); spending time in tropical paradises; and doing things in the great outdoors, like hiking and fishing. Heath claims he's introverted, but he seems to have no shortage of friends. Heath likes to travel - to warm places, that is. "I always try to take a vacation once or twice a year." He acknowledges that it's good for his mind.

Heath graduated from Cascade High School and went on to attain his degree in sociology with a criminology option at Montana State University. Heath applied and was hired as a Compliance Officer at Great Falls Pre-Release. It wasn't long before a Correctional Treatment Specialist position opened up. Heath had the credentials, so easily transitioned into the position. He said it helped him a great deal to learn the CO job prior to becoming a CTS.

What does Heath like about his job? He said he enjoys the people -- both the staff and the residents. He likes helping the residents get on the right path. Heath tries to instill in his residents to do the right thing and not fight the system. Of course there are the obvious challenges of those that aren't ready to accept the help. Heath commented, "It's all good, both the job itself and the people I work with. I get the opportunity to build friendly relationships with various businesses in the community and agencies in the state." Heath is pleased whenever his residents run a good program and save money to set themselves up for a successful future. "At that point it's in their hands. If they've done a good job here, hopefully they will do well."



### Tom Schlosser – Compliance Officer - 5 years:



Tom was taught to work from a young age at his folks' corner grocery store right here in Great Falls. He had the dream of becoming a lawyer, so he attended college in Great Falls and in Washington, majoring in political science with minors in criminology and accounting. However, life happened and his sights changed to that of caring for his family after he married and had children. Tom and his wife have been married for 47 years and have a set of twin boys and a daughter.

Tom spent a lot of years in the bartending business, where he learned to be a good listener. Later on he returned to his roots and worked in the wholesale grocery business, working his way up the ranks, for the majority of his career, before he "retired".

Tom couldn't sit still for long, so he applied and was hired at Great Falls Pre-Release. He commented that he enjoys working with the residents in a friendly, yet professional way.

As for hobbies, Tom enjoys playing golf and hanging with his 6 grandkids, ranging in age from 5 to 27. Tom's keen memory of dates and ages impressed me as I interviewed him, but when I asked him for some words of wisdom he just laughed and said, "I used them all up!" Tom has no regrets about missing out on law school. He said he's made many good friends. He closed with, "Life is good!"

# Arts and Crafts

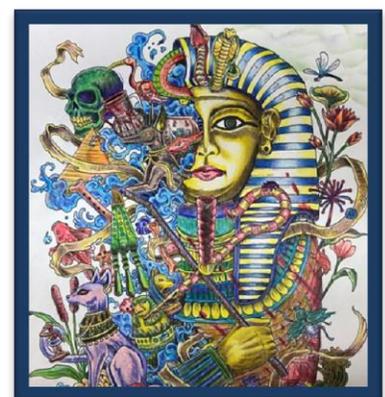
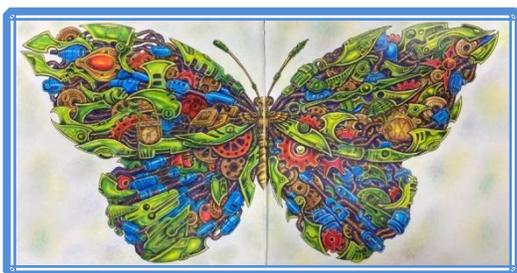
Tim Bishop was doing time in federal prison when a crocheting class was offered. He had a couple of reasons to sign up for the class. He figured it would be a good way to connect with his daughters and he was bored. "I gave myself a week and committed to quitting if I didn't like it." Out of the ten people that started the class only two stuck with it. Believe it or not, there are a lot of men out there that crochet. Tim said that 25% of men crochet and the 75% that want to are too worried about what other people will think. Tim just started learning to crochet at the end of August 2020. It helped him with his anxiety, and he was even able to get off of his anxiety meds. Tim found that crocheting is both a stress reliever and it gives him a sense of accomplishment. "Every piece of one project gives you a sense of accomplishment."



**Tim Bishop** teaching residents the art of crochet.



**Michael Cooper** has taken adult coloring to a whole new level. He said it's a stress reliever. Michael shared that ever since he was a kid he has been infatuated with coloring and the satisfaction of the end product. Michael loves color and experiments with combining different colors. Need a cheap date night idea? Get out the colored pencils and coloring pages – that's what Michael and his girlfriend do!



**Dustin Bushell** crafted these striking pieces of beadwork. Notice the hummingbirds!

## Eric Ambler - Honors Member

By Sheena Jarvey



Every pre-release program has its own set of challenges, and a re-start can be especially challenging. A person can be discouraged by other's skepticism and, worse of all, by their own doubts. So these factors make Eric Ambler's recent acceptance into Honors notable. Eric was 10 days from the door when his slip occurred. He had lost his focus in the Covid lockdown and things got away from him. Even the "solution" got away from him, as Eric said the substance use itself only made him feel more miserable. Eric was in a tight spot and he had to do some soul searching and do it fast.

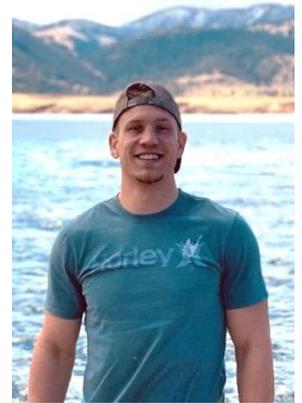
While Eric had always had his love for his family, his addiction would take over. But after his re-start, he realized that, yes, he had to prioritize his family, but essential to this was first prioritizing his own well-being so he could be there for his family. This realization changed everything. Eric admitted he had grown complacent. Prior to his slip, he was in recovery and his loving family was still in his life. Still, in many ways, his life, while all right, was not what it could be; was not what it should be. So he went to work. Fighting off doubts and feelings of being disheartened, Eric took control. The whole incident let him take a clear, cold look at what addiction actually does and it hit him hard. As he put it, it was truly an eye opener. The thing that Eric found most painful in all of this was that he had let his family down. And that hurt.

Eric described his first step, "Be there for myself before I can be there for someone else." Then he set his plan in motion. "Don't give up. Keep a positive attitude and realize there are way better things in life to enjoy. Don't take anything for granted. Appreciate your life now and be grateful. And, this is not about us; this is about others. So, get out of your funk and move forward."

Eric beamed with happiness when he talked about going home. He is excited to be with his family and watch them grow. He said it was such a nice feeling knowing they will always be together. He will also be free to enjoy the outdoors and the fishing, camping, etc. that he loves. He knows now he will not take this for granted.

## Ryan Rudh - Honors Member

By Sheena Jarvey



Throughout the interview with Honors member Ryan Rudh, I was struck by his focus and determination. Ryan was a Booter. There was nothing easy about the Booter program, and it took enormous amounts of mental and physical resolve to make it through. Those intense challenges were the exact thing that, as Ryan put it, made the Booter program awesome. Ryan said that he is now tapping into those lessons from Boot Camp and using them to reshape his life. He cited three main points from Boot Camp that are helping to guide him forward: attention to detail, every action has a reaction, and stop and think.

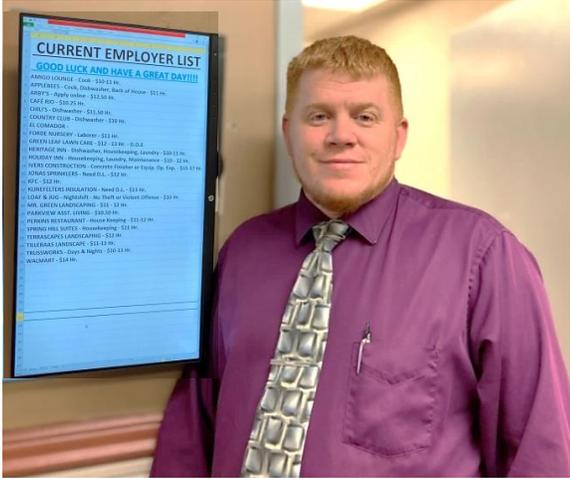
Ryan's son Tristin is now the focus of his world. The love he has for his son, and how badly he misses him, "Is a constant reminder to do good." Being away from Tristin is both Ryan's toughest challenge and his greatest motivator. He told me, "I'm done. You can't kinda do this. I missed out on a lot and I'm not willing to miss out on anymore. I'm looking forward to being in my son's life. I love being a father."

Being a father changed the way that Ryan viewed incarceration. "It really hit me hard when I got arrested. I realized that people were depending on me and that I had nobody to blame but myself." This stark reality got Ryan's attention and he started making his changes and his plans as soon as he was arrested. No more time to waste.

Making Honors was a goal Ryan set for himself. He described Honors as a way to prove to himself that, "I'm trying to do really good. I'm legitimately trying." Ryan said that it's often the little rules that get people, so he is constantly aware of what he is doing. The lesson from Boot Camp – attention to detail, stop and think - are so important in all aspects of his life.

Ryan is excited to build his own gutter business from the ground up. The greatest asset Ryan will have for his business is his clear thinking and his healthy confidence. In addition to the joys of being a dad and running his own business, there is a world of adventure to be had, including skiing, hockey, his Harley and "anything with a motor." Ryan is utilizing all he has learned, and found his focus in life, and now knows he can do great.

## The Joe's Take on Additional Duties



As a result of Roger's retirement, the Administration chose to provide current staff members the opportunity to take on some duties they had already proven to be good at. **Joe Marten** added the position of Employment Support Specialist to his job duties and has made some positive changes such as the job board outside his office.

As for **Joseph Williams**, staff can now officially ask him for help with computer issues. We have long known how savvy Joseph is when it comes to that subject. He is already on top of the 50 something devices at the center.

**THIS OFFICE PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING ASSISTANCE TO ALL RESIDENTS:**

- Obtaining Identification Cards
- Obtaining Social Security Cards
- Obtaining Birth Certificates
- Obtaining Driver's Licenses
- Other Legal Documents
- Child Support Issues
- Provides Local Rental Listing
- Court Ordered Community Service Sign-Up
- Notary Public Services
- House Arrest
- Employment Support
- Jail Alternative & Sanction Bed Programs
- Home Confinement Program
- Enhanced Supervision Program

**THIS OFFICE PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:**

- Court Ordered Community Service
- Jail Alternative & Sanction Bed Programs
- Home Confinement Program
- House Arrest
- Enhanced Supervision (ESP) Program
- Cascade County DUI Task Force Coordinator



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### **TRANSITION TIMES**

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**Kathy Van Tighem:** Counselor, Great Falls High School

### **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.