

TRANSITION TIMES

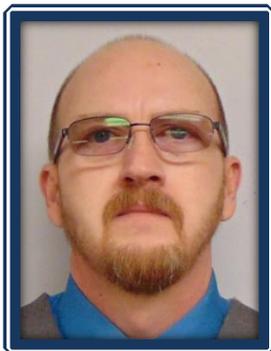


VOLUME 22, ISSUE 4

4th QUARTER 2021

2021 Commitment to Excellence Award Recipients

The Commitment to Excellence award is the highest recognition bestowed upon our fellow staff members. The hardest part is selecting the winners since we have so many wonderful candidates. Every staff member is allowed to nominate one or more individuals, after which the administration selects the winners.



Brett Blasdell was nominated because of the devotion he gives to his position. He comes to work early every day and stays late whenever needed. Brett's knowledge of both the veteran and federal programs is remarkable. He is someone who genuinely cares about the people on his caseload, and he strives to see them succeed. Brett is well respected by his peers and fills in when they are off. He has come to the Center in the middle of the night on multiple occasions to help a fellow on-call CTS. Brett is a consummate professional and a true representation of what the Great Falls Pre-Release Center stands for.

Tom Dwyer was nominated because he presents a calm, professional demeanor and can work successfully with a wide variety of people. He is polite and respectful to all, yet he can still enforce the rules in a firm and consistent manner. Tom is a careful person who makes sure his shift is orderly and well managed, while remembering to bring his sense of humor to keep the mood on a good level. Tom always puts his best foot forward to bring a positive tone to his shift, which has a positive effect on residents and staff. Tom is always dressed professionally and is a great example to staff and residents. He has adapted to change very well and has always remained positive and upbeat.



Shawna Paranteau has been at the center for almost 9 years, and during that time she has been through many changes, big and small, both professionally and in her private life. Yet, despite these changes, she has maintained her positive outlook and friendly personality. Shawna is empathic, but always aware of the rules. She is fair when interacting with the residents and enforces our rules without demeaning the residents. She is calm and professional when speaking with staff and residents. Shawna displays much valued leadership qualities on a daily basis. So much so, that whenever the executive director seeks input from staff, she is usually one of the first people he seeks out. Shawna's devotion to the center and the residents is noteworthy, and her contributions are appreciated every day. She is a model of stability and a valuable member of the team.

Polar Plunge

This is the first year Great Falls Pre-Release put a team together to participate in the Polar Plunge at the Great Falls Christmas Stroll. The GFPRC Double Dippers raised \$1,074.00 for Special Olympics. Braving the 33 degree temperature and icy waters were team captain Andy Anderson, Brandy Anderson, Pete Gammill, Sheyenne Grenier, Allen Heisler, Jim Kist, Joe Marten, and Cody Marten. A big shout out to all those who donated money to support this worthy cause. Thank you to the GFPRC Board of Directors and administration for supporting staff members participating in the event.



**Andy and Brandy Anderson and Pete Gammill
Joe Marten and Jim Kist in the background**



Cody and Joe Marten and Jim Kist



Allen Heisler and Sheyenne Grenier



Allen Heisler and Sheyenne Grenier

“I don’t want to change the world; I just want to make a difference. It’s not about being perfect. It’s about walking the best walk you can because we all know right from wrong. It’s all about every choice we make. If we keep practicing the right things, it will become natural.”

--Resident Theron Plenty Hawk

Employee Milestone

By Brenda Demers

Sandra Bearchum, Federal Employment Placement Specialist – 20 years: Sandra's first job at the GFPRC was that of Community Resource Supervisor where she was in charge of juveniles that were sentenced to do community service. She spent much of her time right alongside the youth picking up garbage. Her next position was the Aftercare Program Assistant in the Booter Wing where she spent 8 ½ years. She went on to be the Federal Social Services Coordinator where she assisted the federal residents with procuring housing, employment, completing paperwork, parenting plans, and budgeting. Sandra is now the Federal Employment Placement Specialist where she assists the federal residents with obtaining employment. Sandra is known for being an outstanding resource person for reentry due to her many years of networking in the community. She assists residents with Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, child support modifications, Voc-Rehab, federal violent offender registration, rental management company listings, Tribal ID's, and the loaner coat program. Each program is unique in its own way, but plays a very important role in the stable transition to community life. She developed a resource guide called Transitional Survival 101 that is invaluable to residents leaving the center.



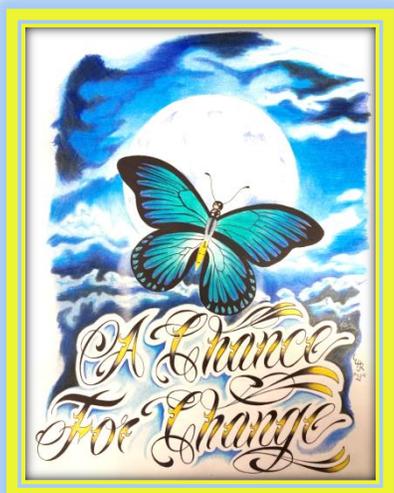
Sandra enjoying time with one of her two daughters and her granddaughter



This picture is from 2007 when Sandra was the Aftercare Program Assistant. Also pictured is Michael Buckley, the Aftercare Counselor, and Micaela Brandt, the Aftercare Counselor Assistant.



This picture is from 2004 when Sandra was the Community Resource Supervisor.



“Before a caterpillar makes its transition to a butterfly it goes through a transition stage known as ‘pupa’; a hard outer case. What we do not see taking place, by looking at the outer case, are the big changes happening inside.”

--Artwork and script submitted by an anonymous resident



Artwork by Resident Tina Marum-Dale

Employee Milestone

By Brenda Demers

Tom Dwyer, Compliance Officer – 5 years:

Tom doesn't get easily flustered, has a sense of humor, and is pleasant to work with. Growing up the youngest in a family of 12 children - 8 of which were girls - is explanation enough. Tom said he developed those traits over time while working with thousands of people with diverse personalities and backgrounds. "I learned to adapt to what works for the people I work with."



Tom served in the Army from 1983 to 1992. While stationed in Germany, he met and married his wife. They raised 5 children and have been married for 34 years. After separating from the military, Tom and his family returned to his wife's home country of Germany where they lived for 20 years.



Regarding his position as a compliance officer, Tom said, "You have to constantly be thinking of the next step, and each step is important. There is a lot of responsibility." Tom said he enjoys putting a smile on the faces of his co-workers and the residents "because sometimes they need it."

Tom has a unique talent of making stained glass, which he learned from his dad. The two built the beautiful grandfather clock pictured above and Tom made the glasswork pictured.



Resident Earns HiSET

by Sheena Jarvey



An excellent opportunity for personal growth can be found in the GFPRC Education Department. Allen Heisler, Education Coordinator, explained that Great Falls College – MSU is our valued partner that makes this possible, and he is extremely grateful for their dedication and commitment to help people further their education. **Andrew Bell** recently obtained his HiSET with this support.

Andrew Bell went through the demanding process of doing what is expected of him as a resident which includes work, duties, programming, and recovery activities all while studying to pass the five components of the HiSET. He is now a proud high school graduate, which opens so many doors to his future. He told me, "This education was not forced. This was my choice and it feels good to take action for myself."

Andrew realized that his time at GFPRC was actually very valuable, in that it contained opportunity for personal advancement. He became determined to make the most of his stay, not just count off days. Andrew said that before this achievement he was skeptical of being told that if he did good things, good things would happen. He also wasn't sure that he had the power to accomplish significant life goals. After getting his HiSET, this skepticism vanished, and Andrew said he now knows, "When you really want something, you can achieve it."

Andrew spoke highly of the open learning at Great Falls College and said the teachers have the skills to help you learn. "It's cool how they help you; they want to see you succeed." He said the staff at Great Falls College are really good people, who take the time to care. Andrew is also appreciative of the help from Pre Release staff and the time, advice and encouragement of Allen Heisler.

At the end of our interview, Andrew offered this advice: "Use your time here wisely as there are people and resources to help you move forward in life". He further stated, "Your hard work will pay off in the end. It's never too late to get an education and nothing bad will ever come of getting this education. Find your internal motivation and go for it". Now, Andrew states with well-deserved confidence, "**Success is my only option; failure is not.**"

Christmas Spirit

Resident Jonathan Korman



Residents Gabriel Alvarez and Aaron Thomas



The staff and residents of Great Falls Pre-Release truly appreciate the members, businesses, and churches in the community that provided items or monetary donations so each of our residents could receive a gift bag for Christmas.





Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GREAT FALLS, MT
Permit #211

Providing re-entry services since 1984

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TRANSITION TIMES

Brenda Demers, Editor
Great Falls Pre-Release Services, Inc.
1019 15th Street North
Great Falls, MT 59401
brenda@gfprc.org
406-455-9323

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jon Boutilier, President: VP-Branch Manager/Commercial Loan Officer, Stockman Bank
John Gregory, Vice-President: Retired Branch Claims Manager
Gary McFerrin, Secretary: Retired Commercial Producer, HUB International
Max Van Heel, Treasurer: VP Sales & Marketing, Pacific Media Technologies
Karen Grove: Retired Trust Officer, Davidson Trust Company
Kevin Heffernan: Supervising United States Probation Officer
Bill Quast: Retired Vice President, Energy West
Trudi Schmidt: Former State Legislator, Educator, and Social Worker
John Strandell: Former Cascade County Sheriff; Retired Bureau Chief, Division of Criminal Investigations
Curtis Thompson: Attorney, Thompson Law, P.C.
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.