



DSP of the Year awards held using virtual format

Members of the Wyoming Community Service Providers gathered last fall to recognize the top direct support professionals in the state. Held in conjunction with the national observance of DSP Appreciation Week, the event affords an opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated individuals who support people with disabilities.

Originally scheduled to be held in Casper, the venue was changed to a virtual format due to safety concerns with the COVID-19 pandemic. Each WCSP member organization had the opportunity to nominate deserving individuals, and the difficult process of choosing a winner fell to a volunteer committee comprised of Department of Health HCBS employees.



Veteran DSP Jason Prescott was nominated by MRSI based on his 25-year career with the organization and his extensive work with extremely challenging individuals.

He readily admits that he had no intention of having a career as a DSP, but eventually came to view the work as a calling and the reason he was put on earth. While Jason did not receive the award, he and his fellow nominees re-

ceived a certificate as well as the respect and admiration of the disability community.



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(available on-line at www.mrsi.org)

Employee of the Year, seniority, SE awards presented



annual holiday party. Nevertheless, members of management made the presentations to each individual at their workplace or residential setting.

Nikki Hamp received the prestigious Employee of the Year award for her outstanding efforts as staff scheduler. She joined the organization in August 2004 and assumed scheduler responsibilities in 2016. The selection committee noted that she did a remarkable job maintaining staffing levels in spite of the incredible challenges presented by the pandemic.

Employees who reached benchmark years of service, 5, 10, 15, etc.) were also recognized for their seniority and dedication to the

organization. All told, 12 individuals received sweatshirts with the MRSI logo and years served or cash awards for their accomplishments.

Participants engaged in the supported employment program were also recognized with a customized trophy featuring the name of their employer and the number of continuous years they have been with the employer. Eleven individuals were recognized for their vocational efforts.



MRSI's tradition of presenting employees and participants with year-end awards looked a bit different this year as pandemic precautions resulted in the cancellation of the

Participating in the electoral process



great deal of interest among participants and staff.

As is always the case during election season and especially during the pandemic, MRSI provided interested participants with an opportunity to safely cast their ballot by arranging early voting sessions at

the Uinta County Courthouse. A total of 10 participants engaged in their civic duty by voting in the general election.

The 2020 presidential election was quite possibly the most contentious contest in recent history and generated a

MRSI receives 3-year certification

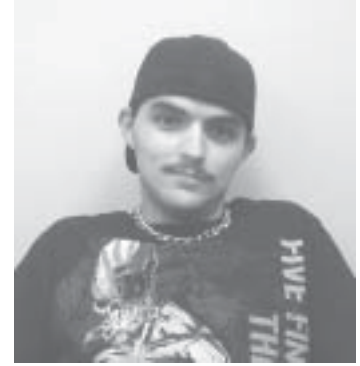
After a prolonged process caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, MRSI was finally able to complete the certification process mandated by Wyoming's Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Section. The survey was conducted using virtual technology and involved numerous staff members from the Division. Citing a "flawless score," the Division awarded MRSI a three-year certification renewal which is the highest possible award.

Employee of the Month

Darcie Brow received the Employee of the Month award for July. Darcie serves as a direct support professional in the day habilitation department and has been with the organization since November 2017. She received the award for her upbeat and cheerful attitude, willingness to work where she is needed, and extending her shift when necessary. She is also known for her comprehensive cleaning skills and ability to carry a tune!



Keith Peay was the recipient of the Employee of the Month award for October. Keith began his career with MRSI in 2012 working for several years before leaving the area. He returned in November 2017 and currently serves as a direct support professional in the residential habilitation department on the 11-7 shift. He was recognized for his positive attitude, attention to detail, and excellent rapport with participants and peers.



Ben Petersen earned Employee of the Month honors for August. Ben is a veteran employee having worked on and off with the company since 2005. His most recent employment began in July 2019, and he currently serves as a direct support professional in the day habilitation department. Ben's vast experience has enabled him to work successfully with extremely involved individuals, and he can be counted on during challenging situations.



Cynthia Thompson was named Employee of the Month for November. Cynthia works as a direct support professional in the residential habilitation department on the 11-7 shift and has been with the organization since April 2014. She received the honor for consistent implementation of plans of care, accurate documentation, and faithfully completing household chores. She is a valued member of the team and an excellent role model.



Melanie Mari was named Employee of the Month for September. She is MRSI's longest serving employee having begun her tenure in October 1988. She has served in a variety of positions including drug and alcohol administrative assistant at UCRC, VP of administrative services, controller, HR director, administrative director for Cornerstone and QA/COI director. She is truly an outstanding employee and an asset to the company.



Jake Houghton received Employee of the Month honors for December. Jake joined the MRSI team in 2008 for a just a short period of time, but returned to the organization in October 2019. He currently serves as a direct support professional assistant supervisor in the residential habilitation department. He is a great worker who always puts participant needs first. Additionally, he is dedicated to his job and not deterred by a challenge.



Farewell 2020 - you will not be missed

by John Knopf, CEO

Most year-end columns contain a plethora of fond memories and a bit of remorse that time has passed too quickly. Not so for 2020! The year of COVID-19 has been memorable, but for all the wrong reasons. The once in a lifetime pandemic (hopefully) upended every aspect of daily living and provided unhealthy levels of uncertainty and fear.

After ten months of beating the odds, the virus finally found its way into MRSI infecting numerous participants and staff members. Fortunately, every individual recovered, and for the time being, no new cases have been reported within the company and

active cases in Uinta County have been trending downward. Uinta County Public Health began vaccinating willing participants and staff in January and continue to provide us with expert advice regarding all aspects of the pandemic. We simply cannot thank them enough for their dedication and professionalism.

Through it all, participants and staff have been positive and brave. Even during the darkest hours with positive cases in multiple residences, our direct support professionals continued providing compassionate care for sick individuals and reassurance to others in spite of the personal risk. Their efforts have been truly heroic.

Looking forward, the State's challenging financial situation will almost certainly translate to funding cuts to providers of disability services. A 2.5% reduction in provider reimbursement rates is scheduled to take place in February, and additional reductions have been proposed and will be considered during the 2021 legislative session.

MRSI, along with fellow providers, will advocate to stop or minimize the reductions through continued dialogue with state officials and legislators. It is our belief that resolving Wyoming's financial crisis by further reducing funding for this vulnerable population is fundamentally wrong.



Participants receive first aid training

In an effort to enhance the provider incapacity component of MRSI's emergency disaster plan, three participants volunteered to complete the America Heart Association's Heartsaver CPR, AED and First Aid Training course. Facilitated by training director Monyka Landry, the course covered lifesaving material offered in individual sessions of the CPR/AED and first aid training via video-based and instructor-guided education. Landry was impressed with how serious each student approached the learning experience. "Each individual was on time, enthusiastic, and asked great questions," stated Landry. "If I was incapacitated, I would feel good knowing they would get help coming." She plans on offering the class to interested participants on a more frequent basis during the coming months.