

## **Employee of the Year Nominee Profile**

### **Brandi Helton – Director of Nursing, Tsali Care Center Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority**

Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority is proud to recognize those who lead not only with skill, but with heart. Brandi Helton, Director of Nursing at Tsali Care Center, is one of those rare leaders whose commitment to excellence, innovation, and compassion has uplifted an entire community. Her leadership has transformed both the culture of care and the care itself, making her an extraordinary nominee for Employee of the Year.

#### **Integrity**

Brandi leads by example, every single day. Whether she's arriving early to prep the team for a successful shift or staying late to address urgent needs, her commitment is unwavering. Her leadership is not just about directing others — it's about setting the tone through her own actions. When a resident's family has concerns, Brandi doesn't delegate the conversation — she takes it on personally, ensuring transparency, trust, and resolution.

During the major transition to the new Tsali Care facility, Brandi shouldered responsibility for the entire process — embracing both the visible challenges and the ones behind the scenes. She never passed the buck, never pointed fingers. Instead, she inspired confidence, held herself accountable, and kept resident care as the top priority. Her colleagues admire her not just for what she does, but for how she does it: with professionalism, empathy, and humility.

#### **Responsiveness**

When someone needs help — a resident, a staff member, or a family — Brandi is there. She treats every concern with urgency and compassion, whether it's a sudden medical change or an overwhelmed team member needing support. She listens, acts swiftly, and ensures follow-through with the same level of care and attention every time.

Her reliability is unmatched. She is consistently on time, organized, and responsive — a calm and effective leader in high-pressure situations. During the facility relocation, Brandi mapped out detailed contingency plans to ensure continuity of care, coordinated across departments, and made sure everyone was informed and supported every step of the way. Her responsiveness builds trust and reinforces a standard of excellence across the board.

#### **Success**

Success for Brandi isn't just measured by operational outcomes, it's reflected in the faces of the residents she serves and the team she leads. She is the backbone of the nursing department at Tsali Care, known as the one who gets things done while also lifting others up. Her work ethic, clinical knowledge, and leadership have helped guide the facility through some of its most significant milestones, including the seamless transition into a new home.

Brandi is an essential resource, not only for clinical guidance, but for strategic planning, staff mentorship, and continuous quality improvement. She has implemented numerous policies that promote resident safety, operational efficiency, and team accountability, all while remaining grounded

in the mission of CIHA. Her leadership helps ensure the Cherokee community receives the compassionate, culturally grounded care it deserves.

### **Teamwork**

Brandi understands that leadership is about collaboration. Her belief in mutual respect and shared responsibility has created a culture of unity and trust at Tsali Care. During the facility move, she modeled teamwork in its purest form, coordinating with multiple departments and jumping in wherever needed, whether it meant tackling logistics or providing emotional support.

Her influence extends well beyond the nursing unit. She has played an active role in staff training programs, quality improvement initiatives, and community health events. She also supports employee wellness programs and team-building efforts, recognizing that a healthy team is essential to delivering healthy outcomes.

### **Innovation**

Brandi isn't afraid to challenge the status quo if it means better care. She has led with innovation in both large-scale planning and small operational improvements. Her introduction of individualized, culturally sensitive care plans honors the traditions and preferences of Cherokee elders while also meeting medical needs. She's worked closely with CIHA's IT team and Blue Ridge Health to integrate user-friendly electronic documentation tools, streamlining processes and reducing staff burden.

Her flexible staffing models and staff development workshops have boosted morale and retention, while her commitment to continuous improvement has made Tsali Care a leader in quality and patient experience. Brandi's visionary mindset and willingness to embrace change ensure that Tsali Care stays at the forefront of long-term care delivery in the region.

### **A Leader Rooted in Purpose**

Brandi Helton exemplifies everything CIHA strives to represent: integrity, responsiveness, innovation, compassion, and unwavering commitment to community. Her leadership has not only elevated Tsali Care Center but has also deepened the connection between our hospital and the people we serve.

We are honored to recognize Brandi Helton as a nominee for Employee of the Year at Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority — a role she has, in so many ways, already fulfilled.