

Employee of the Year Nominee Profile

Michelle Frerich – Program Manager, Beauty for Ashes (Analenisgi) Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority

Some leaders shine not because they seek recognition, but because they consistently light the path for others. Michelle Frerich is one of those leaders. As Program Manager for Beauty for Ashes, Michelle has not only built a vital healing program from the ground up, she's also become a trusted therapist, teammate, and innovator within the Analenisgi team and across the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority. Through quiet strength, deep empathy, and a vision for lasting change, Michelle has earned the respect of her peers and the trust of the community she serves, making her a deserving nominee for Employee of the Year.

Integrity

Michelle leads with heart and holds herself to the highest standards. She is often the first to take on a challenge and the last to take credit for success. When problems arise, Michelle jumps into action, driven not by obligation but by compassion, always seeking the best outcome for the client or team involved. If the solution doesn't exist within her own toolkit, she humbly reaches out, building bridges across departments to get it done.

What makes Michelle truly remarkable is her unwavering professionalism, even as she uses humor and connection to meet clients where they are. In a community that values laughter as medicine, she blends empathy and authenticity to create safe spaces where healing begins. Her integrity is not only respected, it's felt by everyone around her.

Responsiveness

Michelle listens with intent. Whether it's a client in crisis, a co-worker in need of support, or a team member sharing a win, Michelle responds with full presence and care. She brings thoughtful insight to every conversation and offers honest feedback in a way that uplifts rather than critiques.

She isn't afraid to make hard calls or tackle emotionally charged situations head-on. In fact, her calm confidence often diffuses tension and replaces it with hope. Her ability to see each person as a whole — not just a role or a case — makes her one of the most trusted and respected voices in the room.

Success

Michelle's success story is one of humble leadership and transformative impact. As a therapist, she helped countless individuals move toward healing. As the manager of Beauty for Ashes, she has taken a new and essential program and turned it into something dynamic, deeply rooted in community, and full of potential.

Michelle is laying the foundation for a program that is rapidly becoming a cornerstone of trauma recovery and empowerment in Cherokee. Her influence reaches far beyond her job description. She is building something enduring and doing it with grace, humility, and service.

Teamwork

Michelle is a collaborator in every sense. She is quick to share praise, quick to offer help, and always present for her colleagues. Despite her managerial role, Michelle remains deeply engaged with clients, modeling hands-on leadership that inspires trust and unity.

She actively supports her fellow managers and is often a connector across teams. Her warmth and presence are so impactful, it's a running joke that no one can walk to lunch with her without being stopped by someone wanting to chat. That's more than popularity — that's impact. That's a reputation built on kindness, follow-through, and the genuine respect of her peers.

Innovation

Michelle sees opportunity in everything. Whether she's supporting a colleague's initiative or designing new group offerings for the community, she is constantly asking, *"How can we do this better? How can we reach more people?"* Her creative spirit has brought new energy to Analenisgi, and her collaborative approach has helped bind the department together like a family.

She is currently developing several new group-based offerings to expand access to behavioral health services, further strengthening the role Beauty for Ashes plays in long-term healing. Michelle doesn't wait for direction, she takes initiative, builds solutions, and brings people along with her.

A Leader Who Builds with Love

Michelle Frerich's impact cannot be measured by titles or checklists. It's found in the lives she's touched, the programs she's built, and the energy she brings into every room. Her leadership is quiet but powerful, deeply personal, and always focused on making things better for someone else.

We are honored to recognize Michelle Frerich as a nominee for Employee of the Year at Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority — a healer, a builder, and a beacon of hope for our staff, our patients, and our community.