

Mandi Gardner serves as a Unit Coordinator in the Emergency Department at the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority and is widely recognized as an exceptional employee, trusted teammate, and dedicated steward of the hospital's mission and values. As an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Mandi's connection to the hospital extends far beyond her role. She and her family receive care through CIHA, giving her a deeply personal investment in the success of the organization and the wellbeing of the Cherokee community. She approaches her work with pride, responsibility, and a profound understanding that the hospital belongs to the people it serves.

Mandi consistently demonstrates integrity through honesty, accountability, professionalism, and ethical decision-making. She leads by example in every interaction, earning the trust and respect of staff, leadership, patients, and families alike. Her calm demeanor, respectful communication, and unwavering commitment to doing what is right create a positive and dependable presence within the Emergency Department. Colleagues describe her as someone who embodies Guiding Principle Three – ᎠᎩᎠᎩᎠᎩ (Ni hi tsa tse li), "It belongs to you," through the care and dedication she shows toward protecting the hospital's reputation, supporting patients and families, and responsibly stewarding Tribal resources.

In one of the hospital's most fast-paced and high-pressure environments, Mandi consistently demonstrates exceptional responsiveness and reliability. She remains calm and organized during stressful situations and is someone staff members can depend on without hesitation. Her extensive knowledge and quick decision-making allow her to respond rapidly to urgent patient and operational needs. She has critical contact information memorized for key facilities and resources, enabling immediate action when time is critical. Whether assembling emergency packets within moments, coordinating essential information, or ensuring continuity of care during busy shifts, Mandi's attentiveness and efficiency directly support both patient safety and departmental success.

Mandi continually goes above and beyond the call of duty to support her department and coworkers. She willingly stays beyond scheduled shifts, comes in on days off when needed, and takes on responsibilities far outside of her formal job description to ensure the Emergency Department operates smoothly. Her broad institutional knowledge and understanding of departmental operations make her an invaluable resource for staff throughout the unit. Colleagues frequently rely on her expertise, knowing she can quickly identify solutions, coordinate resources, and help navigate complex situations with professionalism and confidence.

Her contributions extend far beyond daily operations and have a meaningful impact on the broader Cherokee community. Through her dedication to maintaining efficient workflows, supporting frontline staff, and ensuring patients and families receive compassionate and coordinated care, Mandi actively advances the mission of the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority to provide accessible, patient- and family-centered healthcare. Her work helps strengthen trust in the hospital while supporting the wellbeing of the people and community she proudly serves.

Mandi also exemplifies teamwork and collaboration in every aspect of her role. She consistently supports nurses, providers, leadership, and fellow staff members with kindness, respect, and loyalty. Whether assisting coworkers during difficult shifts, mentoring others, or stepping in

wherever help is needed, she fosters a culture of trust, cooperation, and shared success. Her approach reflects Guiding Principle Four – ᏏᏏᏏᏏᏏᏏ (Di qwa tse li i yu sdi), “Like family to me,” as she treats both coworkers and patients with compassion, understanding, and genuine care.

Through her initiative, adaptability, and resourcefulness, Mandi consistently identifies ways to improve efficiency and strengthen departmental operations. She anticipates needs before they arise, quickly adapts to changing circumstances, and approaches challenges with confidence and practical problem-solving skills. Her willingness to take on additional responsibilities, suggest process improvements, and continuously support patient care reflects CIHA’s commitment to excellence and the pursuit of the highest standards of service.

Through her professionalism, compassion, leadership, and dedication to the Cherokee people, Mandi Gardner exemplifies the mission, vision, and guiding principles of the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority and is exceptionally deserving of recognition as Employee of the Year.