

Michelle Frerich serves with Analenisgi at the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority and is recognized as a compassionate leader, dedicated advocate, and invaluable resource for both clients and staff. Through her professionalism, empathy, and unwavering commitment to helping others, Michelle has made a lasting impact on Analenisgi programs, the hospital, and the Cherokee community as a whole.

Michelle consistently demonstrates integrity through her leadership, accountability, and genuine care for those around her. Colleagues describe her as someone who immediately steps forward when challenges arise, working tirelessly to identify solutions that best meet the needs of clients and staff. When additional collaboration is needed, Michelle actively reaches out to other teams and leaders to ensure every situation is handled thoughtfully and effectively. Her professionalism never wavers, even while using humor and connection to create an environment where people feel comfortable, supported, and understood. Her ability to balance compassion with strong leadership allows her to make difficult decisions with both grace and confidence.

Known for her responsiveness and attentiveness, Michelle creates an environment where every individual feels seen, heard, and valued. She consistently meets clients where they are emotionally and personally, helping foster trust and connection in even the most difficult situations. Staff members describe her presence as calming, uplifting, and supportive, noting that she creates spaces that are genuinely a joy to be part of. Michelle also has a remarkable ability to provide honest and constructive feedback in ways that encourage growth and understanding, allowing employees to feel supported rather than discouraged.

Michelle's dedication to serving the community began long before stepping into leadership roles. As a therapist, she provided compassionate care and support to countless clients, and she has continued that same level of commitment as Program Manager for the Galvgwodiyyu program. In addition to leading Galvgwodiyyu, Michelle also stepped forward to take on leadership responsibilities for the Domestic Violence Program, further demonstrating her willingness to rise above and beyond the call of duty to ensure continuity of care and support for vulnerable individuals within the community. Colleagues consistently describe her as humble, approachable, and deeply invested in helping both her team and clients succeed.

A strong believer in collaboration and shared success, Michelle exemplifies teamwork in every aspect of her work. Despite receiving significant praise and recognition for her accomplishments, she consistently redirects credit toward the individuals and teams who support the work around her. She is always willing to assist other departments and programs, whether coordinating cultural support for events such as the Remembrance Tree or visiting Tsali Care Center to share stories and connect with residents. Michelle fosters an atmosphere where staff know they can always reach out to her for guidance, support, or assistance without hesitation.

Michelle's innovation and forward-thinking leadership have also contributed significantly to improving services within Analenisgi and the broader Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority system. Through her collaboration, support of other teams, and willingness to make difficult decisions, she played an important role in dramatically reducing the Individual Therapy Waitlist from more than 100 clients to fewer than 40. Her ability to approach challenges with creativity, good intent, and thoughtful problem-solving has consistently resulted in positive outcomes for both staff and patients. Even in situations where the outcome may not be immediately clear,

Michelle demonstrates courage, initiative, and trust in doing what is best for the people and programs she serves.

Through her compassion, humility, leadership, and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others, Michelle Frerich embodies the mission and values of the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority. Her ability to inspire those around her, strengthen programs, and provide meaningful support to the Cherokee community makes her exceptionally deserving of recognition as Employee of the Year.