

Dr. Yona Wade serves in Human Resources – Learning and Development at the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority and has become a driving force behind employee growth, leadership development, and organizational improvement across the hospital. Through visionary leadership, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to staff success, Yona has elevated the department into a strategic resource that supports both employee engagement and long-term organizational excellence.

Known for leading with integrity, Yona consistently models professionalism, fairness, and accountability in every aspect of his work. He approaches challenges with transparency, accepts responsibility for departmental outcomes, and fosters an environment built on trust, respect, and collaboration. One example of his forward-thinking leadership was advocating for the department's transition from "Training" to "Learning and Development," a change that better reflects the department's broader strategic purpose and commitment to continuous professional growth throughout the organization. His positive attitude, professionalism, and genuine care for colleagues have earned the respect of staff across all departments.

Yona is highly responsive to the needs of employees and leadership alike, ensuring staff have access to the tools, resources, and educational opportunities necessary to succeed. In March 2024, he quickly adapted to an unexpected leadership role transition, ensuring continuity of services without disruption while maintaining high standards for training and development initiatives. His reliability, organization, and strong communication skills have strengthened onboarding processes, improved scheduling for leadership development programs, and kept major initiatives moving forward efficiently and effectively.

His impact on organizational success has been substantial. Yona played a key role in strengthening Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority's New Employee Orientation process, helping reduce onboarding time while improving new hire satisfaction scores by 15% through enhancements identified in post-orientation surveys. He also enhanced the Leadership Learning Series 1.0, increasing engagement and improving knowledge retention among participants. By leveraging Microsoft 365 tools and streamlining administrative processes, Yona improved departmental efficiency, reduced administrative burden, and increased overall productivity.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Yona earned a Doctorate in Education while simultaneously leading the department, demonstrating exceptional dedication to personal growth and lifelong learning. He has applied advanced organizational development strategies gained through his doctoral work to improve training effectiveness and strengthen professional development opportunities across the hospital. Beyond his department, he serves as Vice President of the Employee Association, helping lead initiatives that strengthen employee morale, engagement, and organizational culture throughout CIHA.

Yona's collaborative leadership style and commitment to teamwork are evident in every project he undertakes. He actively partners with colleagues across departments to develop impactful educational programs, mentors team members to help them grow professionally, and creates an inclusive environment where all voices are valued. His ability to bring people together around shared goals has strengthened relationships across the organization and contributed to a culture of mutual respect and shared success.

Through innovation, resourcefulness, and a commitment to continuous improvement, Yona has consistently introduced creative solutions that improve workflows and enhance employee development opportunities. Whether implementing new technologies, identifying operational inefficiencies, or advocating for strategic departmental improvements, he approaches challenges with initiative and a solutions-oriented mindset. His leadership, vision, and dedication have made a lasting impact on Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority, making him exceptionally deserving of recognition as Employee of the Year.