

President's Award Nomination

Award Description:

The President's Award will be presented to an individual who has responded to the needs of individuals with disabilities in a significant and effective manner.

NOMINEE: Sheri Holmes

ORGANIZATION:

Include a narrative including answers to the following questions. You may also attach a maximum of three letters of support. Additional information may be attached if necessary.

- To what needs has the person responded?
- How were those needs fulfilled?
- List any personal services and/or achievements that are pertinent.
- Provide a biographical sketch of this person.
- Additional information.

NOMINATION NARRATIVE: I am thrilled to nominate Sheri Holmes, Cottonwood, Inc., for the 2024 Interhab President's Award. Sheri demonstrates an unwavering commitment to supporting people with IDD, enriching their lives and advocating for their rights with unparalleled dedication and passion.

A day does not go by that Sheri does not make a huge difference in the lives of persons-supported, her staff and everyone at Cottonwood. Sheri began her career with Cottonwood right out of high school as a DSP in our Life Enrichment area which supports people with significant needs. While her work experience has remained in the Life Enrichment area over her 28+ years at Cottonwood, this tenure should in no way imply that her work was stagnant. She has been promoted from DSP to Team Lead to Supervisor to Coordinator to Sr. Coordinator. With each promotion came new challenges and opportunities and in true Sheri-style, she faced them all with a calm energy to get things done!

Sheri embodies the values of empathy, respect, and inclusion in all aspects of her work. Through innovative programs and initiatives, she has provided invaluable support and resources to persons-supported, families and staff, to aid persons-supported to achieve their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. She is a change agent, embracing change, identifying what needs to be changed and ensuring the changes are designed and implemented in a calm, efficient manner.

During the COVID years, Sheri led the apparently seamless (but not really!) transition to providing day services in group homes and thereby relieving much of the stress of these never-before-seen changes for staff, families and persons-supported. Her tireless efforts developing Cottonwood's capacity to face these huge challenges brought about by the pandemic strengthened the organization in so many areas and Cottonwood emerged from these times a stronger, more nimble and flexible organization.

Over the past year, Sheri has worked tirelessly to build a new day activity program at Cottonwood called CORE (Community, Outreach, Recreation, and Enrichment). Cottonwood had not implemented a new day service in decades. Sheri led a team to address needed changes due to the implementation of Final Rule and designed and deployed an amazing, innovative and creative community-focused program which has had huge success, both for persons-served and Cottonwood.

In addition, Sheri consistently demonstrates kindness, patience, and maturity in her interactions with persons-supported and their families. She is never defensive, listening to everyone's point of view and working collaboratively to solve the problem. Her tremendous ability to be empathetic yet firm has certainly enabled her to build great rapport with families and staff. Her unwavering commitment to making a difference in the lives of others is truly commendable and deserving of recognition.

Overall, Sheri's dedication, compassion, and attitude that conflict is not to be avoided but embraced as an opportunity to improve have all made a significant difference in the lives of persons-supported, families and staff. She exemplifies *Cottonwood Strong!!!!* Her commitment to inclusivity and empowerment serves as an inspiration to us all and I cannot think of anyone more deserving of the 2024 Interhab President's Award.

Thank you for considering this nomination for Sheri Holmes.

NAME OF PERSON MAKING THIS NOMINATION: Heather Thies
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I have reviewed and agreed to the criteria for filming the awards video.

I have obtained approval for this nomination from the submitting agency's Executive Director.