



August 11, 2021

Thank you for completing your 2021 Community Star Individual Nominee Questionnaire!

Overview

Here is a copy of your answers for your records. All nominations will be reviewed and evaluated by members of NOSORH's Community Star Selection Committee. One Community Star will be selected per state. If you are selected as your state's Community Star, I will work with you to schedule an interview so that we can develop your outstanding story to share in our annual book of Community Stars released on Thursday, November 18, 2021.

If you have any questions, please reach out to NRHD Community Star Project Coordinator, Brea Corsaro at bcorsaro@powerofrural.org.

Your Information

Amber Martinsen-Blake, LCSW Candidate

Executive Director

Catalyst for Change

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Have Questions? Contact:
powerofrural.org | nosorh.org | bcorsaro@powerofrural.org



Organization or Project Website

<https://catalystforchange.org>

Please describe in as much detail as possible, your role within your organization and the nature of your work in rural health?

My first reaction in responding to this inquiry was to provide my job description. However, my role within my organization as Executive Director for Catalyst for Change is so much more than that, and is as follows:

- 1) Giving rural people a voice by empowering locals to speak up about the change they would like to see in their communities, specific to mental health and suicide prevention, intervention, and follow-up care.
- 2) Constantly seeking the latest, cutting-edge technology to facilitate a wide network of digital interventions that make receiving mental health care easier on rural populations.
- 3) Utilizing our virtual-meets-local model to educate and train local champions to become Community Health Workers (CHWs) who act as a trusted individual(s) or guide for locals in need of assistance in utilizing various technology platforms and equipment to facilitate their mental health appointments.
- 4) Mining resources locally, statewide, and federally whenever possible to improve access and awareness of social services supports for rural communities.
- 5) Aid with fundraising and grant-writing to bring as much funding as possible to rural areas that are often overlooked or eliminated from

statewide and federally funding efforts. These funds are facilitated and controlled by the rural communities.

- 6) Communicating and advocating for rural communities to receive more equality when it comes to accessing various funding streams and support from policymakers, statewide and federally.
- 7) Provide crisis support and stabilization to those in mental health and addictions crisis in rural areas.
- 8) Collaborate with other professionals in the mental health field with an interest in serving rural areas to create leadership that otherwise doesn't exist. This is a high priority as the lack of leadership and collaboration in our state makes for a highly competitive field that hurts rural populations as most entities are siloed and working separately from one another. This is one of our highest suicide-risk factors in Montana.

What inspired you to choose your career?

Honestly, my career chose me. Once I graduated with my Master's in Social Work, I thought I would go directly into private practice. However, after experiencing the suicide epidemic up close and personal in rural Montana, I couldn't bring myself to pull away from addressing this very real crisis. This was when I first considered creating a non-profit, and the beginning of Catalyst for Change.

What is the impact of your work in your community or the rural populations you serve?

We have served over 300 people locally in our hometown of Big Timber, population 1900 in town, in less than two years. The need here is great. As a result, we have numerous counties wanting to replicate our program. As

such, we have chosen one other local county to start the replication process and the need is even greater than Sweet Grass County. Referrals are coming in rapidly and we are helping the people in need.

Have you accessed, benefited from, or worked directly with your State Office of Rural Health? If yes, please describe.

Yes. I work with MSU, Beth Ann Carter and Kris Juliar often and I have since the beginning. They have been a huge part of our success and a great resource.

Are you or your organization a HRSA, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Grantee? If yes, which grant program? If yes, which one?

No