



July 29, 2021

Thank you for submitting a nomination for Amber Martinsen-Blake.

Overview

Thank you for your 2021 Community Star Nomination. Here is a copy of the nomination for your records. If you have any questions, please reach out to NRHD Community Star Project Coordinator, Brea Corsaro at bcorsaro@powerofrural.org.

Your Information

Beth Carter

Assistant Director

Montana Office of Rural Health

Bozeman, Montana

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Community Star Nominee: (Individual)

Amber Martinsen-Blake

Executive Director

Catalyst for Change

Big Timber, Montana

Amber@CatalystforChange.org

406-459-4763

Have Questions? Contact:

powerofrural.org | nosorh.org | bcorsaro@powerofrural.org



Which best describes the organization your nominee is associated with?

Community Action Agencies

Please describe your connection to the individual or organization you are nominating.

I oversee the statewide Behavioral Health training program at Montana Office of Rural Health, I met Amber when I heard about her CHW program in Big Timber, she has had several of her CHWs take our trainings.

Please explain the individual's or organization's connection to or interaction with their State Office of Rural Health.

Catalyst for Change provides consultation and support to rural Montana communities wanting to start their own CHW Program. MORH has provided the CHW core training, as well as professional development trainings.

The Community Star Recognition Program is designed to honor those whose contributions are making a difference in rural through collaboration, education, innovation, and communication. What do you believe to be your nominee's "star" qualities? Provide examples of how your nominee demonstrates these qualities in their work and service.

Amber created the first ever network of professionals in her community that consists of mental health counselors, therapists, psychiatrists, and psychiatric nurse practitioners who provide therapy, counseling, and medication management. She has increased mental health awareness and has reduced stigma in her rural town of Big Timber. She created a model utilizing Community Health Workers, to which many other communities statewide have looked to for implementation. Her success has been

measured in the large number of referrals she has received from patients and from the moving testimonials of those that have sought help. Her relentless efforts to combat the mental health crisis in our state, starting within her small community, has grown exponentially and has improved the lives of countless Montanans.

The 2021 Community Star Selection Committee will review and evaluate nominations, making recommendations for which stories to include in this year's book and other NRHD activities based on the following merits. Please review these and select all that apply to your nominee.

Cultivates a vital, innovative rural health landscape and infrastructure. ,
Develops leadership capacity to grow rural population health and health equity. , Builds capacity for rural data-driven program planning and decision making. , Contributes to rural health innovation, education, collaboration, and communication.

Describe in as much detail as possible, examples of your nominee's work and accomplishments that correspond with your selections to the question above.

Amber has developed the first Community Health Worker program in the rural town of Big Timber (population 1200). Leading a local team that consists of community health workers, school counselors, primary care providers, law enforcement and county commissioners, to name a few, they are working together to tackle a growing mental health crisis that has overtaken their small community. Suicide rates in Montana are among the highest in the nation. In 2018, Amber surveyed Big Timber high school students using the YRBSS, with results showing 30% of students had thought about suicide and 19% had attempted suicide. These results were staggering. Two years later, the numbers were then 26% had thought about suicide and 10% had attempted. This has been a direct result of Amber's tireless work within this community.



Amber and her team focus on getting their clients connected with the necessary resources they are most needing, most specifically mental health services. They are utilizing telebehavioral health, which allows these rural community members to speak with a mental health provider via video chat, rather than having to traveling hundreds of miles. Ambers team has been instrumental in reducing stigma associated with mental health in Big Timber. She is highly respected for the work she does by those not only in her community, but across the state of Montana.

She has now expanded her program, Catalyst for Change, to work with communities statewide in assisting them with the development of a network of mental health professionals, that also includes community health workers, school staff, law enforcement, and other local resources.

I can confirm that the individual or organization is making a difference in rural through collaboration, education, innovation, and communication, and is located, working, or volunteering in a designated rural area.

Yes

I can confirm that I have notified the nominee of their nomination, and the nomination will be accepted.

Yes

How did you learn about the 2021 Community Star Recognition Program?

State Office of Rural Health
Natalie Claiborne