

BOSWELL REGIONAL CENTER'S BULLETIN

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2019 Employee of the Year named

Boswell Regional Center's

The Boswell Bulletin is published to inform the public, employees, family members and friends on Boswell Regional Center's activities, programs and progress. This publication also seeks to provide information to those interested in the work conducted by Boswell's employees to enrich the lives of those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

Clint Ashley, Director
Kara Kimbrough,
Editor



Boswell Regional Center
1049 Simpson Highway 149 N.
P. O. Box 128
Magee, MS 39111

ON THE COVER:

Natisha Polk was named Boswell's 2019 Employee of the Year. She received her award at Boswell Lake instead of at a regular recognition reception.



Natisha Polk named 2019 Employee of the Year

Natisha Polk, a licensed social worker described as "one of the most compassionate and caring professionals you'll ever meet" was selected as Boswell's top employee of the year for 2019. The majority of the honorees in Boswell's quarterly recognition program are involved in the direct care of BRC individuals. The category in which Polk was recognized honors outstanding support or professional personnel.

Due to the pandemic and in accordance with Gov. Tate Reeves' mandate to limit gatherings to 25 people or less, an employee recognition reception was not held this year. However, "Tish," as she is called by friends and family, received a cash award from Boswell's Friends and Family Association, an engraved award, personalized parking sign declaring her status as Employee of the Year and in a nod to the current pandemic, an engraved face mask in a socially-distanced presentation by Boswell Lake.

Polk, a resident of Magee, graduated from Magee High School before earning a bachelor's degree in social work from The University of Southern Mississippi. Additionally, she received a master's in social work from Jackson State University. She is currently enrolled in Mississippi State Personnel Board's Certified Public Manager (CPM) program.

Polk's nomination form contained glowing accolades from supervisors and peers with statements that included, "Natisha goes the extra mile to provide excellent care for those we serve," "She possesses a genuine, sincere heart for others, whether it is an individual or family member" and "Shying away from difficult or controversial situations when it relates to the well-being of our individuals is something Natisha would never do."

Even more specific, her supervisor Will Beeson had this to say about Tish: "Ms. Polk is a very compassionate and highly intelligent person. Her only weakness may be her modesty and lack of a competitive nature. She manages to negotiate the numerous minefields of interdepartmental projects with the grace of a ballerina. Her people skills are her strength. When faced with uncertainty she always manages to meet the needs of our program without requiring specific rules and instructions."

Boswell director Clint Ashley emphasized his support for the contributions made by Tish as well as those from each 2019 employee of the quarter.

"Thank you for all that you do each and every day for our center and for those in our care," Ashley said. "Your dedication changes lives, enhances our center and creates long-lasting results for those we serve."

Assistant director Cindy Womack echoed his thoughts, stating, "It's reassuring to know someone like Tish is looking out for our individuals' best interests. Her work ethic and dependability set very high standards for others to emulate."

Tish has worked at Boswell for six years and credits her "team" for helping her excel on the job.

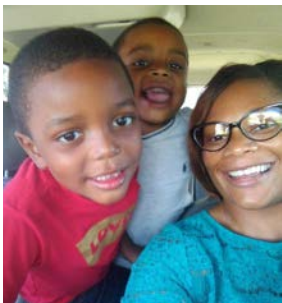
"If it wasn't for the psychologists, nurses and a multitude of other caregivers, I would not be able to do my job in the way I feel it should be done," she said. "With their help, I am able to concentrate my energies on our individuals and for that, I am sincerely grateful."

In her spare time, Tish enjoys spending time with her three sisters and numerous nieces and nephews, reading and working in her yard, including tending to flower beds.

2019 Employee of the Year named



Boswell Regional Center's Employee of the Year for 2019 is Natisha Polk of Magee, center. Congratulating her at the socially-distanced awards presentation by Boswell Lake are Clint Ashley, far left, director of Boswell and Cindy Womack, far right, assistant director.



Spending time with family, including lively nephews Jayceon and Josiah, is one of Tish's favorite past times.



Tish credits a group of friends and co-workers from Oakbrook and Ridgeview units with being a strong support system. This group of friends, mostly former or current team members, came out to support Chiquita Price, third from left, and Tish, center, when they received 2019 Employee of the Quarter awards. Others pictured are from left: Vicki Kettleman, Carla Nichols, Ann Brinson, Janet Applewhite and Mollye Hancock.

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Spotlight On...

Summer time...and the livin' was...different!

Summer at Boswell is usually a busy, fun-filled few months, packed with activities for individuals that include cookouts, swimming parties, short vacations, watermelon cuttings, outings to ball games, movies and much more. Summer 2020 was vastly different due to the restrictions as a result of Covid. Boswell's Recreation staff had to be creative in coming up with ways for individuals to enjoy fun activities and sunshine while keeping them safe.

A few of the special activities that were enjoyed in small groups were a ladies' lemonade and hats party, rides in the Star Cart, special music and treats on the units.

Here are a few photos from Boswell's "different" summer:





Spotlight On...

'Summer time...and the livin' was...different!'



September is National Suicide Prevention Month



Letter from Diana Mikula Executive Director of DMH

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. Though we observe this recognition annually, this year has perhaps a more poignant reason to acknowledge it. The COVID-19 pandemic is a serious issue not just for our physical health, but our mental health as well.

The CDC reports that symptoms of anxiety and depression increased significantly in the first half of the year, with 40 percent of respondents to one recent poll experiencing harmful symptoms like anxiety or depression related to the pandemic.

The Harris Poll recently conducted a national survey that indicated most Americans believe suicide can be prevented and that they would take action if someone close to them was expressing suicidal behavior.

They're right – each death by suicide is one that can be prevented, and sometimes all we have to do to prevent that loss is to ask a question. Don't be afraid to ask someone if they have had thoughts of harming themselves. Yes, it may be difficult, but the simple fact is it shows you care.

We often think it can't happen in our families, but suicide is the third-leading cause of death in Mississippi among people 15-24 years of age. From 2014 through 2018, Mississippi lost 2,065 lives to suicide. For each of those losses, an untold number of family members and friends experienced shock, anger, guilt, or depression. That's why it's so important to have conversations about suicide awareness and to understand the risk factors and warning signs of people struggling with suicidal thoughts.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to add to the stress and anxiety of our daily lives, we should understand that help is always available and it's ok to reach out to a loved one, a trusted friend, or to call a help line. As health care professionals, we should be sharing that message every time we have a chance. It can take everyone in our communities to help prevent suicide.

When we leave our workplaces and head to our neighborhoods, our churches, our gyms, and anywhere else we may go when we clock out for the day, let's make sure we're prepared to help others. September may be National Suicide Prevention Month, but we should be focused on this topic all year. Knowing the signs and asking a simple question may save someone's life.

These are extraordinarily difficult times. Please know that just as you shouldn't hesitate to offer help, you shouldn't hesitate to ask for help either. Remember that the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours a day at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK). Help is also available through the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to the number 741-741.

I hope each of you is staying safe and healthy, and thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,
Diane Mikula
Executive Director
DMH





Spotlight On...

Grounds crew endures summer heat to maintain campus grounds, group homes

While most of us are blessed to be able to work inside air-conditioned buildings during summer's brutally hot days, members of Boswell's grounds crew don't have that luxury. Instead, they climb on tractors and mowers, grab weed-eaters and shovels and set out across Boswell's rolling hills to mow grass, trim shrubbery, pick up limbs and perform numerous other daily tasks to keep the main campus and other properties in perfect condition. One thing's for certain, something always needs mowing or pruning at Boswell, courtesy of nearly 200 acres of large fields, lawns, buildings with adjacent yards and hundreds of trees, flowering plants and shrubs.

Led by Gene Lee, who will be retiring Oct. 31 after 26 years of working outside in the elements, the crew has braved 90+ degree heat this summer for weeks on end. And, they'll put on heavy jackets and hats and continue their work outdoors when the weather turns cold.

During winter months, the crew puts out pine straw, sets out plants in anticipation of spring blooms, picks up fallen limbs and continues to mow and hedge campus areas and fields, albeit on a smaller scale than during summer months.

Lee, who works alongside the other members on the crew, says the guys don't need a lot of supervision, as most have their preferred area to maintain and instinctively know when it's time to mow, weed eat and perform other tasks to keep it maintained.

"Every morning, we all just get on a mower or tractor and head out," said Lee. "There's not usually a lot of discussion; we know which areas are in need of mowing and we get it done."

Regardless of the time of year, we can all agree on two things: their job isn't easy and they do a fantastic job of keeping Boswell beautiful year-round.

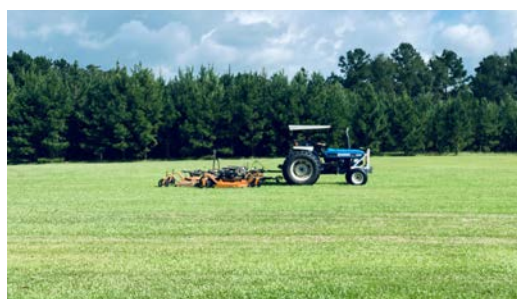


Left, Bo Magee's favorite place to work is the rolling hills in front of the Auditorium, which requires mowing every few days.



Above, Jerry Little is pictured trimming the hedges at the gravesite of Dr. and Mrs. Henry Boswell. At the time of Dr. Boswell's death in 1957, the Sanatorium board of directors had to seek special permission from the legislature for the burial to take place on state property. Mrs. Lola Boswell was buried next to her husband in 1986.

Gene Lee, right, works alongside the others, making sure every area of the campus and outlying properties is well-kept. Picking up limbs is an ongoing process due to the hundreds of trees, some of which are over 100 years old.



Cutting the grass of several large fields requires the use of a tractor, left, driven by Mike McAlpin. Boswell's athletic field is not being used right now, but it still has to be mowed.



E. G. Brown, left, transferred to the grounds crew from another department and says he enjoys working outdoors. He's pictured here maintaining the Boswell gravesite.



Spotlight On...

Employees of the Quarter named

Employees of the Quarter were recently named and received cash awards and certificates from the Friends and Family Association. Winners were:

Campus: Verma Robinson

ICF Group Homes – Susan Grizzle

Community – Lashayna Kelly

Support- Erica Hubbard

Erica and Verma were available for photos; Susan and Lashayna are not pictured.



Erica Hubbard, who works in Recreation, was named Employee of the Quarter for her dedication and flexibility to work wherever a need arose during the pandemic. She also made motivational signs for units and buildings.



Verma Robinson was singled out for displaying a positive attitude and going beyond the call of duty to take care of individuals during the health crisis.

Recreation classes are back!

After a few months' absence, individuals were excited to be able to return to campus classes, especially art and music. Now under the instruction of Recreation director Cindy Sanders, assisted by Erica Hubbard and Dawn Anglin, individuals have enjoyed attending daily classes at Five Oaks, where they are learning new skills, including wreath-making. Cindy and her staff have a number of new classes planned, including scrapbooking and learning a variety of music genres.



This gentleman from Fairway enjoyed making a fall tree with colorful leaves to hang in his room.



The first of a series of monthly themed wreaths was made using fall colors by an attendee at one of the art classes.

THINGS I CAN'T CONTROL

How long
this will last

How others
react

I CAN CONTROL

My attitude

How much social
media and news
I consume

Following health
guidance from
trusted sources

Kindness and grace

Taking care of
myself

Finding fun
things to do

Asking for help if I
need it

If others will
practice social
distancing

Predicting what will
happen next