

LeadingAge Wyoming Newsletter

Jonni Belden Named Daniel J. Lex Award Winner



Jonni Belden, Vice President of Continuing Health Services at Campbell County Health (CCH), is the recipient of this year's Daniel J. Lex Award for Lifetime Service in Long-Term Care from LeadingAge Wyoming, an organization that provides advocacy and representation for non-profit nursing homes in the Cowboy State.

Jonni has been employed by CCH since 1990, and has been the administrator of The Legacy Living and Rehabilitation Center since 2012.

“Receiving this award is most fitting for Jonni because she radiates compassion, advocacy and dedication to her staff and the residents of The Legacy”, said Colleen Heeter, CEO of Campbell County Health. “Through her relentless acts of leadership, Jonni inspires and motivates her staff to deliver “Excellence Every Day” to each and every one of The Legacy residents. The COVID-19 pandemic has been extremely strenuous and difficult for our community, residents and employees, and Jonni and her staff have worked tirelessly to keep our residents safe.”

Jonni has served for many years on the LeadingAge Wyoming board. She has helped strengthen the voice for seniors and has been a never ending advocate for improving senior care and for protecting their rights and quality of life.

Eric Boley, President of LeadingAge Wyoming recounts “The day I visited Jonni to present her with her award, I waited outside The Legacy. She greeted me wearing her scrubs and PPE

because she had taken a few minutes away from working hand in hand with her staff. She expressed her concerns for her staff and the residents they are caring for while combating COVID.”

“Jonni embodies the values of LeadingAge Wyoming and is a very deserving recipient of this prestigious award.”

The Daniel J. Lex Award honors one outstanding professional each year who has dedicated their career to providing high quality long-term care.

The award was named for Daniel J. Lex, the first Executive Director of the Quality Health Care Foundation of Wyoming, now called LeadingAge Wyoming. Dan dedicated more than 20 years of his professional career to the ideal of ensuring high-quality care for the state's elderly, and helped the organization grow from a small startup to the predominant nursing home organization in Wyoming.

Encouragement from Jonni Belden

“We are weary, we are tired, we are sad, we are overwhelmed, we are not sure we want to be in healthcare anymore.” Those are words I have heard this last week from beautiful souls who are doing everything they can to meet the needs of the residents, patients and coworkers, while still maintaining a family, helping children live a “normal” life and just walking through life. I am honored by the work you do every day to ensure our residents smile, feel human touch, connect with their families, get special treats and the suggestions you have to make the upcoming holidays special in the midst of uncertainty. I feel as if the COVID-19 pandemic, will top the list as one of life’s most stressful events in years to come.

Today, there is a lot of grief we are dealing with, personal and in others. Grief, that the world is not what we thought it would be, missing families, fear and uncertainty, loss of routines and loss of “normalcy”. This can manifest itself as anger, sorrow, depression, withdrawal, and generally feeling unsafe. It is very difficult to focus on work when there is constant change and worry. You give so much of yourselves daily. You pour your strength, comfort, compassion, caring, skills and time into others. It is exhausting; then you go home. Home to loved ones who need the same emotions,

support and strength. The roller coaster of emotions sometimes sends your brain to fight or flight and sometimes to just freeze. Fight is anger, anxiety, fear. Flight is overexcitement or getting so busy you forget to relax. Freeze is depression, sadness, numbness. All those emotions are valid. Balancing those emotions is hard and takes intentional effort. As you enter the doors of the Legacy, you put on Empathy’s Armor which helps you cope. Sometimes, we have to put on the armor in order to care for those who need us the most. Some of us engage the world with our feelings first, some of us with our minds. Empathy’s armor keeps us caring and provides the emotional intelligence necessary to continue to work on days that are full of pain, anxiety, sadness and loss. It is important to balance the armor with vulnerability. Each day is a battlefield and each day you are the wonderful individuals who choose to wake up early, stay up late, and walk this journey with those who need us the most. You choose to be uncomfortable and show up weekly for testing with a smile on your face, so residents and patients can be spared the discomfort of testing. You hold their hands when testing is inevitable. You choose to

cope with this season we are all in together. I am humbled by you and all you do. Thank you!!

If I am allowed a little literary license, may you put on the armor of the caregiver and stand in the gap for those who are most vulnerable. I pray peace and joy over you, for your work is worthy!

"Therefore put on the full armor of the caregiver, so that when the day of reckoning comes, you may be able to stand your ground and protect those who are frail, ill, lonely and vulnerable. Stand firm then, with the belt of confidence buckled around your waist to inspire trust, with the breastplate of love and compassion for others, with your feet and hands fitted with the dedication, skill and compassion to answer the needs of those under our care. In addition to all this, take up the shield of strength and fortitude, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of sorrow, loneliness and despair. Wield your sword of best practice to protect coworkers, residents, patients and their families from infection, harm, and depression. Walk with confidence, for you are a warrior wearing the caregiver’s armor to protect those who cannot protect themselves.



Courage doesn't always roar.
Sometimes courage is
the little voice
at the end of the day
that says
I'll try again tomorrow.

LeadingAge Wyoming

Board of Directors

The LeadingAge Wyoming Board of Directors has announced the new board for the 2021 year.



Shane Filipi



Nancy Bunot



Brian Huso



Eli Lainhart



Karen Parker



Jonni Belden



Brenda Gorm
