



Manitoba's TOP Employers 2011

Teamwork puts Brandon RHA on Top Employer list

'We try to promote a workplace that allows employees to reach their full potential'

By Peter Carlyle-Gordge

For a second year in a row, the Brandon Regional Health Authority (Brandon RHA) has once again been recognized as one of Manitoba's Top 25 Employers.

Jason Marchand, Vice-President of Human Resources and Support Services for the Brandon RHA, says, "It helps validate what we've been striving to achieve in the workplace and there's no doubt it helps us with retaining staff and attracting new employees.

"Essentially we are a service industry whose success is based on our employee's hard work and dedication. We as an organization try to promote a workplace that allows employees to reach their full potential."

Mr. Marchand says Brandon RHA employees also work hard to develop not only a healthy environment within the workplace but to also set an example of community involvement and promoting healthy lifestyles. Some examples of that are the United Way Campaign, Heart and Stroke Big Bike Ride and participating in the Healthy Brandon Walk the Talk Challenge.

"We strongly support those ideas and initiatives. Their community involvement and charitable efforts make the whole community stronger."

Mr. Marchand says the Brandon RHA operates at 17 sites and employs about 2,600 people full time and part time. It offers a counseling based Employee Assistance Program and active social and wellness programs for staff, including access to a gym, sports teams, ski trips and fitness centres.

Benefit packages are important, but many other factors are considered when a team of national judges decide who gets to be on Manitoba's Top 25 Employer list. These include training and mentoring programs, community efforts, physical and social aspects of the workplace, family supports and others.

"We are very connected to the local community and we rely on them for volunteer efforts in our own work," Mr. Marchand says. "We have hundreds of community volunteers who do many tasks such as the Brandon Regional Health Centre Auxiliary that run the health centre gift shop and Nearly New Shop.

"Many of our retired employees, including nurses, come back to work after they retire, and some staff return to volunteer."

Like many organizations, Mr. Marchand says the health authority has many aging workers who are nearing retirement, so mentoring programs are in place in some areas to allow them to transfer their knowledge and experience to an incoming generation.



Brandon RHA staff undertake many in-house and community events, ranging from Enviro Day and (inset) an annual DASH Tent where people can visit mock hospital facilities.



The RHA also employs a wide variety of people, both part-time and full-time, so building flexibility into its workplace policies is vital. For example, it supports families who need daycare in order to work and it has 22 reserved child places for staff at a local YMCA crèche and daycare.

Mr. Marchand says the RHA also recognizes that employees vary widely in age and have different recreational interests, so the impetus for leisure activities always comes from the ground up, with full support being given by the administration.

"We have things like a floor hockey league and volleyball teams, which appeal to the younger generation, but we also have many other programs such as yoga and a Weight Watchers program that may appeal to others," he says.

"Our focus is on what makes our staff healthy and happy because when that happens everyone benefits, including all those we serve."

For more than 10 years, RHA staff have organized a huge event called the DASH Tent where up to 700 children and adults visit mock hospital facilities to learn about all aspects of its work, including the operating room and X-ray department.

"The staff organizes all aspects of this free of charge event. There is no financial cost to us as an employer but it does help cement community relations," Mr. Marchand says. "We look at the bigger picture as an employer because our employees serve the wider community but are also important members of it, too."

The Staff Wellness Committee and Social Committees play a lead role in the organization of many programs and events and

Mr. Marchand says they are enthusiastic and productive groups. The region has developed Respectful Workplace Policy and education programs, and signage underlining their credo that a respectful environment for all workers improves both productivity and harmony.

The authority's mission statement accurately sums up their goals: 'Support healthy choices and the delivery of health services through partnerships and strategies that focus on the factors that determine health.'

Mr. Marchand says the core ideas which drive his organization are simple: Integrity, Continuous Improvement, Respect and Dignity, Teamwork, Accessibility.

Achieving these goals doesn't happen through serendipity but through careful planning and rigorous analysis of problems and programs, so that continuous improvements occur.

Critical to this is a two-way flow of ideas and solid communications - a flexible approach that takes all opinions and ideas into account rather than a rigid, top-down management model that leaves employees feeling disempowered.

When everyone works together as a team and all opinions are respected, the results are always better and the proof is evident in the Brandon Regional Health Authority's success in being again placed among the province's outstanding employers.

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