



**PRESS RELEASE
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2023 Award for Excellence in Health Service Winners Announced

Hot Sulphur Springs, Colo. (July 20, 2023) — Each year, the Grand County Rural Health Network honors modern-day health pioneers who truly impact the health and lives of individuals and our community. These are individuals or organizations who have contributed significantly, either professionally or as a volunteer, to the health of our community.

This year, the Network’s Board of Directors chose to award multiple individuals that are dedicated to putting the health of the community first in many unique ways. **The Network is pleased to announce the 2023 recipients of the Award for Excellence in Health Service: Leigha Kline, owner of Thin Air Fitness; and Ann Baer and Tracey Vasquez, Grand County Public Health and Home Care services.** These deserving award recipients will be recognized on September 6th during the kickoff event for our fundraiser “Gratitude for Grand – Give a High Five for Health”. This annual fundraiser provides an opportunity for people to share their gratitude and give a “High Five for Health” to individuals, organizations, or groups that make a difference in their health or the health of our community. For more information or to give a High Five during the week of September 7-13, please visit www.gcruralhealth.org/highfive/.

Leigha Kline is a personal trainer, group fitness coach, and gym owner with over a decade of experience training clients ranging from a neurodivergent middle-schooler to Paralympic athletes and everyone in between. Her knowledge base and drive to never stop perfecting her craft, along with her compassion and empathy for everyone around her, make her a step above the rest. Leigha holds a degree in Science and Elementary Education. After college, she worked as a homecare health aide and found herself thriving while working with several high school students with developmental disabilities, but started to question whether the general classroom was the right fit for her career. Exercise had always been her outlet for both physical and mental wellness, and through many different opportunities over the years she has now successfully brought her educational skills to the gym. In June of 2022, Leigha took over ownership of Thin Air Fitness in Tabernash and has been enjoying creating new class offerings and rebuilding the gym community that was damaged due to the pandemic. She understands the importance of exercise to both the physical and the emotional well-being of our mountain community. She strives to always make it possible for anyone to become part of her gym, no matter their situation.

Through Grand County Public Health’s Home Care services, Ann Baer and Tracey Vasquez provide non-medical care for our senior neighbors with compassion and empathy each and every day. Ann grew up in Denver with a love of horses and all animals. After an internship at the Denver Zoo, Ann spent 22 years there as a zookeeper. Dreams of raising a family in the mountains brought her to Grand County in 2010, where Ann began working at Grand County Home Care as a Personal Care Provider and soon after was offered the Supervisor

position, which she still holds. Ann loves being of service to the people in her community and giving back and can't imagine another job as fulfilling as hers.

Tracey's family has Colorado roots that date back to around 1918, when her great grandfather homesteaded a large cattle ranch in what is now Larimer County. In 2007 she and her husband moved to Wyoming, living and working on several large cattle ranches while raising their son. They returned to Colorado in 2015 to be closer to family, and to raise their son to enjoy "small town mountain living" within a good community. Tracey wanted to pursue something that she was more passionate about and joined Grand County's Home Care services as a senior nutrition cook and part time home care provider. During the pandemic, with the kitchens closed to protect our most vulnerable residents, she adjusted to providing home care services full time to accommodate the growing need for many of our older residents. Tracey enjoys assisting the residents of Grand County and looks forward to becoming a "long-time" resident here.

Many of the clients Ann and Tracey have served over the years have been able to stay in their own homes for the duration of their lives because Home Care services help clients maintain their lives in their homes. Ann and Tracey don't just do a little laundry, cleaning, and pick up groceries; they see these people weekly, talk with them, listen to their stories, and provide the social connection that is necessary for life to maintain meaning.

The Rural Health Network's Board of Directors believes these recipients' leadership, compassion, and commitment to health best practices illustrates the innovation and community impact this award was designated to celebrate. Their efforts truly showcase that "health is more than healthcare." Congratulations to Leigha, Ann and Tracey!

Past award recipients include: Tess Riley, Grand County Library District in 2022; Brene Belew-LaDue, BSN, RN, and Outbreak of Kindness in 2021; Grand County COVID-19 Incident Management Team Command Staff in 2020; Sue Johnson, LCSW and Katie Hornbaker, CRNA in 2019; Heather Bentler, RN and John Nichols, MD in 2018; Wade Walker, RPh in 2017; Val Lind, RN in 2016; Hannah Foley, NP and Ray Jennings in 2015; Mary Jo Hargadine, RN in 2014; and Therese McElroy, RN in 2013.

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About Grand County Rural Health Network: Grand County Rural Health Network offers access, resources, and support for all of our neighbors to lead their healthiest lives. We believe everyone has the right to health care and to understand how to access that care. We are a nonprofit serving Grand and Jackson counties in Colorado. Our office phone number is (970) 725-3477 and website is <https://www.gcruralhealth.org>. Our local health resource guide can be found at <https://www.healthgrandcounty.org>