

November 29, 2018

To whom it may concern at The Business Journal:

I am writing this letter to recommend Teena Ahuja, ACHE for a Healthcare Hero recognition, and more specifically the Meritorious Service Award for excellence in administration. I have worked closely with Teena over this last year in her role as Regional Vice President of Operations for Strategic Behavioral Health.

We live in a society that has expectations that mentally ill people will be cared for, especially when there is news of a tragedy. On the other hand, support for mental health treatment is very limited. When I started my career as a psychiatrist 33 years ago, I had hopes and dreams that our societal attitude about mental health would evolve to a much better place. After all these years, it is still the case that running a psychiatric hospital is one of the most challenging and difficult jobs in all of healthcare. No matter how much effort is put into doing things right, there is constant dissatisfaction, anger and pushback coming from somewhere almost all of the time.

Over the course of my career, I have worked with dozens of hospital administrators. Unfortunately, too many of them succumb to the constant negative pressure, and they lose sight of what is best for the patients and the community. Not Teena. The psychiatric hospital that I work at currently, Willow Creek Behavioral Health in Green Bay Wisconsin, was in crisis mode a year ago. Because of poor management, the hospital had essentially no core medical staff and was relying on locums doctors for coverage. As you can imagine, locums doctors are typically retired and/or burned out physicians who provide temporary coverage to a hospital with a doctor shortage. While they show some care for individual patients, they are certainly not invested in the community. And to make it worse, they cost the hospital three times more than paying a salaried doctor and they often refuse to follow the rules and regulations of the hospital.

In her role as Regional Vice President, leaving her family behind, she came to Green Bay to make the unpopular necessary decisions to save the hospital, not just for the company, but for the patients and the community. She faced anger

and resentment from the start, including inappropriate attitudes about her gender and race. She was not intimidated, and she forged ahead. She put in the time and effort to start building relationships with the medical community in Wisconsin. Miraculously, she was able to forge enough of a relationship with local psychiatrists, that within a few months the hospital no longer needed to use locums doctors. The quality of patient care improved quickly and dramatically as a result. And the negative view the community had about the hospital has steadily improved over the course of this year.

There is a current television show depicting the idea of doing what is right for patients in spite of business concerns. Teena's brilliance allow her to achieve the balance of doing what is right for both the business and the patients and community as well. Any hospital and any community would be blessed to have Teena at the reigns. Strategic Behavioral Health is blessed to have her in charge of starting up new hospitals. There are only a couple of hospital administrators that I have worked with over the course of my career that I would say I fully trust. Teena is one of them.

She is to be admired, respected and congratulated. I pray that her complete dedication to her work over this last year has not adversely effected her health. The healthcare field needs more of her amazing leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Venard', with a stylized, flowing script.

Neil Venard, MD

Board Certified Psychiatrist