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Re: JDCAP 2018 Staff Person of the Year Nomination

This letter serves to nominate Dave Sucke, Treatment Supervisor for the JDCAP 2018 Staff Person of the Year. Dave started his career at Abraxas in 2002 and is now a vital member of the Leadership Experiential Adventure Program (LEAP), which provides adventure based programming to youth in residential treatment.

During his sixteen years with LDP, Dave has spent an incredible amount of time imparting his abiding love for nature on youth who often have not had the opportunity to experience it before. Dave is a skilled hiker, certified canoeing instructor, holds a Wilderness First Responder medical certification, is a Red Cross CPR/First Aid instructor, among other impressive credentials. But where his true gift lies is in his ability to foster a love and wonder of nature. On any given day, Dave can be found around the grounds of LDP with a group of youth searching for crystals and interesting rocks, building igloos out of snow, or reading the Lorax out loud around a camp fire in the woods.

Dave is known at LDP for his ability to use whatever skills he is teaching in a natural setting as metaphors for the experiences and challenges youth are facing. He always finds a way to incorporate the clinical concepts they are learning in treatment into his adventure based programming. Whether it's "steering your own boat" during canoeing or "trusting your compass" while hiking, Dave has helped bring about many break-through moments for youth who have struggled to internalize clinical concepts in a traditional treatment setting.

The relationships Dave has built with residents and staff through the years are perhaps his greatest accomplishment. The youth at LDP trust Dave because his investment in them is undeniable. Youth who have underachieved in different areas of their lives push themselves toward excellence under Dave's encouragement. He helps them realize they are capable of anything they apply themselves toward.

There is a story about Dave that I believe accurately summarizes what he does for the youth we work with, one that has never failed to deeply impact me when I hear it. Years ago, Dave took a group of residents on a camping trip and once the sun had set, a young man asked him what the lights were that he was seeing in the sky. When Dave explained he was seeing the stars, he closed their conversation by telling the young man, "welcome to the universe." That is exactly what Dave does for youth at LDP. He broadens their world, he shows them the simple and pure joys of nature, and he welcomes them to the universe.