



BULLETIN

Jas Giddha, radiation technologist, man of action

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Jas Giddha is justifiably proud of this bulletin board

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BY LAURA BUSHEIKIN

"My goal is pretty simple: to make a positive difference in any way I can," says Jas Giddha, a medical radiation technologist at Surrey Memorial.

This goal fuels Giddha's work, his HSA involvement, and his many other volunteer activities.

In fact, Giddha has been making "a positive difference in any way he can" since his teens. In high school in Williams Lake, where Giddha grew up, he volunteered as a peer tutor - while also graduating as a top three student in the school district, working at the local sawmill, and pursuing a black belt in Tae Kwon Do. He also coached elementary school sports teams, volunteered at William's Lake Seniors' Centre as a recreation co-ordinator, and was the students' council president at Thompson Rivers University, where he completed a year of general science and a year of business administration.

Giddha took a break from volunteering while studying for his Medical Radiation Technology diploma at BCIT. Once he graduated, in 2012, and began working at Surrey Memorial, he started looking for opportunities to get involved again. HSA felt like a good fit.

"I thought this would be a good opportunity for me to give back to my co-workers and to improve my workplace," says Giddha. He talked to his HSA chief steward and within two weeks he was a general steward.

Once he settled into his new role, Giddha set about fixing one of many problems he'd noticed soon after being hired. "When I started working at Surrey Memorial I didn't even know I was in a union. I'd ask my supervisor or manager about my rights and relied on their answers. A lot of time they'd give me incorrect information. I attended our Fraser Health new members' orientation session, but there was no union representative. It felt like we didn't matter." Clearly, there was a need for better and more consistent union orientation.

Creating change started with a conversation: "I raised the issue with our chief steward and our HSA labour relations officer. They were not aware of this problem. But we have language in the collective agreement saying that union orientation is mandatory," says Giddha. He stepped up to resolve the issue and started attending regional health authority orientations and providing orientation kits and information about HSA.

"Also, when I meet stewards at regional meetings I make sure I talk to them about orientation. Even if there is no special orientation day, as a steward you should be introducing yourself and giving members an information package."

Two years ago, Giddha became assistant chief steward. He's also a member-at-large for Region 7; constituency liaison for Surrey-Panorama, he's sat on the resolutions committee, attended the BC Federation of Labour convention, and, appropriately enough, he recently he played a role in a new video designed to welcome new members as part of an on line orientation kit now available at hsabc.org/welcome.

He also volunteers at work, as a hand hygiene auditor and a cultural hub ambassador, promoting workplace values such as accountability, teamwork, clinical excellence, compassion, employee safety, and more.

As well, Giddha is a Platinum Club Mo Bro, which is a designation given to top fundraisers in the Movember

Canada initiative. "Every November I grow a fine moustache to raise money for Prostate cancer research and awareness," says Giddha.

Somehow, Giddha ensures that all this activity still leaves time to focus on his career. In the last few years, he has earned an advanced certificate in Computed Tomography (CT) and completed the BCIT Health Leadership Program with distinction. Currently, he is working towards his certificate in Interventional Radiology and serving the role of a newly elected director on the board of the BC Association of Medical Radiation Technologists.

Looking toward the future, Giddha hopes to move into a higher leadership role. "With more of a leadership role, I'd have more tools to create a positive impact on the department and health care," he says, staying true to his goal of creating a positive difference in any way he can.

"I feel that everybody should give back somehow. That's how strong communities are made, how relationships are made. Being raised in a Sikh family, I was taught that giving back, standing up for the weak and against injustice are embedded principles. Also, no one likes a selfish person," says Giddha, with a laugh.

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