

BULLETIN

Honouring Christine Ambrose, an OH&S Champion

December 23, 2020

Every year, the HSA Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Committee awards the David Bland Award to an HSA member who has demonstrated leadership to improve occupational health and safety at their worksite and beyond.

The award was established in 2007 and honours the memory of David Bland, a vocational counsellor and HSA member from Richmond Mental Health who was killed at work by a former client. His death is an important reminder to take action to prevent workplace violence.

This year's recipient of the David Bland Memorial Award is Christine Ambrose. Ambrose has displayed an outstanding commitment to increasing physical and psychological health and safety across her chapter at the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health (QACCH), where she works as a supported child development consultant.

"I was watching the live stream of the HSA convention and I was absolutely shocked when I heard [HSA President] Val Avery begin to speak about the award and my OH&S work at Queen Alexandra," said Ambrose.

"I feel so honoured to be recognized for this work, much of it off the side of my desk. But it could not be done without the excellent steward team we have at Queen Alexandra supporting each other and our members. Their hard work, encouragement and dedication has driven me forward when the work seems overwhelming, emotionally difficult and slow," she said. She also thanked the staff team at HSA for their support, and thanked HSA for the award.

Ambrose is a long-time labour activist with HSA, and currently serves as OH&S steward, co-chair of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) Committee, chief steward, member-at-large, and Victoria Labour Council delegate.

With hard work and dedication, Ambrose has advocated for her co-workers on a variety of complex OH&S issues, including workplace violence and physical environment hazards. Her collaborative and strategic approach has resulted in tangible gains at her worksite, including the creation of a JOHS subcommittee at Ledger House In-patient Child and Youth Mental Health Program. This step forward has created the space for HSA members in the program to be actively involved in the prevention and mitigation of occupational health and safety risks unique to their program.

"OH&S work takes lots of time and persistence, and often there is no quick fix. It is keeping the important safety issues that affect our members on the JOHS Committee table, going back to the regulations, and never giving up that brings the safety changes, goals and results that we want to see for our members," she said.

According to Ambrose's co-worker and Occupational Therapist Teresa Winberg-Phillips, Ambrose is a "caring spirit" who is always thinking about the wellness of her co-workers.

"Christine is always reminding us to go for a walk, take a break, eat healthy, and stop looking at screens so

much - not just for our own health, but to be the best for our clients. She's increased all of our awareness of health and safety and is a true leader by example."

Physiotherapist Victoria MacAulay, who works alongside Ambrose in AQCCH's School Age Program, said Ambrose promotes self-care and educates her co-worker about how to reduce mental, emotional, and physical stress. "Christine lends a listening ear to her office mates when we need to debrief on difficult conversations, dealing with direct or secondary trauma or violence prevention. She is a great resource and mentor," she said.

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