

I have the very enviable position of representing both the Providence Health Care Community Board of Directors as well as Columbia Surgical Specialists as we address Dr. David Brown. We are gathered here this morning to present an exemplary performance award from the Providence Board to commemorate the care provided by Dr. Brown to one of the more vulnerable gentleman in our community, exhibiting the true meaning of the Providence Mission in Spokane. We are fortunately witnessed to excellent care provided by a very large number of practitioners, however, from time to time, the senior administration is made aware of special circumstances that truly illustrates the core values that drive our ministry in this community.

Dr. Brown did emergency surgery for a man with a bowel obstruction. This man is homeless and stays with his dog and all his belongings underneath the freeway near the skate park. Within 4 hours of surgery, the patient wanted to leave AGAINST MEDICAL ADVICE and the nursing staff notified Dr. Brown. He went up to the ward, spoke to the patient and learned that this man wanted to leave, to be sure that his dog and belongings were safe and protected down at the skate park. Dr. Brown threw on his jacket and walked to the skate park to check on the dog and belongings. After asking around a bit, he found both the dog and the belongings under the watchful eye of another homeless gentleman and took pictures with his phone. Back at the hospital, he showed those pictures to the patient, reassuring him that everything was safe that he could stay in the hospital for the remainder of his recovery after surgery.

Dr. Tim Bax made this nomination after he spoke with David in the surgical changing room and found him dripping wet. He had just returned to the hospital and simply stated that he had “underestimated the rain.” This prompted a few more questions and Tim gradually pulled out the rest of the story.

As people of Providence, we nurture the spiritual, physical and emotional well-being of one another and those we serve. We embrace those that are suffering. We reach out to people in need and give comfort as Jesus did.

We welcome uniqueness and honor the dignity of every person. We communicate openly and we act with integrity. We develop the talents and abilities of one another.

We believe everyone has the right to the basic goods of the earth. We strive to remove the causes of oppression. We join with others to work for the common good and to advocate for social justice.

It doesn't take much of a leap to recognize these core Providence values in David Brown's simple acts. We hope that all of us can fulfill these values illustrated in the Providence Mission statement as we carry-on our work of healing and caring.

Perhaps the most difficult leap, is to remove ourselves from the comforts of our routine and social structure and see the humanity and value in a man's life under the bridge with a dog as one of his most valued companions. I want to share another little story about the importance of that bond. My wife, CariJean and I adopted a four and a half-year-old child from a Chinese orphanage almost 8 years ago. We have learned that orphanage raised children never bond in the same way that a child nurtured from birth bonds with their caregivers. One of the accustomed techniques to promote bonding is the use of a pet. We bought a small mutt dog last summer and worked on the adventure of pet ownership in the eyes of a preteen. Sassy was Anna's responsibility and her nearly constant companion. It was obvious that the bond between Sassy and Anna was growing very solidly, but difficult to see Anna bond with

Sassy. Unfortunately, just after New Year's, the dog was mauled by 2 coyotes and managed to escape whimpering at the front door. Anna was very shocked and frightened by this bloodied little animal, however, didn't show any obvious anxiety or marked distress (this is isn't to say that our boys didn't freak out and lose a fair amount sleep.) Sassy went to Pullman, had a trauma laparotomy and rectal repair and spent the next week in their ICU. Postop day 6, I took the kids to see Sassy as she was recovering. Still very weak, this little dog struggled to her feet to move closer to Anna, obviously elated to see her. At that point, there was a true visible response in Anna. Not knowing the feeling of bonding or attachment, Anna witnessed this dog, who clearly illustrated the same emotions we hope to create for her to experience. None of us know the background of the homeless gentleman starring in David's story. However, I cannot imagine that this same very common bonding experience is not a central factor in creating this dynamic.

David Brown grew up with dogs in Ortonville, MN and Larimore, ND, both farming communities of less than 2500 people. He describes small town America more reminiscent of Mayberry than a skateboard park under the freeway, but he obviously learned the value of compassion and viewing other people through the same lens regardless of their social status or address. David has now added dramatically to the toolbox he carries to assist other people, caring that begins with a warm hand and gentle gaze.

Mother Teresa helps to ground the technology and training that we have in the context of simple caring. She tells a story of walking past an open drain and catching a glimpse of something moving in it. She investigated and found a dying man whom she took back to a home where he could die in love and peace. 'I live like an animal in the streets,' he told her. 'Now, I will die like an angel.'

William Penn wrote "I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again. David's level of compassion for a homeless patient, whom many would disregard, and his willingness to walk down to the community of homeless people at the skate park to find his dog and belongings, demonstrates his desire to put others before himself. That level of humility, I am embarrassed to say, is a rarity amongst surgeons. Together, we all need to answer the call of every person we serve: Know me, care for me, ease my way. I am very happy that David is both a member of our surgical group and a member of the Providence medical staff. Thank you for coming.