



FEBRUARY 2010

## Community Information Staff Focus

**Tanya J. Riggs**

*TCRHCC Performance Improvement Director*

My name is Tanya J. Riggs, my colleagues know me as T.J. I'm Mexican Navajo born for Edgewater. My maternal grandparents are Red Streak Running into Water and my paternal grandparents are Bitterwater. I was born and raised in Tuba City. My family and I reside at Moenave. My husband is Wayland and we have three boys, Shannon, Stade, and Cooper. They are my biggest supporters.



I have a Bachelor in Science in Health Sciences and recently completed my Masters in Administration. Both degrees are from Northern Arizona University.

### *Why did you choose the career you're in now?*

As the Performance Improvement Director, I am a healthcare administrator. My career choice was based on my determination to improve the healthcare services provided to my people at TCRHCC. We provide quality health care services and I always wanted to be part of a team that shared my vision.

I am focused on developing a robust quality improvement program and making positive changes within tribal healthcare. When I was younger and seeking employment, I faced the same decision many young Navajos face when seeking employment on the reservation – the choice to work for the government, tribe, or state. At that time, TCRHCC was a govern-

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# CARDIAC REHAB

## And invaluable service at TCRHCC

*Restoring Patients to vital, healthy lives through monitored exercise, doctor care, and lifestyle change.*

**L**iving in Sipaulovi Village on Second Mesa his whole life, Leonard Talaswaima's (63) story is all too common. He didn't think much about his heart health until a significant medical event changed all that – he had a heart attack.

His life first changed when he was rushed to the emergency room at Winslow Memorial Hospital ten years ago, feeling terrible with extreme thirst. His blood sugar level was too high and he was diagnosed with diabetes. He spent three days in the hospital receiving treatment.

Two years later (2002), Talaswaima was participating in an important Hopi ceremony. He felt ill with what he thought was extreme heartburn, but felt he had to continue the ceremony. He didn't know the symptoms of a heart attack or how serious his situation was. He was having a mild heart attack. He landed in the University of Arizona Medical Center in Tucson where a stent was placed in a blocked artery that delivers blood to the heart. (*A stent is explained on page 2.*) Talaswaima finally realized that he was in a serious situation with his heart.

This event would eventually lead to a journey to better health and an awareness of fitness and better dietary habits, but not before more serious trouble.

Talaswaima would take medication for his heart, but he felt his life was greatly affected. He knew he had to be more active but was afraid about further heart trouble. He kept working but was always afraid of exerting himself to much. He would have check-ups every three months with Dr. Randall Coffey at TCRHCC every three months. He would also learn to change his eating habits.

Talaswaima grew up in the Hopi tradition – a lifestyle of farming and looking after one's health. The Hopi have a long cultural history of health awareness, walking and running. Talaswaima was a runner when he was young. He served three years in the Army beginning in 1967 at age 21 and spent a year in Viet Nam. His military service included rigorous physical activity.

Returning home, Talaswaima married and raised five children in an active family lifestyle, encouraging physical fitness as a family, participating in 5K and 10K runs throughout Northern Arizona.



*Leonard Talaswaima on the treadmill at TCRHCC's Cardiac Rehab. Department, on his favorite exercise unit – the treadmill.*

"Being fit is going to give you a long life," he'd tell his children. Talaswaima's mother had diabetes, took care of herself, and lived into her 80s, but he lost brothers to the complications of diabetes.

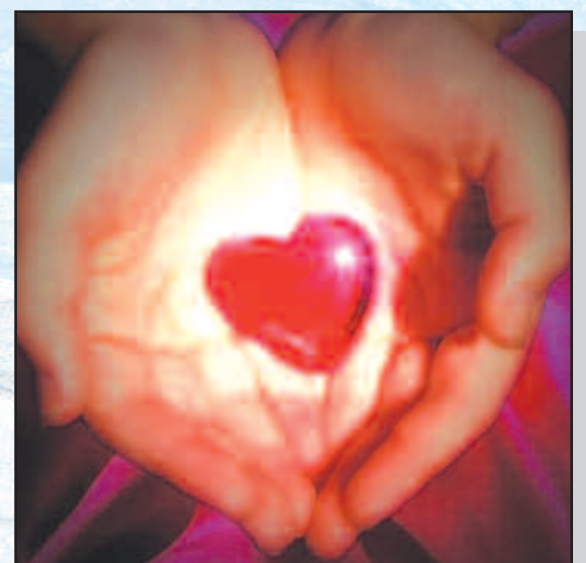
**~ He didn't know the symptoms of a heart attack or how serious his situation was. ~**

*(See symptoms of a heart attack on page 2.)*

In May 2009, tests revealed advancing problems in the heart and Talaswaima was again sent to U. of A. Medical Center where he underwent triple bypass surgery. (*See page 2.*) He was in the hospital for a week then began an extensive recovery period that would last over six months.

In August he was referred to the TCRHCC Cardiac Rehabilitation Program – the first of its kind in all of IHS. "It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I'm

*Continued on page 2.*



**February is National Heart Health Month**



**No Excuses,** *Continued from page 1.*

very fortunate the cardiac rehab is right here in Tuba City,” remarked Talaswaima. He committed himself to recovering and getting fit and healthy in order to live a long life.

Talaswaima would participate in rehab administered by the Cardiac Rehab team three times per week for 12 weeks. Since he had a driving learner’s permit, Talaswaima’s youngest son got a lot of driving practice taking his dad on the 60 mile round trip from Second Mesa.

The team tests a patient’s abilities in a carefully monitored approach. In designing and implementing an exercise program for each individual patient the stresses on the body are carefully monitored.



*Leonard Talaswaima – a changed lifestyle and feeling great.*

“I told them I used to be a runner, so the goal we set was to run again.”

During the course of his program, Talaswaima would jog on the treadmill.

Talaswaima praises the Cardiac Rehab team for their work with him and their dedication.

“I feel good now, and much more motivated – motivated to continue.”

The rehab program took place from August to December.

When at home, Talaswaima utilized the Hopi Wellness Center, just five miles from his home. When he’s in Tuba City he utilizes the TC Wellness Center. He exercises at home as well.

Talaswaima credits his wife Rhonda for helping to keep him on a healthy track, along with the nutrition education and counseling he received at TCRHCC.

“I had fallen into not taking care of myself and not paying attention to my diet for a long time, so I had to re-learn so much such as what healthy portions looked like,” said Talaswaima. “Now I read a lot of labels, we eat more fruit and vegetables, and I now realize water is the best. Water is life. I drink a lot of water instead of unhealthy drinks.”

“We’ve adopted a much more healthy lifestyle as a family. You can’t throw everything away – everyone craves a steak dinner once in a while, but as a treat, certainly not all the time.”

Talaswaima decided to retire to spend more time with his family and do the things he enjoys and return to some of the more traditional ways. He’s looking forward to more farming – planting corn, beans and melons in the spring. He said he will remain very active in his community’s sacred ceremonies. His prayers are for the benefit of all people, the environment, animals, rain, and the good things in life.

“A person needs to pay attention to healthy habits on a daily basis, and total wellness consists of body, mind and spirit,” explains Talaswaima. “Mental and emotional health is as important as physical. One cannot lose their spirituality – believing in something more powerful than self.”

Talaswaima prays each day to the moon and stars, saying “they never fail us and are always there.” Understanding the entire cycle of life and the environment and “praying for rain and snow is how we have endured as a people.”

Talaswaima thanks TCRHCC for helping him to have his life back with a big ‘thank you’ to the staff.



**Cardiac Rehab Team:** (left to right) Tennell Gilmore, PT; Melissa Lytell, PT; Leonard Talaswaima; Aaron Jones, PT; and Joette Walters, RN.

**Bypass Surgery:** Coronary artery bypass surgery, also coronary artery bypass graft surgery, also simply called bypass surgery is a surgical procedure performed to relieve angina and reduce the risk of death from coronary artery disease. Arteries or veins from elsewhere in the patient’s body are grafted to the coronary arteries to bypass atherosclerotic narrowings and improve the blood supply to the coronary circulation supplying heart muscle.

**Stent:** A stent is a wire metal mesh tube used to prop open an artery during angioplasty. The stent is collapsed to a small diameter and put over a balloon catheter. It’s then moved into the area of an arterial blockage. When the balloon is inflated, the stent expands, locks in place and holds the artery open. The stent stays in the artery permanently, holds it open, improves blood flow to the heart muscle and relieves symptoms (usually chest pain).

**Arterial Disease – Atherosclerosis** is the condition in which an artery wall thickens as the result of a build-up of fatty materials such as cholesterol. It is a syndrome affecting arterial blood vessels, a chronic inflammatory response in the walls of arteries. It is commonly referred to as a hardening or furring of the arteries.

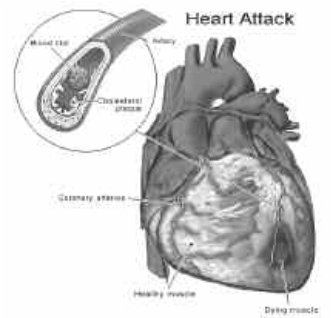
**Plaque** is made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium, and other substances found in the blood. (See cholesterol on page 4.)

**Stroke** is caused by the same plaque or clots in blood vessels but it is when blood supply is cut off to a portion of the brain. May cause paralysis, damage to any organ or body function, or death.

**SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK**

The five major symptoms of a heart attack are –

- Chest discomfort. discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. including pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs: These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.



*A heart attack occurs when a clot blocks a blood vessel that delivers blood and nutrients to a part of the heart muscle and a portion begins to die.*

*It is important to recognize the signs of a heart attack and to act immediately by calling 911. A person’s chances of surviving a heart attack are increased if emergency treatment is given to the victim as soon as possible.*

## Sacred Peaks Health Center (SPHC) Flagstaff

*Watch for Grand Opening Details.*

*The new Flagstaff Sacred Peaks Health Center is located in the Park Santa Fe Shopping Center at 3480 E. Route 66.*



## HEALTH PROMOTION/DISEASE PREVENTION

# What is PreDiabetes?

*Have you ever been told your blood sugar level is borderline? Could you have PreDiabetes?*

Prediabetes, sometimes called “borderline diabetes” occurs when the body does not respond properly to the hormone insulin and therefore cannot keep blood glucose (sugar) levels within a normal range. Blood sugar is higher than normal, but not high enough to be diabetes. Some of the food we eat turns into blood glucose, or sugar, during the normal process of digesting our food.

The bloodstream transports glucose to all cells in your body to be used for energy. Normally, the pancreas produces insulin, which allows the sugar in the blood to enter the body’s cells. When your body’s tissues are not responding properly to the insulin, it becomes difficult for cells to get glucose from the blood for energy. This is called insulin resistance. When this happens, the cell cannot use the glucose, which then remains in the blood. The buildup of sugar in the blood causes abnormally high levels of blood sugar. Over time, if not treated, prediabetes may get worse and lead to type-2 diabetes and other serious complications.

## Symptoms

Prediabetes is most often a silent condition with no symptoms. However, certain risk factors, such as obesity or lack of exercise, may put you at a higher risk of developing prediabetes. If you have any of the risk factors for prediabetes, which are similar to the risk of type-2 diabetes, ask your health care provider whether you should be tested.

## What happens?

Being diagnosed with prediabetes is a warning sign that you are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Although you may still be healthy, moderate and persistent elevated blood sugar levels greatly increase your risk for getting diabetes and/or heart and blood vessel (cardiovascular) disease.

**You can help prevent or delay the onset of type 2-diabetes by doing all of the following:**

- Get your blood sugar level tested
- Limit sweets
- Get regular exercise
- Limit the amount of fat you eat
- Lose some weight (if overweight)

These are healthy habits you can initiate and help to lower your risk of getting diabetes or any other complications. Are you interested in improving your overall health, lose some weight, feel better, and learn new ways of balancing your life? The TCRHCC Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) offers Lifestyle Balance Classes designed to help you meet your personal health and wellness goals. For more information on how you can prevent or delay the onset of diabetes, see or contact DPP at (928) 283-1429/1426.

If you have Internet access, go to the following web address to read an article on Preventing Diabetes: Small Changes Have Big Payoff: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122104219&sc=emaf>

## Staff Focus, Continued from page 1.

ment facility so I chose to work for the government.

My first introduction to TCRHCC was provided by the tribe; they provided the funding and selected my work site, which was the Office of Environmental Health (OEH), where I worked as an Environmental Health Technician. Once I completed the tribal student work program, I returned to school.

In 1999, I began working at TCRHCC as a part-time Switchboard Operator. My journey continued as an Automation Clerk in OEH. I moved to Patient Financial Services (formerly the Business Office). It was there my TCRHCC career advanced. I was a Program Assistant, Supervisory Accounting Technician, and Deputy Patient Financial Services Director.

## What made you decide you wanted to go to graduate school?

I wanted to make a difference at TCRHCC and felt that if I broaden my educational experience, I would be able to contribute more to the organization. In addition, our organization offers a tuition reimbursement program as a means of encouraging employees to further their education.

## In what ways has your previous experience prepared you for graduate study?

I have a good work ethic and I’m very persistent. If I don’t understand an issue or situation, I’ll research and evaluate to find an answer or solution. This has contributed to both my professional and graduate career.

## What do you believe was your greatest challenge during your graduate studies?

The greatest challenge was time management. Life is full of demands, family, work, school, etc. My family and I had to make many sacrifices since I was committed to completing my graduate studies. And I was fortunate to have a supportive husband who never made a negative comment.

## Describe any research project you’ve worked on.

*What was the purpose of the project and what was your role?*

I had to work on many projects and one of the most difficult was in my Contemporary Developments in Global Healthcare class. We had to study the effects of globalization on healthcare. One challenging project required the selection of a pandemic and a country, study the healthcare laws of the country, and develop an action plan that addressed the socioeconomic factors to obtain provisions that addressed or help alleviate the pandemic.

## How will you be able to make a contribution to this field?

The current trend in healthcare is focused on continuous quality improvement and patient safety. Institutions in healthcare quality are now applying business management models for the implementation of quality improvement projects. I feel that I can make a positive contribution to my organization and field by applying these concepts.

## What are your career goals like now after graduate school? How will your graduate studies help you achieve your goals?

My goals are to further develop the Performance Improvement Department and to become a Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality. I am also determined to broaden my clinical knowledge of the many specialty and sub-specialty services we provide at TCRHCC. My graduate studies have helped me

## John Yazzie Retires

After 35 years of service, John Yazzie retired from TCRHCC at the end of December 2009. Most recently, John worked in the Procurement Department after years of service in the Finance Department and Personnel. He began working at the TCIMC Laboratory from 1973 to 1975 for the Navajo Nation’s Strep Disease Control Program.



John was born in the old hospital across the street from present-day TCRHCC, one of 13 children. He grew up going to school and living with some wonderful foster parents in both Utah and California on several farms and ranches.

From 1969 to 1971, John served in the U.S.

Army in Germany and Vietnam. Upon leaving active duty, John worked with the Navajo Nation Veterans Office serving servicemen, veterans and their dependents.

John’s daughter Robin and son Samuel both live in Flagstaff. Robin has nearly finished the nursing program at NAU and Samuel is an electrician.

John’s plans for retirement so far are to continue to work on his house, do some traveling, and spend more time with family and friends, and just relax.



establish a professional foundation on which I can continue to grow.

## What skills do you bring to TCRHCC? How will you help others in his or her work areas?

I am very fortunate to have obtained managerial and leadership experience, which will benefit TCRHCC. I am dedicated to motivating and promoting individuals who are interested in career advancement. A good work ethic can help you achieve your goals.

## Do you plan to continue with your studies after taking a break?

I would love to seek a doctorate degree however my main focus is my children. They are still young and they are a priority in my life and my husband’s. Any parent knows that our greatest accomplishment is not what we achieve but what our children do.

## What do you NOW do in your spare time?

My family and I are avid horseback riders and big fans of rodeo. My my spare time will likely be spent making sandwiches or barbecuing at junior rodeos. There are also plenty of books I would like to read.



**Contact Community Relations  
with your staff and community news.  
(928) 283-2993**



T.J. Riggs with her children, (left to right), Cooper (4), Shannon (13), and Stade (9).





**TUBA CITY REGIONAL HEALTH CARE CORPORATION**  
**Main Telephone Switchboard (928) 283-2501**  
**Emergencies: Call Navajo Nation Police (928) 283-3111**

**Adult Walk-In Clinic 283-2669**  
 • Sign In: Monday - Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
 (After hours go to Emergency Room)

**Family Medicine Clinic 283-2458**  
 • Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 (Some evening hours available.)

**Pediatric Clinic 283-2679**  
 • **Walk-in Patients**  
 Monday - Thursday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
 • **Appointments:**  
 Monday - Wednesday & Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 Thursday: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

**Outpatient Pharmacy 283-2754**  
 • Monday - Thursday: 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
 Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.  
 • **24-Hour Pharmacy refill line: 1-866-976-5941**  
**Refill Pharmacy** is open seven days a week from  
**8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.**  
 Prescriptions ready for pick-up with no waiting  
 time for customers who call in 24 hours in advance.

**Dental Clinic Tuba City: 283-2672**  
**Cameron: 213-8161**  
 • **Tuba City**  
 Monday - Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 (Thursday afternoons - urgent care only)  
 • **Cameron**  
 Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday:  
 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

**Diabetes/Internal Medicine 283-2689**  
 • Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 (Some evening hours available by appointment only.)

**Diabetes Education Program 283-2895**  
 • **Appointments and walk-ins**  
 Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 - Abdul Baco: 283-2895 - Ruby Whitethorne: 283-2963  
 - Health Technicians: 283-2693

**Ear/Nose Throat (ENT) Clinic 283-2974**  
 • Monday - Wednesdays: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 (By referral only)

**Environmental Health 283-2844**  
 • **Car Seat Day**  
 Every Thursday: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**Eye Clinic 283-2748**  
 • Monday - Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**HP/DP**  
 • Health Promotion Program 283-1429/1420  
 • Diabetes Prevention Program 283-1429/1420

**Mental Health 283-2831**  
 • Monday - Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

**OB/Gyn Clinic (Women's Health) 283-2460**  
 • Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.,  
 except Tuesday start at 9:30 a.m.

**Occupational Therapy/ Speech Therapy 283-2593/2594**  
 • Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**Orthopedic Clinic/Surgical 283-2660**  
**Orthopedic Clinic**  
 • Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.,  
 Thursday: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
**Urology, Podiatry & Surgery**  
 • Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 (Call for specific clinic times)

**Physical Therapy 283-2659**  
 • Monday - Wednesday & Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.,  
 Thursday: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

**Respiratory Therapy 283-2596/2572**  
 • Everyday 24 hours a day

**Cardiac Rehabilitation 283-2960**  
 • Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

**Extended Hours (Evening Clinics)**  
 Selected nights, Monday - Thursday  
 • Diabetes Prevention: 283-2689  
 • Diabetes/Internal Medicine: 283-2689

**Urgent Care Clinic**  
 • Monday - Friday: 4:00 p.m. - 12:00 midnight  
 • For patients in need of medical care after normal,  
 daily Walk-in hours. Go to the Emergency  
 Department to be screened and registered – shorter  
 waiting times for less severe, non-life threatening  
 medical needs. No appointment necessary.

**Family Wellness Center 283-3058**  
 Monday - Friday: 6:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
 Saturday: 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Sunday: Closed  
 Closed national and tribal holidays.

**CONTRACT HEALTH SERVICES (CHS)**  
**Toll-Free Telephone: 1-866-944-7601**  
**Call the TCRHCC Contract Health Office before you seek non-emergency services or appointments at any medical facility or with any medical provider other than TCRHCC. You are not automatically covered for payment with Contract Health Funds!**  
**In the event of emergency medical care (severe or life-threatening) away from TCRHCC or any other IQS/638 facility you have 72 hours to call and notify Contract Health to begin the process to qualify for payment.**  
**Failure to follow CHS procedures may mean you are fully responsible for all charges.**

**The Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation** consists of a 73-bed acute care referral hospital and integrated health system. It provides a broad range of outpatient specialized care services in addition to inpatient care. The patient population includes Navajo, Hopi and San Juan Southern Paiute.



# What is Cholesterol?

**Cholesterol is a type of fat made by your body.**  
 Cholesterol (kuh-LES-ter-all) travels through your body in your blood vessels. Your body needs some cholesterol to stay healthy.

**There are 2 types.**

- **LDL (bad) cholesterol** sticks to the walls of your blood vessels. Too much hurts your body.
- **HDL (good) cholesterol** protects your body. It helps keep LDL (bad) cholesterol from building up in your blood vessels.

**Too much cholesterol causes problems.**  
 Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs. If you eat too many fatty foods, your body gets too much cholesterol. This extra cholesterol sticks to the walls of the blood vessels that go to your heart and brain.

Over time, the blood vessels can get blocked. This can cause a **heart attack** or a **stroke** (brain attack).

**What do the cholesterol numbers mean?**  
 Your health care provider checks your cholesterol with a blood test. The numbers that are healthy for you depend on your risk factors. Ask your provider when you should have your cholesterol checked.


**Your LDL Goal – Lower is better.**

- Under 100 is best.
- Under 130 is good.
- 130 - 159 is almost too high.
- 160 or over is unhealthy.

**Your LDL Goal – Lower is better.**

- Over 60 is best.
- Over 40 is good.
- Under 40 is unhealthy.

**What can you do?**  
 Take small steps. You can lower your bad cholesterol and raise your good cholesterol.



- Be at a healthy weight.
- Eat low-fat, low-calorie foods.
- Be active for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Stop smoking.
- Limit alcohol.

**Ask your provider or dietician about more ways to keep your cholesterol levels healthy.**

Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation  
**Healthy Directions**  
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 Writing, photography, design and production by Peak Publishing, Flagstaff, Arizona.