



### **Recognizing 2025 Rhapsody Healthcare Heroes**

**Award nominee: Spirit River Pharmacists, Dionne Hjelsing/Divyang Patel**

**Community: Spirit River**

A pair of pharmacists in Spirit River navigated through challenging healthcare times by working cooperatively for the community's benefit.

Pharmacists Dionne Hjelsing and Divyang Patel were recently nominated for a 2025 RhPAP Rhapsody Healthcare Heroes Award with backing from the community, its leaders, and health professionals.

"They exemplify the true spirit of collaboration, dedication, and innovation that rural healthcare demands," writes Tammy Yaremko, chair of the Central Peace Attraction and Retention Committee.

Spirit River is located about 500 km northwest of Edmonton in the Central Peace region.

"In the north, providing healthcare requires out-of-the-box thinking and a shared vision, and these two embody that every day."

Hjelsing has worked in rural healthcare since 2010, joining the Central Peace Health Complex in 2017 as a hospital-based pharmacist. She volunteers with local sports programs.

Patel works as a community pharmacist. He started working at a local drug store in 2014 and later opened his own pharmacy and has the ability to prescribe prescriptions. He was instrumental in bringing a physical therapy service to Spirit River.

Physicians from the Central Peace Health Centre are appreciative of the pharmacists' support, both in their individual roles and also in their collaboration to ensure quality healthcare is at the forefront in the community.

"Our robust pharmacy team has also been a great asset in the recruitment and retention of new physicians to our area," says Dr. Eva Kitagawa, Dr. Danae Wolfaart, Dr. Adefolake Olaniyan, and Dr. Deanna Funk.

"We luckily doubled from a team of two, to a team of four physicians this past year. We could confidently recruit, naming our strong pharmacy team as a major support for our new physician recruits."

Rachelle Piscopo, a resident of Spirit River, says the pharmacists are not only valued for their work, but also their contributions within the community.

"Their commitment to improving lives, both in and out of the pharmacy, is a testament to their character and the values they uphold," says Piscopo.

"We are very grateful for their presence in our community and the positive difference they make every day."

Yaremko, who also serves as mayor of the Town of Spirit River, agrees.

"The services provided, and relationships fostered by the pharmacy team are invaluable to the region," she says, noting the pharmacists are known for their teamwork in ensuring the best healthcare for all.

"We appreciate their efforts and feel by nominating them, it is a way of saying 'thank you' for their services and continued dedication to our communities."

[Click here to view the 2025 Rhapsody Nominees.](#)