

## Employee Spotlight

### Diana Ekman Assistant Health Director



Each month, Town Administrator Patrice Garvin highlights a single employee whose hard work and dedication exemplifies what it means to be an employee for the Town of Belmont. In the Employee Spotlight series, we are able to shine a light on incredible employee achievements and provide an opportunity to introduce and recognize Belmont Town employees throughout the Belmont community.

In this month's Bulletin, Town Administrator Garvin would like to recognize Diana Ekman, Assistant Director of the Belmont Health Department. Over her 5 years, Diana has been a friendly face throughout the Belmont community and is an important member of the Health Department's team.

Diana describes her role as working on behalf of the public addressing various areas under the "umbrella of environmental health." Diana often finds herself doing crucial health inspections at Belmont's grocery stores, restaurants, homes and even swimming pools! No matter where she is, she strives to ensure that the projects, events, and food experienced by Belmont community members are healthy and safe.

Belmont Health Department Director, Wes Chin, describes Diana as a "dedicated team player and problem solver," and those who know her are likely to agree. Diana approaches public health with professionalism and determination to work toward solutions and has become a go-to person on topics and concerns of public health.

Diana began working in local public health in Philadelphia, PA and then Framingham, MA. She cultivated a passion for public health policy through everyday interactions with residents. Impacting and implementing local public policy became her goal, and the Assistant Health Director position provides the perfect match.

Diana's position does not come without its challenges. Diana explains, "one of the biggest challenges I face is encountering so many different situations with varying circumstances where there might not always be a good or easy answer." Diana explained that effectively addressing this challenge is a "skill" that is always developing and improving. She approaches these situations with her expertise and knowledge coupled with an ability to communicate and explain the very specific codes, regulations or by-laws that apply to any given situation.

"We want people to know that we are all on the same team of good community members and good neighbors who have a shared goal of moving the ball forward to ensure that Belmont is a healthy and safe place to live and do business."

Diana finds motivation in the challenges that she faces and the new problems to be solved with something new to learn each day. The greatest joy she finds in her work comes from her interactions with business owners and residents. To Diana and the Health Department team, they are just "doing [their] small part to create a healthy community." When considering her accomplishments so far, Diana gives a smile and can't decide on just one but instead sees her work as a mosaic of individual personal stories and memories. She explains, "there are so many examples that might seem like little things if I mentioned them, but they had big impacts for the individuals or businesses and that's pretty special."

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic was a big accomplishment that Diana credits to the efforts of the entire team at the Belmont Health Department, from organizing community vaccine clinics, to discovering new ways of communicating with the public, to responding to ever unfolding challenges and changing circumstances. The work and coordination of local health departments everywhere played a large part in helping to steer us all toward better conditions.

Looking ahead, Diana is excited about what is to come from expanding services to strengthening existing and expanding new regional partnerships. Additionally, she and the Health Department team are going to continue working on ways to make public health information and best practices more accessible. As Diana says "When things are going well and the community is healthy, public health can be almost invisible, but to keep things that way we need to make sure that we continue to have resources and information available."

Outside of her work for the Health Department, Diana enjoys hiking, cooking and gardening. Beyond getting exercise by enjoying the great outdoors on a scenic hike, Diana is planning on taking part in a road race this May!