

DIVERSITY WORKS

APRIL 2019 VOLUME 9 ISSUE 2

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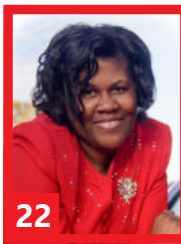
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MISSION AND VISION

OUR MISSION

Diversity Works© is a magazine for the socially conscious and responsible worker at any level. The magazine has a commitment to be a showcase for organizations and their individuals that represent best practices in diversity of the workforce and supplier choices. We feature articles on those displaying inclusionary vision in and for the marketplace and who can both encourage and provide role models to others. Diversity Works©, via its editorial content and other signature promotions, will be a vessel to inform the world about appreciating and accepting the physical, social, cultural and other differences in one another and promote better outcomes through interacting with those unlike ourselves. Our mission is to promote the concept "community" in the workplace, to stimulate literacy and save the planet via recycling printed matter.

OUR VISION

To create a more collaborative world wherein we practice diversity on a more balanced basis, to experience a return to reading and to reuse the ink and paper products that our reading materials are printed with.

Spanish Version

Translated by: Yadira Santiago, MA

NUESTRA MISIÓN

Diversity Works© es una revista dirigida a trabajadores, de cualquier nivel, socialmente conscientes y responsables. La revista tiene el compromiso de ser una vitrina para las organizaciones y sus individuos que representan las mejores prácticas en cuanto a diversidad de las opciones de plantilla laboral y proveedores.

Nuestros artículos muestran una visión inclusiva en y para el mercado; que a su vez estimulen y promuevan un modelo de conducta para los demás. Diversity Works©, a través de su contenido editorial y sus promociones de firma, será una fuente que informará al mundo sobre la apreciación y aceptación de diferencias físicas, sociales, culturales que promuevan mejores resultados a través de la interacción con los que son distintos a nosotros. Nuestra misión es promover el concepto de "comunidad" en el lugar de trabajo para estimular el conocimiento y salvar al planeta a través del reciclaje de material impreso.

NUESTRA VISIÓN

Crear un mundo más colaborativo en el que se practique la diversidad de una manera más equilibrada; experimentar un regreso a la lectura, así como la reutilización de los productos de tinta y papel con los que se imprimen nuestros materiales.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S HEART

RAISED AWARENESS, JOY RENEWED



*Dawn "D.A." Goodwin
Editor*

Beach weddings, family vacations, cookouts, camping trips...tis the season for enjoying everything outdoors. That's right. Springtime is in full effect, and if you know me, you know I'm equally excited about this season, like others, and I hope you are too. But in our excitement, let's remember those who aren't able to enjoy this season. Maybe they lost a close relative last spring, or maybe they can't enjoy the fresh, spring air because of allergies. And what about the ones who appear to have it all together socially who might be battling the toughest fights privately. Remember, we can't

always assume everything is okay. So now's the time, more than ever, to check on those we love and care about to make sure they have every tool, great or small, to help them gain every ounce of joy possible. And that's what this issue is about.

My hope is that you close the last page of this magazine feeling inspired and equipped with a renewed sense of consciousness, recognition, appreciation, and knowledge. In other words, I want you to leave with awareness. But exactly how will we raise awareness this issue? Well, it will depends. For instance, we bring consciousness about several things affecting your life, like finances. State Farm agent Starlee Alexander is here to help you choose the right auto insurance coverage, and Dr. John D'Ambrosio of the Coastal Carolina Better Business Bureau warns you about scammers that rob consumers and businesses out of billions of dollars. But D'Ambrosio teaches you how to spot those thieves and report them. In other financial news, New York Life explains why having a financial strategy is so important. Then Anderson Brothers Bank brings recognition, which is another synonym for awareness. The Hartsville Chamber recognizes the 2018 Will Woodham Business Person of the Year along with the Rotary Citizen of the Year. To find out whom the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce has named winner of the Small Business of the Year Award, you have to keep reading.

We take the time to recognize those whom businesses and individuals in our community want to show appreciation, which is also synonymous with awareness. We ask you to join us in appreciating volunteers in our community whose strenuous work does not go unnoticed by others. Les Echols brings the story of Brian Davison, director of sales for the Florence Center, and the director of the SC chapter of MAAD. Tonya Sumpter Huell from the City of Lake City discusses Lake City's Round-Up program for volunteers, and the City of Darlington thanks Gloria Pridgen for 40 years of service. Then clients take the time to give thanks to Dr. Jennifer Evans of Eastern Carolina Medicine.

Of course, we have other health-related news that don't disappoint. HopeHealth welcomes its new providers and announces additional patient services. And did you know that there are hidden dangers for the heart in women treated for breast cancer? Prepare to discover the truth, just like I did. Then Dr. Vincent Scott from MUSC Health teaches us about pelvic organ prolapse, and discover which hospital's physicians are the first in South Carolina to perform a new treatment for colon cancer. Learn about Magnolia Health Care's available membership practice services, but you'll have to keep turning those pages to see who was named Certified Diabetes Educator of the Year.

Speaking of educators, we celebrate with those named Teacher of

the Year at the Florence Career Center as well as Florence, Marion, Sumter, Lee and Darlington School Districts. Other schools we hear from include HGTC, FMU, FDTC, CCU and more. We thank them all for sharing their endless knowledge with the people of our community.

How about gaining knowledge about fun social activities coming to a town near you? Lake City's Artfields 2019 is quickly approaching. Then the Greater Lake City Community Resource Center announces that applications are now being accepted for the second annual "Next Up" Summer Internship Experience. You must read on to find out why employees of Honda of SC are so pumped to once again celebrate Earth Day, and I'm personally excited about an upcoming lip sync battle in our area although you definitely won't catch me as a contestant. But, for all the 90s R&B fans like myself, you will, however, catch me in the crowd singing and dancing when the hit music group Boys II Men comes to Florence. I hope to see you there!

For our cover story, I hope you join with us in showing appreciation to Charlie Blakely of Finklea Law Firm in Florence. Stick with us to see why he's called "the complete package." And I wonder if you can guess what career path he would have chosen if not the legal field. Even as one of few African American male attorneys in our area, Blakely is here to share with you his perspective on diversity and inclusion.

We share other newsworthy recognitions and announcements. Santee Electric recognizes a woman who is the second female and first African-American female to be a VP. This VP has plans to enhance awareness for members to save money and conserve energy. The City of Florence tells us how springtime is bringing a renewed sense of energy with resources that give residents access to healthy foods and affordable recreational activities. Youth camp activities and tons of family-friendly fun make for an enjoyable spring instead of staying indoors and doing what some of us used to do as children when the season came around: spring cleaning. Nowadays, many of us clean year-round instead. But what about inner cleansing? Don't worry because Robin Lewis is here to get spiritual cleaning underway so you can breathe easy again and refocus on other areas of your life that need your attention.

For the April edition, we raise awareness and hope you pay close attention to serious issues affecting our health and safety. You'll hear from Jennifer Guiles Robinson, the director of Empowered to Heal and a contributing writer for Diversity Works. Robinson, along with writer Adaila Ellis, introduces inspirational survivors like Kristina Bryant. In addition, Ta'Meeka Epps speaks to ROAR coordinator, Kioca Reed, about sexual assault, and Epps informs you about a free program dedicated to reducing and preventing child abuse and neglect within the Pee Dee. On top of everything, writers Kim Williams, Mallory Brayboy and Angela Crosland have beautifully-written articles that will give you strength and courage needed in your own life's journey. You'll also gain new perspectives on autism and alcohol abuse awareness as well as hear from companies like Keystone, CareSouth, Circle Park, Heaven's Hope and many more.

But I'm sure you already know how it goes. I can't tell it all now because I want you to keep reading. Once you are done with this issue, I hope you have accomplished one particular goal: you are leaving with a heightened sense of awareness of all factors that can renew your joy in life and all it can offer. As always, ENJOY!

Reach me at dagoodwin.com, youreeditingpro.net, or follow @d.a.goodwin on Instagram and Dawn Goodwin on Facebook. I would love to hear from you!

WHAT TO DO WHEN INCLUSION SPARKS A BACKLASH ONLINE

Submitted by Dr. Nika White, President and CEO, Nika White Consulting, Best Selling Author of "The Intentional Inclusionist®" and "Next-Level Inclusionist: Transform Your Work and Yourself for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Success"



Dr. Nika White

GREENVILLE—Whenever I post articles on social media, my intent is to engage, provoke thought and inspire. I've always felt that I am most effective in spreading the diversity and inclusion (D&I) gospel when I can engage in meaningful discussion on social media and appreciate others who return the favor.

But what happens when an attempt to engage in constructive discussion is met with criticism and disagreement?

Recently, I re-tweeted a post about "Black Twitter," the unofficial name for African Americans' collective and unique discussions around current events. The post encouraged people to support and follow African Americans on Twitter who were accomplishing great things. Sounded like a great idea to me, so I liked it and re-tweeted it.

Now, if you put yourself on social media and state an opinion or choose a side, you are bound to get reactions—both positive and negative. Maybe because I had quickly shared without even adding a comment, I was caught off guard when a certain gentleman questioned my Christianity because I supported Black Twitter. I was taken aback by his reaction. After some back-and-forth banter and not-so-friendly messages from him, I decided to just let it go. It wasn't worth more energy and time, so I thought.

However, the next day I received an email with the subject "Apology." It was that same gentleman. He tracked down my email address and apologized for how he reacted. He wanted to know if we could have coffee and talk more on our opposing points of views. Refreshing...I thought. Sure, I'd meet to discuss. After all, I was intrigued to understand what could have set him off so, warranting what I viewed as a personal attack.

The thing is, about six months earlier, the gentleman and I had met in person at a [Haggai International](#) event in Greenville. This was an initiative my husband and I hosted along with a few others. Haggai is an international ministry of which my family supports, and its mission is to see every nation redeemed and transformed through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Everyone in attendance at this event are believers of the Christian faith and invited by someone affiliated with Haggai.

When we reconnected last month, it was over a coffee meeting that should have lasted 30 minutes but turned into an almost two-hour talk. I learned more about where he was coming from, why he thought what he thought and why he understood me the way he did. On the flip side, he also had the chance to learn what my intentions were when I reposted that tweet.

We walked away from that meeting with a much broader understanding of each other's perspective. We challenged each other. We respected each other. But most importantly, we heard each other. At the conclusion of our meeting, we walked upstairs to my office so that I could gift my then acquaintance, now new friend, with copies of my two books. He offered to pay, but I declined, accepting instead a gifted copy of his own book he promised to send.

That story had a great ending. But not all online debates end in Starbucks meetings and a warm parting handshake.

Not long after that, I posted a quote on LinkedIn: "To be African American is to be African without memory and American without privilege," with my commentary: "Here is a bit of perspective for those who can't understand why populations that have been historically oppressed (African Americans) can't leave the past behind and move on. It's not that we want to stay focused on the past, but so much of what occurs in our present and future becomes a constant reminder."

Almost immediately, two gentlemen I wasn't connected to, jumped in on the conversation and started an online unfriendly comment thread, apparently looking for a battle.

When one of them commented to the other, "You won that victory, Nika clearly lost on that point," I decided it wasn't worth engaging any further. I let them know I welcome constructive discussions, but since this wasn't indicative of that, I was ending the discussion altogether. With that, I blocked them and carried on with my day.

I was not willing to spend time and energy on someone who saw the exchange as a war whereby one person was declared the victor. I wasn't trying to win anything, and any time you go into discussions with that in mind, you've already lost.

When we put ourselves out there as vocal leaders or Intentional Inclusionists®, we encounter all types of people. You will encounter people eager to learn about your point of view, and you will encounter the ones who are so set in their ways that no amount of discussion helps. So, what do you do when you find yourself in situations like the ones I experienced where civil discourse is at the heart of what needs to be accomplished?

Here's what I learned from those experiences:

1. Determine if you are going to engage. Before anything else, it is important at the onset to reflect on the most important question: What is your end goal? What do you hope to walk away with? I have found that when I don't try to win an argument, I experience healthier and more fruitful discussions. If you enter a discussion wanting to "win," you have already lost.

2. Before you engage, try to assess the other person's mindset. Are they set in their ways? Are they open? Where are they in their journey relevant to the conversation? How much do they know about diversity and inclusion? By putting yourself in the other person's shoes you may be able to communicate better in a way that the other person understands. Diversity and Inclusion teaches us to recognize and embrace our differences. D&I also means we acknowledge what isn't the same, and we seek ways to incorporate people in meaningful and valuable ways.

3. If you do engage, protect your emotional capital and focus on your intellectual capital. Do not get too wrapped up in your feelings. It takes practice to talk about a complex topic you are deeply connected to without sounding defensive. However, it is possible. Try to overcome being emotionally charged and separate the information from the person.

4. Figure out when to end the discussion. If the discussion no longer serves you and the goal you are trying to achieve, end it. It is also important to remember that no one has all the right answers, and that is okay. Many answers and solutions are still a work in progress, and so much of the work on diversity and inclusion is about dialogue and common ground.

5. When you do end the discussion, end it in the most civil way possible. Keep it short, sweet and simple. Be polite and give them something they can move forward with. Have something ready and available and point them to that resource. Don't be afraid to express why you are disengaging and be confident in your conviction to end the discussion. Perhaps the universe will find it appropriate to have the conversation circle back to you someday, and at that time, you'll have a game plan for success.



GREATER LAKE CITY TEENS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2019 "NEXT UP"

Submitted by Ericka Bennett, Director of the Greater Lake City Community Resource Center



"Next Up" interns take a minute to pose for a picture during the 2018 Grand Opening Celebration of the Greater Lake City Community Resource Center.

"Next Up" interns take a minute to pose for a picture during the 2018 Grand Opening Celebration of the Greater Lake City Community Resource Center. While interns are exploring opportunities for success through community engagement, active participation, and positive youth development, they are also training to be the next generation of leaders in Greater Lake City.

During this internship, youth ages 15 and above will work no more than 15 hours weekly at sites around the Greater Lake City area. For eight weeks, rising juniors and seniors will have the opportunity to perform tasks specific to their site as well as those assigned by the site leaders. Sites for the 2019 interns will include: the



"Next Up" interns, Jordan Ross and Alana Fulmore, are pictured in the food pantry of the Greater Lake City Community Resource Center

LAKE CITY-The Greater Lake City Community Resource Center is proud to announce that applications are now being accepted for the 2nd annual "Next Up" Summer Internship Experience.

"Next Up" is a youth-driven, paid summer internship program that aims to provide a safe space for youth to

Greater Lake City Community Resource Center, the Greater Lake City Community Development Office, ArtFields, the Lynchs Lake Historical Society, the Visit Lake City SC Visitors Center, Moore Farms and Botanical Garden, the Greater Lake City Chamber of Commerce and many more.

Teens selected to be "Next Up" interns will also have the opportunity to fine-tune their employability soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, time management, problem solving and work ethic. Interns will be immersed in etiquette courses, resumé building workshops and financial literacy classes. Additionally, interns will travel around the state to gain new experiences and memories.

Application packets can be picked up at the Greater Lake City Community Resource Center, which is located at 410 West Main Street, Lake City, or by accessing their website: www.lccommunityoutreach.org. All application packets must be turned into the Resource Center by 5p.m. Friday, May 3. If you would like more information, please call the Greater Lake City Community Resource Center at 843-374-0400 or email community_outreach@lccreativealliance.org.



Pictured from left to right are Kristal Martinez, Nicholas Matthews, Joneisha Alford, Da'Mara Brown, Jordan Ross, Terrilyn Cameron, Alexis Brayboy, Taylor Atkinson, Alana Fulmore, Deanna Reynolds and Ericka Bennett.



A PROGRAM OF THE LAKE CITY CREATIVE ALLIANCE

"We're making a difference in our community— one step at a time."



ATTORNEY RONALD JEBAILY RECEIVES RALPH KING ANDERSON JR. AWARD

Submitted by *Jebaily Law Firm*



Pictured: Judge Anderson, Ron, and his wife, Suzanne Jebaily

Florence Attorney Ronald J. Jebaily is the 2018 recipient of the Ralph King Anderson Jr. Award. Jebaily was presented with the distinguished award at the annual business meeting of the Florence County Bar.

The award, named in honor of retired South Carolina Court of Appeals judge and former legislator Ralph King Anderson, Jr., “has been awarded annually since 1998 to members of the Florence County Bar who have distinguished themselves through their dedication to community service.”

Jebaily is the twenty-first recipient of the award, which he said he’s humbled by. “It is the pinnacle of the career of lawyering. This coming June will be 50 years for me and believe me when I tell you that this means the world,” said Jebaily.

Jebaily, a native New Yorker, followed his parents to South Carolina and founded the Jebaily Law Firm in 1969 after receiving his J.D. from the University Of South Carolina School Of Law. He began his career by training with Levine & Broder in New York, specifically under the guidance of Moe Levine. Over time, his practice focused on personal injury and workers’ compensation cases.

A high-achieving lawyer, Jebaily has also received several other awards. After serving on the executive committee of the Injured Workers Advocates of South Carolina, Jebaily became the organization’s president in 2005. During that time, he became chair and founder of its Judicial Affairs Committee. Even after his presidency, he continued

as a dedicated chair for seven years. In fact, Jebaily was named the 2012 “Friend of the Little Man” for dedicating years of service to the organization. Jebaily continues to serve as a member.

In addition, Jebaily was awarded in the past for being in the Top 100 Workers’ Compensation Attorneys in the country for 2014 and 2015. In 2015, he was a recipient of the Lifetime Service Award for support in fundraising work with the Kid’s Chance. He is also a member of the South Carolina Workers’ Compensation Education Association. Formally, he was a board member, serving from 2003 to 2007.

Today Jebaily is a member of both the South Carolina Association for Justice and the South Carolina Bar Association. His past community involvement includes “service as president of the Florence County Mental Health Association, former chair of the Florence Symphony Orchestra Board, four years on the South Carolina Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and six years as chair of the Florence Housing Authority. Jebaily participated frequently in Building Bridges, and he also served many leadership roles in the United States Power Squadron. Jebaily has been active as an actor and director in the Florence Little Theater, where he most recently performed the role of Morrie Schwartz in the play Tuesdays with Morrie. Jebaily and his wife, Suzanne, are members of St. Anthony Catholic Church here in Florence, where he has served as teacher, lector, and liturgical committee member.”



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SMALL BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

Submitted by the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce



Blake Pate

Blake Pate of Chick-fil-A was recently named the 2019 Small Business Person of the Year during the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce's Outlook Luncheon at the Florence Center. Jim Ivey of Dedicated Community Bank, which sponsors the award, presented Pate with the honor. The award is given annually to recognize a small business owner who exemplifies professionalism, strives to enhance our community and who has made a positive impact on the local economy.

Ivey stated, "Pate went through an extensive screening process that included at least 15 interviews before he was approved as a Chick-fil-A operator. He had to interview again to become the operator of the former drive-thru location, which was renovated last year into a beautiful free-standing restaurant."

Pate is also very active in the community through his involvement with the schools, coaching soccer and serving in leadership roles with several organizations including the Boy Scouts, Florence Symphony Orchestra, Saint Luke Lutheran Church and the Florence Rotary Club.

"Blake was the perfect choice for the Small Business of the Year Award," said Mike Miller, president of the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce. "He does so much work for the community but does it in a quiet and effective way. 'Humble' might be the best way to describe his demeanor, and 'generous' might be the best way to describe his way of contributing to our communities."



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LAKE CITY'S VOLUNTEER "ROUND-UP" by Les Echols



Tonya Sumpter Huell

LAKE CITY - Tonya Sumpter Huell is a vital cog in the operations of the City of Lake City. Huell is the director of Utility Billing and Customer Service for the City of Lake City. She oversees and supervises utility billing, customer service activities and the collection of monies to reconcile service accounts. Prior to joining Lake City, Huell worked for Williamsburg County government and York County government providing administrative support as clerk to County Council.

Huell's adventure as a public servant started out as "just a job" with stable hours, weekends off and a good benefits package, which later turned into a career. She has been working in local government on the municipal and county levels for over 20 years. Her work experience has allowed her to understand and develop relationships with individuals and organizations that have not normally partnered with governing bodies to address the ever-changing needs of the public.

Several customers had asked over the years if the City provided any assistance with helping with higher than normal water bills due to a leak or when a customer experiences a hardship where they have an inability to pay. The City is unable to provide water or sewer services for free to its customers, so Huell spoke with other service providers to get an idea of how they would address this concern and was told about "round up" assistance.

The City of Lake City's Coins That Care Program is a voluntary round-up program designed to provide financial assistance to families in need. The small amount of change, ranging from \$.01 to \$.99 per month, adds up fast. While that may not seem like a lot of money for offering financial aid, you need to multiply that by the hundreds of people who use the City of Lake City's water services and contributes

to the program. These generous donations and contributions from the public and businesses allow the round-up program to be successful.

The program has been operational since January 2016. It has been beneficial for those experiencing sudden job loss, sickness and other life occurrences. The money collected by the City is transferred to Pee Dee Community Action Partnership to be administered to families in need. Only Lake City customers that participate in the program are eligible for assistance after an application process. The applications are then reviewed on a case-by-case basis for approval and financial award. If a customer does not wish to participate in the program, he or she may opt-out at any time.

Asked about the benefits about diversity, Huell was very passionate: "Some of the most exciting places to be are the most diverse. It was once only the larger cities that were considered the 'melting pots' of many cultures, but not anymore. Our small towns and cities are benefiting in so many ways from exposure to art, music, cuisine and so much more. The City of Lake City has been striving to foster that diversity in all activities and events by welcoming everyone from near and far and all walks of life to come together and appreciate the things our different cultures have to offer. We have seen progress in reduced discrimination and an increase in provided service through this change and unity in continuing to want better," concluded Tonya.

Tonya Sumpter Huell graduated with a bachelor's degree in business management from Limestone College in 2008.



ECHOLS AWARDED FOR EXCELLENCE



Nicole Echols

GREENVILLE – Nicole Echols of Harvest Hope Food Bank received the 2019 Fred R. Sheheen Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership on March 13. The award recognizes individuals of the statewide nonprofit membership organization Together SC, who have utilized organizational and resource development to effectively manage a nonprofit group. It is sponsored by the Fred Sheheen Non-Profit Leadership Institute at Francis Marion University.

Echols is the 13th recipient of the award. In 2018, she returned to Harvest Hope Food Bank after three years with the American Red Cross. She had previously worked there from 2011-2015. The mission is to provide for the needs of hungry people by gathering and sharing quality food with dignity, compassion and education. Upon returning, Echols had a vision of where the organization was going and began to implement necessary and positive changes. This included recruiting a diverse advisory board, a referral-based food pantry and a giveaway for government employees impacted by the government shutdown. In addition to her work with Harvest Hope, Echols is an active board

member for various other nonprofit groups including Women in Philanthropy, MINGLE of the Pee Dee, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. and Florence First Steps.



Fred R. Sheheen presenting award to Nicole Echols

"When your paycheck, passion and purpose all align, you are destined for excellence and great things. I am truly humbled, but I didn't do anything different than any of you or our Harvest Hope team and our donors and wonderful volunteers and supporters did this morning. You all woke up with a passion to help someone in need. For that, each one of us deserves this award," said Echols.



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Celista McKenzie, FNP
Medical Director

Brandon Morris, DC

Bryan C. Wenner, DC

April NeSmith Photography

GET MAXIMUM CARE AT KEYSTONE Submitted by Keystone Healthcare & Wellness



Celista McKenzie, APRN, FNP

Celista McKenzie, APRN, FNP-C is the medical director at Keystone Healthcare and Wellness. She oversees all aspects of medical care for our patients. McKenzie provides services to our patients that include burn treatment; suture removal from lacerations; corticosteroid injections in knees, elbows and shoulders; and physicals, just to name a few.

McKenzie also coordinates other treatments we offer to our patients such as active therapies, passive therapies, chiropractic care and massage therapy to suit each individual's needs. She then can

control if other tests are needed during care like MRI, CT or referral to do spinal injections or surgery, which from our personal injury side, are all covered on a letter of protection.

Having the many different tools to get our patients to optimal health is our goal, along with having a wide variety of referral resources for specialty treatments needed that include referrals to specialists anywhere in the country to get our patients the best care for their specific conditions, care that is essential for optimizing patient treatment plans so they can get the best possible results. Patients are referred for medical issues such as hip resurfacing, partial knee replacements, bunion and heel spurs, spinal surgeries and much more!

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McKenzie is a family nurse practitioner and native of Olanta. She received her RN degree from Florence Darlington Technical College and then proceeded to get her BSN degree from the University of Phoenix and a master's degree from Walden University. McKenzie started working at Keystone Healthcare three years ago to oversee the medical team. She has 16 years of experience, including three years in the emergency room

where she continues to work PRN.

McKenzie is very passionate about providing whatever type of care the patient needs, and her number one priority is to provide care that achieves the goal of maximum medical improvement. In McKenzie's free time she enjoys spending time with family and traveling when she isn't working at Keystone Healthcare and Wellness.

April NeSmith Photography



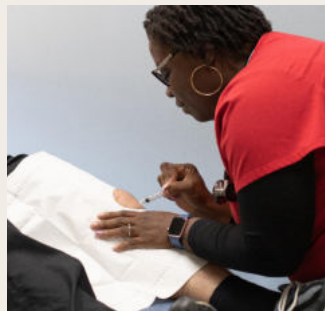
Celista consulting with a patient.



Celista performing a patient evaluation



Celista demonstrating active therapies with a patient



Celista giving an injection in our procedure room.



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J&J RIGHTTOUCH BRINGS HARMONY TO THE TABLE by Adaila Ellis



Joyce Coe-Everett and Janice Green-Floyd

DARLINGTON - Most special memories, occasions and experiences involve people gathering to prepare and share a meal together. Whether you are the one cooking the meal or the one eating the meal that was prepared, food is the common denominator. For Darlington natives Joyce Coe-Everett and Janice Green-Floyd of J&J

Righttouch Catering, they have found their calling in providing a catering service. For the two Mayo High School graduates, their favorite dishes to prepare are sliced roast beef, macaroni and cheese, sliced glazed ham and greens seasoned with ham hocks.

It was the support of friends and family that got them started. They catered their first official event in 1998 which was a friend's wedding reception. "The business was formed when friends and family members asked if we would cater their events. These events turned out good and people loved our food and the way we displayed it."

When comparing cooking and catering, Everett points out, "Janice always says there is a difference between cooking and catering." Cooking is the meal preparation while catering is the meal preparation and presentation. Both must make a good impression to have a successful catering business.

It is a blessing to discover what you are good at and to be able to make others happy by sharing your talents. For Everett and Floyd, they believe that "food can be at the center of building a community and connecting people. No matter how difficult the situation is, or if you have trouble connecting people, just prepare a table. Where there is good food, all hearts and minds start to connect in harmony."

Anyone who has ever started a business knows how difficult it can be. Every difficulty, when faced with creativity and belief in your particular gift, is a lesson that can then lead to success. With success comes confirmation that you are on the right path. When considering their successes Everett states, "The successes confirm that catering is our gift, and with our service, we make people happy. The challenges we face just confirm that anything worth having is worth working hard for. Nothing in life is easy, so we are persistent in winning when we cater each event."

For J&J Righttouch Catering, it is the personal connections that they make with their clients that are most important. When they prepare food for someone's special occasion, they know that people will bond over the food they prepare. People will be connected in fellowship while they eat. So each bite serves to only enhance the special occasion that brought them together."

When reflecting on their growth as a business, Everett says, "Both personally and professionally, we know for sure with God all things are possible. In business and in everyday real life situations, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Floyd and Everett certainly do care and thanks all of their customers for allowing J&J Righttouch Catering to serve them.

Philippians 4:13



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BLUEFORT SPEARHEADS INITIATIVES



Ardweena M. Bluefort

KINGSTREE - For Ardweena M. Bluefort, VP of Member Services at Santee Electric Cooperative, no two days are alike. Each day differs, depending upon which member needs must be addressed, projects that are to be implemented and data that is being analyzed. "On a typical day, I oversee the general operation of the Member Service department. This includes the management of employees in areas of billing, member service, cashier and member support who are responsible for providing frontline service to our members."

Bluefort speaks highly of her team who never knows what the caller may need or what the person across the desk may want. They must each be able to handle a diversity of problems with patience, persistence, sensitivity and urgency. When speaking on the importance of teamwork, she shares, "There's no room for 'I' in Member Services, but there are plenty of opportunities for teamwork."

Bluefort works with teams mostly out of the Kingstree office but also serves branch offices in Georgetown, Manning, Hemingway and Lake City.

Bluefort has several years of experience working in the utility industry and, as a result, has developed a diversity of skills. She has not only had consistent leadership experience but also has consistent success in achieving objectives. Bluefort started out working at Santee Electric as a summer student in 2001 to eventually becoming the company's second female and first African American VP. In addition, she is currently the only female VP in the company.

"Working during the summer and winter breaks in various positions, including operations, engineering, accounting and serving as administrative assistant to the CEO when needed, I learned that you can influence others from wherever you are in an organization."

Bluefort's entire professional career has been based on supporting the Member Service Department. She started out as distribution engineer, then worked up to information systems analyst, where she was responsible for providing advanced technical and analytical support through the management of the Advanced Metering Infrastructure and Mobile Workforce systems. "I was able to implement and deliver both of these projects to Santee Electric and watch them elaborate. Being equipped with this knowledge and experience allowed me to work across the organization to help Member Service create solutions for optimal business practices."

Her goal and vision for the community at large is, "to improve the public perception of the utility and let them know we are here to help and educate them on various low-cost/no cost home energy saving tips." To meet this goal, she is spearheading initiatives that enhance awareness regarding ways to conserve electricity and to save.

For Bluefort, family is everything to her. Her husband, O'Neal, a farmer in Nesmith, and 6-year-old son, Preston, provide her with the drive, joy, love and order that she needs to fulfill her life. Her parents, Arthur & Dorotheal Marsh of Hemingway, inspired and instilled in her work ethic and qualities that have served well in her career. "My father instilled in me the importance of great work ethics. My mother taught me the value of dedication and perseverance and relying on God's word for stability." When Bluefort thinks of her three brothers, she remembers a professor once saying, "families need to have ESP (Encouragement, Support and Patience)." Her brothers embody these qualities.

Bluefort is also inspired by her Santee Electric family. "Those that are most passionate about their job equip you with the skills you need to succeed. They make the most difficult task seem easy. They are also the ones that make and made a difference in my life."

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A TEAM THAT HONORS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION by Mallory Brayboy



John Frinks

AccuStaff of Florence has been helping local businesses grow and thrive by providing quality job candidates for the past 36 years. The company has recently welcomed two new members of its own.

John Frinks has come on board as a staffing specialist, helping companies to acquire talent and individuals to attain employment. Frinks, a native of Florence, previously worked in mortgage servicing and customer service with Caliber Home Loans, JP Morgan Chase and Washington Mutual.

His new position involves analyzing a large pool of talent, which Frinks finds challenging at times, yet exciting. His work reaches him on a personal level, having experienced the perils of finding a suitable job in a sparse job market. "I wasn't able to find anything that fit my requirements. I am better than no one, but I wasn't willing to take any job," said Frinks who went some time unemployed. "I would have been more miserable working at some place that I did not find fulfilling or serving the community in some way." This experience now fuels Frinks when assisting others on their employment journeys. "I love helping people and seeing people succeed. That's what I find most fulfilling from the job," he says.

Frinks is currently enrolled in New Horizon Learning Center's business administration program with an emphasis in project management. He has been able to immediately apply skills--primarily communication skills as well as diversity and inclusion--learned there into his position at AccuStaff, which is a major factor to him. "I feel everybody should be treated the same. My experience in the workplace...seeing things like that makes me go hard," says Frinks. "Everyone deserves a chance." His goal is to not only add value to AccuStaff, but also to the entire work



Kathy Mauro

environment, and he seems to be on the perfect path to doing so.

AccuStaff welcomed Kathy Mauro to its team as a recruiter and sales associate. Mauro, originally of New York, has been in the state for eight years and brings with her 20 years of professional experience. She has a background in recruiting for businesses, sales, management and marketing. Mauro has worked for companies including Monster Worldwide, Attractions Dining & Attractions Guide and Quality Inn & Suites.

At AccuStaff, Mauro has found joy in developing closer relationships with the talent and clients she services in her position, where she can personally interact with them, as opposed to her previous job wherein she had over 4,000 national accounts. Mauro specifically enjoys this intimacy because it allows her to know the beginning to end result of the talent. "Previously, you never knew how the talent felt. How did they feel about the culture? Are they satisfied in their position? The entire experience is so valuable to be aware of and know. Also, are the client's needs fulfilled? Both parties' success is imperative in this equation," says Mauro.

In her off time, Mauro enjoys time with friends and family. "I like to get out and experience new and different things," she says. She understands the importance differences plays in all aspects of life and that our differences make us stronger. "I feel honored for Mrs. Lockhart to even suggest me for the magazine because I believe in it so much. I think that everyone should be more open and realize that everyone from different cultures and races all contribute, and you learn from so many individuals, each and every day. We all make a difference," says Mauro.



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Submitted by Ruiz Foods



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CAN YOU SPOT A SCAM?

Submitted by Dr. John D'Ambrosio, CEO/President, BBB of Coastal Carolina



Dr. John D'Ambrosio

CONWAY—As a consumer, do you know what a scam is? Do you know how to spot one, and more importantly, do you know what to do if you or a loved one is hit by a scam artist?

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) recently released its Tech-Savvy Scammers Work to Con More Victims: 2018 BBB Scam Tracker Risk Report (www.BBB.org/RiskReport). Now that may be a big title, but it's full of valuable information that you can use to keep from being a victim of a scam.

The report is issued annually and provides the information that consumers have provided over the past year. Each year, scams rob consumers and legitimate businesses out of billions of dollars. BBB is committed to having an ethical marketplace where honest businesses can flourish. A healthy marketplace requires consumers being empowered with knowledge.

In 2018, more than 50,000 scam reports were published via BBB Scam Tracker and represent a steady increase of reported scams since the website was launched in 2015.



The number one reported scam in 2018 was employment scams. The job offer comes with high pay and options to work remotely and with flexible hours. Sounds like a perfect job. But, to get the job, the candidate must complete forms and fill out sensitive information and sometimes, they are even required to “purchase equipment,” paid for from the proceeds of a fake check. Scammers use more of a high-tech approach where elaborate

set-ups are common. The applicant may have in-depth interviews and have “official” documents to verify it is a real company. Their efforts have paid off, because in 2018, these scammers targeted a large number of people and resulted in a large monetary loss for people on an average of more than \$1,000 per person. And unfortunately, the people who got hit are usually the most in need—those seeking employment.

The number two scam is the online purchase scam. This slipped from number one to number two in 2018. However, it dramatically rose to 10,450 reports. The reason it fell from the top spot (2017), is because of the amount of money lost in each scam; victims lost more money in the employment scams. The majority of the online purchase scams occur when a payment is made online in exchange for goods or services, but nothing is ever delivered. The most common products promised, but not delivered once payment is made, includes pets, automobile parts, clothing and cosmetics.

The number three scam in 2018 is the fake check or money order scam. Yes, it has ties to both the employment and online scams and is commonly used to reel consumers in. Usually, the check or money order is for more than the agreed upon amount, and the scammer will tell a person to cash it and send the rest back in prepaid cards. Always remember two things: just because the funds are credited to your account does not mean that the check you cashed is valid, and second, cashier's checks and postal money orders can be forged.

Home improvement scams came next on the 2018 top ten list. Most common is that after a storm, “storm chasers” will appear at the door offering quick low-cost repairs, in lots of cases offering roof repair, tree and limb removal or driveway repairs. Then these thieves usually either take payments without returning, or if they do return, they do shoddy work or find issues that dramatically raise the price of

the work.

Men and women are affected differently by scammers. Women fell prey to romance scams and are the riskiest between the ages of 55 to 64. Romance scams are the third riskiest scams for women. In 2018, consumers lost money to romance scams 44 percent of the time they were involved in the romance, and the median dollar loss for these scams was \$2,500.

For men, travel/vacation scams are the number two riskiest scam. Male consumers reported a loss in 37.4 percent of reports filed, and the median dollar loss was \$3,950—more than three times the median dollars lost by women in travel/vacation scams (\$1,200).

So, you see, scammers are working day and night to get your personal information and money. At BBB, we want you, the consumer, to take control of your online experiences that involve finances. Remember, you wouldn't give your personal information to a stranger you pass on the sidewalk, so don't give a stranger your information online.

If you want more information on scams or want to report a scam, visit us at www.bbb.org/scamtracker. The entire report is also available to read and to find out more about the rest of the top 10 scams in 2018 (www.BBB.org/RiskReport.) You can always give us a call if you want more information. BBB will continue our work to reduce the impact of scams to help consumers and legitimate businesses prosper in a trustworthy marketplace.

About the BBB: The Better Business Bureau of Coastal Carolina is located at 1121 Third Ave., in Conway, S.C. and covers the counties of Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Marion, and Williamsburg in South Carolina and Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, New Hanover, Pender, Robeson, and Sampson in North Carolina. For more information about becoming an Accredited Business, call 843-488-2227 or visit <https://www.bbb.org/myrtle-beach/accreditation-application>.

IT'S A SCAM

Fraudsters want your PIN and bank card

- 1 A fraudster telephones you claiming to be from your bank or the police. They tell you that your bank card details have been used fraudulently.
- 2 They suggest that you hang up and ring the bank/police back to ensure the call is genuine. Don't be fooled - they stay on the line. They then tell you to read out or key in your PIN.
- 3 They send a taxi/courier to you to collect your bank card. With this and your PIN, they spend your money.

JUST REMEMBER:
Your bank or the police will never ask for your PIN or bank card - don't give them to anybody!

If you've been a victim of this crime call the police on 101.

MONK TO LEAD GREATER HARTSVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Submitted by Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce



Murphy Monk

HARTSVILLE-The board of directors of the Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the promotion of Murphy Monk from membership development coordinator to president. In this capacity, Monk will lead the chamber in its mission to be a catalyst for community success through member support and advocacy.

A graduate of Clemson University, Monk holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies. Prior to coming to the Chamber in 2017, she worked in sales, marketing and management at Le Bleu of Charleston and Main Street Boutique in Mount Pleasant. She also managed business development for Tobaccoville USA, Inc for the state of Virginia. As membership development coordinator at the Chamber, Monk was responsible for member outreach and engagement, and promotions and marketing for the chamber and its members.

Under her leadership, the Chamber's website has grown from 80,000 hits per year to over 100,000, and the Chamber's social media presence has grown by 50 percent, based on Facebook Likes. More significantly, the Chamber has seen 19 percent growth in membership over the past two years. "Murphy has forged relationships and bonds with the business community and understands the true value of chamber membership. She is a dynamic, strategic leader who gives 110 percent of herself every day. It has been a delight to watch her grow professionally, and I feel positive the Chamber is headed for bigger and better opportunities that will directly have an impact on our community," remarked former president Quinetta Buterbaugh, who is leaving the Chamber after four years as president to serve the Darlington

County School District as its business engagement coordinator.

Monk assumed her new role on January 4 and will be working with the board of directors to execute this year's program of work. The Chamber will be hosting a number of new offerings that she has shaped, like the "On the Menu" small business lunch and learn series, "Chamber Chat" coffee meetings to help members understand their chamber benefits, how to get the most out of membership, and an outlook forum concerning healthcare changes and how they will affect the business community. "I would like to thank the board of directors for their confidence and Quinetta for her support and leadership. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to serve my community as president of the chamber, and I look forward to continue working with our membership to enhance their vision for Hartsville. The Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce is successful because of our commitment to our members' goals, and I aim to keep that at the forefront of my decision making," remarked President Monk.

The Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce is a membership-based business advocacy organization founded in 1910. The Chamber provides a voice for local businesses, supports economic development, and promotes the vibrant and personal community that makes Hartsville appealing to businesses and residents.



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MEET THE TRANSPORTATION ENTREPRENEUR EXPERT

Submitted by Bettye Scott, Owner



Bettye Scott, Director of Lee Transportation Services

BISHOPVILLE-Meet Bettye Scott, an award-winning entrepreneur who may have a disability but who took a dream and made it a reality. She took \$31, a vision and a lot of determination and willpower to create a transportation system in a rural community that is now valued at one million plus dollars. The system is federally funded along with having matching funds via our regional transportation provider, Santee-Wateree Regional Transportation Authority. This creation has inspired and grasped the attention of the transportation industry at the

national level.

Scott's vision was triggered by living in a very rural community and having no accessible means of transportation for the residents to get to their basic services to ensure that they could maintain a quality of life that would help them ensure a level of independence, as well as being able to afford the transportation costs. Her vision was one of the driving forces behind creating a fare-free transportation system.

We evolved from a sub-committee called "Quality of Life." This committee was appointed by our Lee County Council to focus on concerns that affected the residents of the county. Whenever we surveyed the population targeting the most immediate needs, transportation was always at the top of the list as the most basic need that had not been addressed. Because we did not have any means of public transportation, an ad hoc committee was created with Scott appointed as chairperson. With faith, patience and determination, Scott's vision for transportation became a reality for the people of Lee County.

By partnering with our Regional Transportation Authority, which for our four-county area is the Santee-Wateree Regional Transportation

Authority, our vision became a reality.

We now have a fare-free transportation system available to anyone who chooses to use it five days per week throughout the city, a rural community of the Manville-Wisacky area and a once-a-week route to the city of Lynchburg with active plans to expand. Because areas of unmet needs

remain, we are focusing on "work, drop-off and pick-up as well as to schools and colleges. We have been in operation for four years and are seeing continual growth."

Because of this amazing creation, communities throughout the country are replicating this model at some level.

For Scott's unique creation, she has been recognized throughout the transportation industry as an award-winning entrepreneur expert. Awards she has received range from the Rural Intercity Mobility Award by the National Transportation Association of America, the Visionary Award by the Transportation Association of South Carolina, and the Martin Luther King's Service Award by the NAACP. She has been recognized from Myrtle Beach to Asheville, N.C. She has been guest speaker at National Conferences from Omaha, Neb. to Breckinridge, Colo.

Scott's motto is "If you dream it, you can believe it. If you believe it, if you can receive it, and if you receive it, you can achieve it." Everything is possible, simply by faith and determination.



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ARTFIELDS—EVERYBODY'S INVITED!

Submitted by Roberta L. Burns, Lake City ArtFields Collective



Dandelion Stroll features street performers as well as the first look at competition art work. Photo by Fred Salley, Meade Agency.

for the top prize of \$50,000, a portrait contest, upscale gala, kids activities and three nights of live music.

ARTFIELDS® 2019 will feature an event for everyone—and everyone is invited, no matter how much you know about art. “Some people are very hesitant when it comes to art and view it as something that is for others, but not for them,” says Carla Angus, ArtFields project manager. “Based on my experience, once you come to ArtFields for the first time, you’ll want to come back every year.”

Each day at ArtFields, visitors can view competition artwork from artists across the Southeast in venues around town, plus artwork in the ArtFields Jr. competition from artists in first-12th grade from all over South Carolina. There will also be educational artwalks for students, adult tours and voting for the People’s Choice Award winners that will each take home \$12,500. New this year will be temporary public art installations by Jamey Grimes and Craig Wedderspoon, plus fresh murals around town.



The Village Green is the hub of live music and entertainers. Photo by Fred Salley, Meade Agency.

Market to shop for handmade goods and end the night with a live performance from Infinity Show Band. Makers Market is back on Sunday, along with an afternoon art-making activity for youth ages 5K-12 grade.

And you won’t want to miss finale weekend either. On Thursday, May 2 the Bean Market will be decked out for a night of dining and dancing at the annual Dandelion Gala. Friday will feature Lunchtime Crunchtime, a unique experience where artists can promote their art and share the story behind their work. Crowd favorite Harlem Gospel Choir will perform on Village Green, while local restaurants serve up delicious food and drink. On Saturday, ArtFields will conclude with the announcement of winners, live music from Rhythm Nation and a firework display under the stars.

ArtFields began in 2012 with a small group of local women who had a strong desire to put Lake City on the map. Their hope was to boost the economy while bringing together and transforming a community through the arts. They’ve done just that. ArtFields has



Competition artwork on display in TRAX Visual Art Center. Photo by Fred Salley, Meade Agency.

LAKE CITY—It’s a nine-day celebration of art and community that draws thousands to a small South Carolina town and awards over \$145,000 in cash prizes. This epic Southeastern art competition runs from April 26-May 4 and will feature a wide variety of events, including an art competition with nearly 400 pieces vying

for the top prize of \$50,000, a portrait contest, upscale gala, kids activities and three nights of live music.

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Special events for the kick-off weekend will be the ribbon cutting ceremony and Dandelion Stroll to start the week on Friday, April 26. Saturday brings the annual portrait contest, which will feature active duty and military veterans as models. Guests can attend Makers

Market to shop for handmade goods and end the night with a live performance from Infinity Show Band. Makers Market is back on Sunday, along with an afternoon art-making activity for youth ages 5K-12 grade.

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ArtFields began in 2012 with a small group of local women who had a strong desire to put Lake City on the map. Their hope was to boost the economy while bringing together and transforming a community through the arts. They’ve done just that. ArtFields has

grown tremendously and continues to transform Lake City each year. Whether you come for one day or for the whole week, you’re sure to leave with a respect for art and a renewed sense of community.

“Lake City is my home, and I’m excited to see what a positive impact this event



Students help finish a temporary mural on Sauls Street during ArtFields 2018. Photo by Fred Salley, Meade Agency.

has each year on the community, especially the children,” said Angus.

ArtFields is living, breathing proof of the power of art. This spectacular event happens every year through the strong belief that anything can be done if you have the right people, work hard, and believe in what you’re doing. Don’t miss ArtFields this year from April 26–May 4! Visit artfieldssc.org to learn more or call 843-374-0180.

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IN HONOR OF 40 PLUS YEARS OF SERVICE

by Adaila Ellis



Gloria Pridgen

DARLINGTON-Living a service-driven, God-centered life has created many blessings and given Gloria Pridgen something to hold onto in trying times. Serving as clerk and treasurer for the City of Darlington is just one act of service on a long list she has rendered for her hometown. As a young lady, she wanted to leave home for college or a university to study business. Her parents could not afford the cost of a college education, so as was God's plan, she stayed close to home and went to

Florence-Darlington Tech where she received a two-year associate degree in secretarial science, just hours short of bachelor's degree. This degree led to an immediate job for her. Later in her career, she attended the Municipal Clerk & Treasurer's Institute in Columbia for four years to become a certified municipal clerk.

"Even when you are raised with great faith, such as we were, it can be hard to anticipate or understand God's plan for your life. However, as I looked back over the years, I have come to believe that the difficulties we faced were, for me, nothing short of 'Divine Intervention,'" Pridgen says.

Born and raised in Darlington, Pridgen was the second oldest of six children. She describes the Darlington then and now as a place where "people are friendly and want the best for their town. The behavior of the town's people gave real meaning to the phrase, 'Southern Hospitality.'" She grew up loving to help others whenever she could, and this was taught in her home during her formative years.

Pridgen's work ethic was woven into the fabric of her life by her mother, who lived to the age of 90 and was a house cleaner as well as a cafeteria worker in neighborhood schools. She also worked on the cotton and tobacco farms in Darlington County. Pridgen patterned her work ethic after her mother, and in her early years worked on area farms, babysat and cleaned houses. She had two sons of her own, Reginald and Alex Bruce and is now the grandmother of two granddaughters and three grandsons. Her spiritual home is New Jerusalem Apostolic Church of Jesus with pastor and founder Linda D. Bailey. Pridgen has been a member since it was founded in 1991.

It was Pridgen's reliance on God, love of service to others, and her work ethic that carried her through some of the most challenging times during her 40 years of service. Her biggest challenge was being obedient to God and staying in one place rather than pursuing other positions, locally or statewide.

She went to work for the City of Darlington in 1979 during a time where there were not many women of color in public office. Some people were not ready to accept her presence, and what did she do? She prayed and asked for God's assistance to endure some of the negative experiences she had on the job and dealing with the public. Pridgen says, "My experiences confirm the fact that prayer changes things!"

It is no surprise then that Pridgen attributes her successes to staying strong in her faith and following the path that God put before her. She says, "My relationship with the Lord has been so strong. I fear nothing that 'Man' can impose on me, for God has never failed me. He stays by my side, and when I



become a bit faint hearted, I always get the feeling that He is carrying me."

And so God carried Pridgen from one position of service to another. First, she served as a secretary in the Clerk & Treasurer's Office, then as one in the Police Department. She later transferred back to the Clerk & Treasurer's Office, where she worked while being cross-trained as a cashier for the Water Department. Afterwards, she became head cashier, and from that position, she became the assistant clerk and treasurer until 1996 when the mayor offered her the role she fills today as clerk and treasurer for the City of Darlington. When reflecting on this path of service Pridgen states, "Some of the decisions that were made by me, and others on my behalf, led me through a series of successful experiences with the City of Darlington. Of great significance has been the fact that my attitude toward work has evolved positively through the years, and I have learned to listen to wise counsel from those who cleared the paths for me."

Through the years of Pridgen living in Darlington, while there haven't been any drastic changes, in more recent years people have become more receptive to change, and there is great promise for future developments. Darlington is home of the famous Darlington Raceway, which hosts the annual NASCAR Southern 500 race. It is also home to beautiful Darlington oaks and Spanish moss.

When thinking about the past and the possibilities for the future, Pridgen states, "During my early years of development, people of color were to be seen and not heard as they worked the cotton and tobacco fields, and in the homes of the majority population. But, today Darlington can boast of being racially inclusive, with a City Council that is balanced with Caucasians, African-Americans and women. In 2016 the city elected its first female mayor, who is African-American. So, today emphasis in the City of Darlington rests with individual productivity, and not racial separatism. And, hands that once picked cotton and tobacco can now pick the city's leadership."

To God Be The Glory for The Great Things He Has Done and Is Doing!



SPIRITUAL SPRING CLEANING by Robin Lewis



Remember spring cleaning?

HEMINGWAY -As a child, my mother had seasonal schedules for the cleaning and health of our home that included ceilings, windows and baseboards. She would set aside a couple of days, open the windows, and when we had checked everything off the list, our house not only smelled fresh but seemed to sparkle.

We all love a clean house. I learned that dust bunnies under the bed are the only thing that will keep growing if left alone. We would get down on our knees, push the dust mop all the way under the bed disturbing those bunnies, sweep them into the dustpan, then out of the house they would go.

Many families still participate in spring cleaning. They get busy wiping down the walls and sponging off the layer of dust and dirt that has become adhered to the surface. Others will include a deep clean of carpets, and almost everyone get the windows, inside and out.

It was when the dust rags were in the washing machine and the buckets put away that you realized just how layered with dirt your house had become. Now you can see the camelias, dogwoods and cardinals in the yard with new clarity. Everything felt new and beautiful again.



Spring Cleaning for the Soul

We were designed by God with three important parts: a spirit, a soul, and a body. The diagrams below give a visual demonstration of how this all works together. You are a spirit, you have a soul, and you live in a body and each part is important.

What if we could do a spring cleaning of our souls? Our soul is comprised of our mind, our will and our emotions. Wouldn't it be great to cleanse, sweep out and sponge off the negative and harmful layers from our thoughts, choices and feelings? After all, we have all made some decisions and had some reactions in the past seasons that have left a layer of spiritual grime on the walls of our hearts.

James 1:21 reads, "Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word of God planted in you, which has the power to save (cleanse, heal, restore) your soul."

God's truth contains the cleansing, healing and restoration we all need. So how does this apply to the parts of our soul?



Your Mind

When it comes to your mind, what needs to be cleaned out for a new season to be possible? Negative thoughts are like dust bunnies under the bed. Negative thoughts will keep growing mentally until they affect our

health if they aren't cleaned out regularly. We have the power to change our thoughts and choose our focus. If you have a habit of thinking negatively about life or harboring thoughts of criticism for yourself or others, you can clean those dust-bunny-thoughts right out by first asking God to help you

and then choosing the truth you need to clean and nourish your soul.

Your Will

When it's your will that needs cleaning, what choices and decisions do you continue to make that aren't good for you or others? Many people have repeatedly made the same bad decision so often that it has become a habit. But habits can be changed. Without becoming intentional to change your choices, your end results in life won't change.

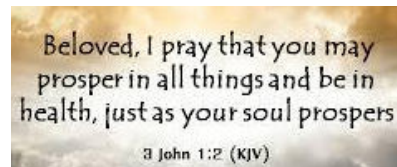
If you need to learn to make better choices, begin by submitting your will to God by asking for his help. What is the truth you need to remember that will help guide your willpower into something that instead makes your life better?

Your Emotions

Did you know that if emotions are left unchecked, most people will let their feelings make decisions for them a whopping 85 percent of the time? Emotions are created by God as a unique part of who you are. Many of our responses are learned, but they are still important. It's through emotions that we express our hearts and minds to God and to others.

I've had several coaching clients tell me that they can't help how they feel. That's because they don't yet understand the power of choosing. Victor Frankl, a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor who saved hundreds of lives from inside a concentration camp, wrote about the importance of choosing our own responses. When everything had been stripped away from people they always have one power left: to choose their own response to any given situation.

How we feel is very important to God, but how we feel shouldn't run our lives. So how do we spring clean our emotions? When you feel emotions, whether positive or negative, take them first to God and share them with him. That's actually why you have them—they are designed to be part of your relationship with God and with others. Anything we release to him in prayer can be healed. Emotions we stuff inside cannot because "emotions buried alive, stay alive." Talk out or write out how you feel. Ask God to help you unravel your feelings and soothe your emotions.



God's Help for Your Soul

Maybe you need some renewed hope and joy? Maybe you need a fresh sense of purpose for your life? Our souls can look like the dust bunnies under the bed and the

windows after a storm if we don't take care of them. Instead of dust mops, we need fresh truth that cleanses, heals and restores us.

The spring cleaning of our souls for our mind, will and emotions begins with asking God for help. These beautiful areas of our design determine our attitudes, words and behavior that give us the life results we experience. Wouldn't we all benefit from a fresh "spring cleaning" of the inner part of who we are?

God didn't design life to be complicated. We're the ones who are known for that. He won't criticize us when we come to him in need or in pain because he loves to help us heal and grow. We have permission to come to him as simply and honestly as we can manage and will never be condemned, only deeply loved.

3 John 1:2 reads, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

Ask God to be Lord of your thoughts, your decisions and your emotions, and walk into more freedom and maturity as you give these important parts of who you are a good, deep spring cleaning.

To get a crystal-clear plan for your personal and spiritual growth, book a free 30-min Discovery Session with Robin Lewis, The Freedom Coach, at www.robinlewislife/coaching.

THE CONTINUUM TO CHANGE FACE OF LOCAL EDUCATION Submitted by Jeanette Altman, Director



LAKE CITY — A dynamic new educational initiative, backed by a powerful partnership among some of the Pee Dee’s leading institutions will open this summer, offering area students pathways to meaningful careers and employers, statewide, a much-needed stream of skilled employees.

The Continuum, housed in a breathtaking new \$25 million facility in downtown Lake City, will be a regional center for education and workforce development, focused on advancing the knowledge and mastery of innovative and technical skills. It will offer an array of educational options, including courses that lead to two-year and four-year university degrees, dual enrollment courses for high school students, workforce development certificate programs, programs for K-12 students in science and innovation and even business incubator space.

The Darla Moore Foundation is partnering with Francis Marion University and Florence-Darlington Technical College to create The Continuum. “There are many issues facing South Carolina today,” said Moore. “None is more pressing than creating an educational system that more effectively meets the needs of the businesses and industries of this state, and the citizens who make them go. Major employers — everyone from Volvo to Boeing — inform me they need a better-trained, better-educated workforce to sustain their growth in our state. That’s a vital need we must meet. I believe The Continuum will fast become a model for how that can be done.”

Dr. Fred Carter, president of FMU, said The Continuum represents one of the most innovative ideas he’s seen in his more than four decades in education. “What Darla has brought together here is extraordinary in its breadth and vision,” said Carter. “Through its unique structure and flexibility, The Continuum opens new doors for students across the spectrum. FMU is eager to begin this bold, new adventure.”

Interim FDTC President Ed Bethea said, “The Continuum is going to be huge for Lake City and the surrounding area. Lower Florence County will have easy access to educational opportunities that have never before been available in that part of Florence County.”

Instructors from FMU and FDTC will teach courses in a variety of disciplines. Dual enrollment courses and courses for traditional students will include English, math, history, biology, chemistry, art, music, business, computer science, education, pre-engineering and pre-nursing. Initially, the workforce development courses will provide training in HVAC, welding, health sciences, mechatronics and advanced manufacturing technology.

Though courses at various academic levels will not be combined, students will be able to change tracks and pathways during the course of their education as new opportunities and interests present themselves. In addition, some dual enrollment and other courses already offered by FMU and FDTC will move to The Continuum facility in Lake City. Additional courses will be added as The Continuum grows.

The Facility

Architect McMillan Pazdan Smith, who has developed several facilities similar to The Continuum across the state, drew inspiration for the design of the 46,000-square foot structure from Lake City’s rich agricultural history, but The Continuum will be filled with state-of-the-art technology. Included in that mix will be seven high-tech classrooms, three computer labs, three distance learning (online) classrooms, large prep rooms for biology and chemistry labs, four workforce development classrooms/labs, health science space, and a large lecture hall that can be converted into event space. The FMU-run business incubator will have a separate public entrance and space for up to five nascent businesses.

South Carolina-based Thompson Turner Construction is overseeing the construction of The Continuum. Thompson Turner is a division of the Thompson Companies, which provides construction and maintenance services worldwide.

The Continuum is currently scheduled to be complete in May with classes beginning in August.

Leadership

Jeanette Altman, most recently the principal at J. Paul Truluck Creative Arts & Science Magnet School in Lake City, will be the director of The Continuum.

Altman is a 1999 graduate of Clemson University, where she earned a B.S. in industrial engineering. She worked for Michelin Tire Corporation in Lexington as an industrial engineer for three years before moving to Lake City and pivoting to the world of education. She was a teacher and assistant principal before assuming the principalship at the Truluck magnet. Altman holds a Master of Education in educational administration from the University of South Carolina.

Anna Todd, most recently assistant director of admissions at FMU, will direct FMU’s services at The Continuum, while also managing a variety of other outreach programs for the University. Todd received both her undergraduate degree in business (2006) and her MBA (2008) from FMU.

Briana Dennis, executive director of the Kelly Center at FMU, will manage the business incubator. Dennis received both her undergraduate degrees (2003) and her MBA (2007) from FMU.

Other personnel, including a program manager for FDTC at The Continuum, will be named soon. The Continuum will be governed by a four-member board, consisting of Darla Moore (chair); Dr. Marion Fowler, the president and CEO of the Darla Moore Foundation; FDTC’s Bethea; and FMU’s Carter. For more information, contact Jeanette Altman at The Continuum at 843-374-4477 or orjaltman@thelccontinuum.org.



Jeanette Altman



Anna Todd



Briana Dennis



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FMU HONORS FALLEN Submitted by FMU



Turner Park

Francis Marion University recently unveiled a new park on campus in honor of the late Farrah “Maxine” Turner. The unveiling took place at an on-campus ceremony that included members of the Turner family, the Florence community and University administrators.

Turner, a 2005 graduate of the University, was an investigator with the Florence County Sheriff’s Office. Turner Park, situated amongst the Forest villa residential apartments on the University’s campus, is a picturesque and intimate space that includes a fountain, benches, darting trails and various flowers and plants.

The creation of Turner Park was approved by the Francis Marion University Board of Trustees during their November 2018 meeting. Francis Marion University President Dr. Fred Carter said the park is a fitting tribute to a person who was the true embodiment of public service. “It’s an idyllic place, and it’s probably the most appropriate venue that we could determine for countless generations to sit on those benches and reflect on what the true meaning of public service is,” Carter said.



Farrah Turner

Linda Goodwin-Weaver, Turner’s aunt, said the park’s dedication personifies the close ties the family has with Francis Marion. “Farrah loved this university. Our family had no home university, so Francis Marion became our university and Farrah has inspired so many in our family to come here,” Goodwin-Weaver said. “This is a great day for us.”

The park is a part of the University’s ongoing enhancements within its residential areas on campus.

MUSC LAUNCHES INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY Submitted by MUSC

CHARLESTON-In the summer of 2018, the Medical University of South Carolina's MUSC Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion launched the David J. and Kathryn Cole BRIHTE Leadership Academy, named for the president and first lady of the institution.

BRIHTE stands for Building and Retaining Inclusive High-potential Talent and Excellence. This two-year enterprise-wide leadership training program is designed for professionals who self-identify as underrepresented minorities (URM) in healthcare professions. The program invites applications from individuals who are currently employed, high-potential URM team members at MUSC. It is designed to identify and prepare participants for future leadership positions within the organization.

"The BRIHTE Leadership Academy is astonishingly engaging! The first meeting was witty, while intellectually stimulating...even down to the associated literary material. I am immensely honored to be part of such a prestigious program. My hope is that as I interact with others, they

will know that the David. J. and Kathryn Cole BRIHTE Leadership Academy is changing what's possible here at MUSC." – Mary Lewis, MUSC PC-Laboratory

Strategically aligned with MUSC's institutional vision, mission, values and goals and utilizing the National Center for Healthcare Leadership (NCHL) Health Leadership Competency Model, this leadership development program is designed to identify and prepare BRIHTE participants for future leadership positions at MUSC; align with the goals of the organization's strategic plan; and implement an innovative approach to longstanding models of "grow your own" talent and leaders.

This BRIHTE program was created and is facilitated by Dr. Willette Burnham Williams, University chief diversity officer and Title IX coordinator, VeLonda Dantzler, HR manager/learning and talent development and Dr. DaNine J. Fleming, associate professor, director of Training and Intercultural Education, Unconscious Bias Faculty scholar.



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INTERSECTIONALITY AT COASTAL CAROLINA Submitted by Emily Vrettos, CCU Student Marketing Assistant

CONWAY - Coastal Carolina University is home to many students of all different racial and ethnic backgrounds. As stated in Coastal Carolina's Strategic Plan, "CCU appreciates diversity and values civility and fairness toward individuals, cultures, ideas and resources." These values led to the establishment of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI). This office provides leadership, support and resources to promote a culture of equality. Not only does ODI promote this culture, but the office also supervises and works alongside Intercultural and Inclusion Student Services, which promotes social inclusiveness through a variety of involvement opportunities.

Intercultural and Inclusion Student Services has recently developed a new program that focuses on intersectionality. According to Atiya Stokes-Brown, Ph.D., assistant vice president for diversity and inclusion, "At its core, intersectionality is an idea that we as individuals have lots of different identities that make up who we are...to think about ourselves holistically is to understand how those identities intersect with one another and then frame our world view and the way which we live."

This concept of recognizing the intersect of identities has led Intercultural and Inclusion Student Services to create the "Black and..." series.

The idea behind this series focuses on the different realms of identity that exist and the obstacles people with specific identities face. Franklin Ellis, Psy. D., assistant director of Intercultural and Inclusion Student Services, is the creator of the "Black and..." series. Ellis, a Coastal Carolina graduate with a degree in psychology, a master's in mental health counseling and a doctorate in marriage and family therapy, discussed the evolution of the office from focusing on a singular idea of Black History month, to this year incorporating the spread of different cultural identities found within the Black community. The "Black and..." series held events every week during the month of February to celebrate Black History month. The four identities covered in this series revolved around being black, in addition to being Asian, Jewish, disabled and a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. A black and LGBTQIA+ drag show finished off the series at the end of February. All events included speakers who discussed their lived experiences and the ways in which their lives have been shaped by the broader social and political climate.

The speakers chosen for the events have their own relatable experiences being defined as more than "black," inspiring students and faculty alike. Stokes-Brown talks about the impact of the series, saying, "'Black and...' had a goal to have the audience ground their sense of intersectionality. Intercultural and Inclusion Student Services wants these events to help our students understand how important intersectionality is in terms of understanding their social identities and how they move through the world." Although this series is new for Intercultural and Inclusion Student Services, the office plans to continue this for future Black History months, giving the opportunity for more people to share their story.



Franklin Ellis



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SOUTH FLORENCE AND WILSON “TEAM UP” WITH GSSM

Submitted by Melissa Rollins, Communications Specialist, Florence 1 Schools



Florence 1 Schools Students first

Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, students at Wilson and South Florence High Schools will have the chance to take classes through the Governor’s School for Science and Mathematics (GSSM) without ever leaving their home school’s campus.

Through a virtual program called TEAM UP, Florence 1 students will take courses in math, science and engineering using real-time video conferencing technology provided by the Governor’s School. Students must apply and be accepted to the three-year program that begins in their tenth-grade year of high school.

Dr. Zaria O’Bryant, director of TEAM UP, said that the virtual program was started as a way to offer the opportunities available through the Governor’s School to more students around the state. “The Governor’s School for Science and Mathematics was established to give students across the entire state of South Carolina exposure to higher level math and higher level science,” O’Bryant said. “About seven or eight years ago the Governor’s School, along with our Foundation, SC colleges and universities, and several corporations around the state decided that if we could partner and reach into the school districts we could prepare more students and retain the talent in the state.”

O’Bryant said that with a 288-bed limit for the school’s residential program, their physical space is limited; virtual programming opens up the door for many more students across the state.

“The way we present the virtual program is through partnerships,” O’Bryant said. “We ask the schools to provide a space for the students to take their virtual courses, a facilitator (an adult who is in the room with the students and works with our instructors), and the bandwidth in order to have the video conferencing equipment; we provide everything else.”

Nine districts are current TEAM UP partners. Florence 1 Schools will join next school year.

“We want students to be prepared before they ever get to college,” O’Bryant said. “The whole point of these virtual engineering programs is to cultivate more engineers in South Carolina. We need more engineers, and we need more students to go to school in South Carolina; that will help the entire South Carolina economy.”

O’Bryant said that the virtual courses will offer students an extensive outlook on potential majors for college. “We want to give them a broad

stroke of what engineering is and allow them to go more in depth in some of the areas, such as mechanical and aerospace or biomedical, so they are more prepared when they go to college to decide what major they want to pursue,” he said. “The majority of the engineering courses in TEAM UP are honors courses, but they are going to get exposure to college content and curriculum and when they actually go to college they won’t be shocked by how much work it is and how complicated it is.”

Chris Rogers, Florence 1 Schools director of STEM, said that, aside from the course material, another interesting aspect of the program is the chance for students in Florence to meet their peers from around South Carolina. “The students in Florence will be able to communicate with the students who are in the class with them from across the state so they’ll get a chance to meet students they wouldn’t have otherwise,” Rogers said. “A few Saturdays a semester, the students will also get together in-person and do science experiments and other projects together.”

Rogers added that he is excited for the rigor this program offers, setting students up for success in college. “This is challenging curriculum but something that they can handle when they work hard, especially if this is something that they really want to do. With several of the courses, they will also earn dual-enrollment credits to put toward a degree.”

Students will apply as a rising tenth-grader and must have completed Algebra I and Algebra II to enter the program. South Florence students who are interested in TEAM UP will need to take a summer Algebra II course to meet the requirements because of the way their class scheduling currently runs.

Florence 1 Schools Superintendent Dr. Richard O’Malley said that the district’s commitment to providing academically challenging courses to students stretches beyond simply what can be offered in a brick and mortar building, as shown by the partnership with GSSM.

“Partnering with the Governor’s School, we are able to offer more classes at a higher level of rigor than we can physically offer in all of our high schools,” O’Malley said. “Technology is a great way to open the world up to our students and give them every opportunity possible.”

Students who would like more information, or are interesting in applying for the program, can contact their school guidance counselor or Chris Rogers at chris.rogers@fsd1.org.



WRIGHTEN RECEIVES FMU'S AAFSC DIVERSITY AWARD Articles submitted by FMU



Dr. Shayna A. WRIGHTEN

Dr. Shayna A. WRIGHTEN, an associate professor of biology and coordinator of the Pre-Dental Program at Francis Marion University, received the FMU African-American Faculty & Staff Coalition's Diversity Award at the organization's annual gala. The diversity award, given annually by the coalition, highlights the work of individuals who are dedicated to celebrating diversity and inclusiveness at FMU and beyond. Organizers noted WRIGHTEN's commitment to encouraging inclusivity, especially within the FMU student body.

WRIGHTEN is a native of Charleston, who joined the FMU faculty in 2012. She received her B.S. in neuroscience from Furman University and her Ph.D. in biomedical studies from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine.

WRIGHTEN's honor highlighted the AAFSC's 18th annual gala, which is a fundraiser for the organization's scholarship fund and other charitable activities. The AAFSC recognized 12 recipients of AAFSC-sponsored scholarships; heard from keynote speaker Kevin L. Jacobs, a local meteorologist; and reacted enthusiastically when FMU President Dr. Fred Carter announced a new scholarship in honor of the late Dr. Freda Campbell Wilson, the founding director of FMU's Speech-Language Pathology Program.

The Campbell Wilson scholarship will go to minority students majoring in the health sciences. It joins four other named scholarships administered by the AAFSC. The AAFSC was founded at FMU in 1995 to stimulate and enhance cultural awareness and to promote professional development and welfare among faculty, staff and students.

The organization's goals include increasing morale and communication among members; creating an atmosphere of community for FMU African-

American faculty, staff and students; serving as a liaison between the administrative personnel of FMU and the African-American faculty and staff; and examining the university's efforts in recruitment and retention of African-American faculty and staff. Past winners of the AAFSC Diversity Award included Dr. Rebecca Lawson, Dr. Louis Venters, Ms. Angela Crosland, Dr. Rhonda Brogdon, Ms. Yvonne Davis, Mrs. Crystal Graham, Dr. Will Wattles, Dr. Jason Owens and Dr. Ruth Wittmann-Price.

DURANT RECEIVES BUSINESS AWARD



Dr. Hari Rajagopalan, the dean of the FMU School of Business, presents award to Durant

The Francis Marion University School of Business honored Joyce M. Durant with the 2019 Morgan B. Coker Outstanding Alumni award at its annual Alumni Reception at the FMU Performing Arts Center.

Durant spent her entire career at FMU where she earned a Bachelor of Science in business administration in 1973. She recently retired from her post as dean of the University's Rogers Library in July 2018.

The Morgan B. Coker Outstanding Alumni award is named for Morgan Coker, the first dean of FMU's School of Business. It's one of the top honors that can be bestowed upon a graduate of the school.

Durant's long tenure of service to the University spans 45 years and includes numerous title changes but started with the position of clerk-stenographer in the library's reference department.

Durant rose through a number of positions before being named the dean of the library in 2009.

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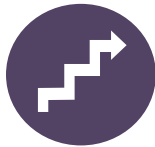
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TRANSFORMING TEACHER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION IN MARION

Submitted by Dr. Kandace Bethea, Superintendent



Dr. Kandace Bethea

MARION—Research and experience are clear: An effective teacher has largest in-school impact on students' academic achievement. However, school districts today, including Marion County, are facing a crisis in finding and keeping effective teachers especially in classrooms where they are needed most.

The Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) recently released the latest data for South Carolina, showing a continued trend of

teachers leaving their positions, creating vacancies and not having enough candidates to fill the void. This year alone, over 5,300 teachers either left the profession or left the state to teach in another state and only a little over 1,600 completed a SC teacher education program. This is a trend that has been occurring over the last five years.

Educators today have more choice about where they want to work, including tens of thousands of other districts across the U.S.—charter, private, online, and abroad. This brings greater pressure for small rural districts such as Marion County to compete for great teachers. With more information available than ever before, candidates are now using more ways than ever to find teaching jobs such as Google, social media, online application services such as Indeed and ZipRecruiter. No longer can districts run a springtime ad in the local newspaper and wait for teachers to come in droves. Research and experience tell us that the most effective teachers are hired by May.

In Marion County School District, we're now thinking and acting differently about recruiting and retaining teachers. We're currently building a year-round, proactive system to attract, hire and retain effective teachers for the classroom—and this includes involving district leadership, principals, teachers and community members. No longer is recruiting and retention a job for only human resources; it is now a district-wide effort that is a top priority across all departments, schools and community.

We're excited to be empowering teachers in recruitment through school-based onboarding teams—made up of the principal and a cross-section of teachers with varying backgrounds and experience. The teams work to recruit teachers to their schools through a variety of personal, meaningful connection points. The team also provides a warm welcome to new hires to provide connection and belonging right from the beginning—both keys to job satisfaction and retention.

We're also using daily compelling social media and professionally-created video to tell Marion County's transformation story to help attract great candidates to join our journey and celebrate the work of our current educators. Through the Empowering Educators to Excel grant from the US Department of Education, our teachers are receiving incredible layers of support such as individual coaching, new teacher leadership opportunities and professional learning communities—all which are major levers for retaining great teachers.

The process doesn't stop once the teacher is recruited. We are continuously finding ways to encourage our teachers to stay. Our teachers have told us the number one reason they stay is because of the connections in their schools and the community. We're proud of the progress we're making and can't wait to continue to see the impact on our students.

SENIOR BETA CLUB MEMBER AWARDED Articles submitted by Toyinda Smith, PDMSTA Communication Liaison



Willow Rogers

BISHOPVILLE – The Pee Dee Math, Science & Technology Academy’s (PDMSTA) Senior Beta Club delegates attended the State Senior Convention in Myrtle Beach, February 8-9. The delegates were Stephanie Layne, Tyler Brown, Willow Rogers, Austin Bailey and Layla Hammett. Student delegates demonstrated leadership and academic skills, shared ideas, engaged with and competed against other scholars from around the state.

Willow Rogers, a ninth-grade scholar, contended in the Division I: Spanish Competition and placed second in the state. Rogers will represent South Carolina and PDMSTA by competing at the National Convention in June in Oklahoma City, Okla. The mission of the Senior Beta Club Program

is to allow students opportunities to showcase their academic achievement, artistic creativity, critical thinking skills and collaborative teamwork, and to increase student leadership.

“Our students’ confidence as leaders and educational determination continues to strengthen. I am so proud of our PDMSTA scholars and of the academic achievement Willow Rogers demonstrated by placing second at the convention,” said E. Keith Bailey, executive director, PDMSTA.

The Pee Dee Math, Science & Technology Academy (PDMSTA) is a tuition-free public charter school established in fall of 2013. PDMSTA offers a unique approach to students located in the heart of rural Pee Dee region of South Carolina and serves students kindergarten through ninth grade. PDMSTA is located at 101 Docs Drive, Bishopville, S.C., 29010. For more information, you can contact the school at 803-428-8400, or visit their website at www.pdmsta.org.

JUNIOR BETA CLUB MEMBERS ATTEND JUNIOR CONVENTION



Junior Beta Club Delegates

The Pee Dee Math, Science & Technology Academy’s (PDMSTA) Junior Beta Club delegates attended the South Carolina State Junior Convention in Myrtle Beach from January 17-18. Ten PDMSTA student delegates demonstrated leadership and academic skills, shared ideas and engaged with and competed against

4500 other student scholars from around the state. PDMSTA students competed in the Book Battle and Quiz Bowl. Also, scholars Faith Ham and Chris Moorman competed in the speech competitions. In the arts category, Chris Moorman and Faith Ham entered drawings and paintings while Neil Bailey entered both paintings and poetry competitions. Additionally, several PDMSTA students competed in mathematics, social studies, English language arts and science subject tests. The scholars are as follows: Aaliyah McCullough,

Aiden Wilson, Jude Plyler, Kyasia Sims, Danielle Holmes, Neil Bailey, Faith Ham, Promise Ham, Chris Moorman and Johnnae Alston. The mission of the State Junior Beta Club Convention Program is to allow students opportunities to showcase their academic achievement, artistic creativity, critical thinking skills and collaborative teamwork and to increase student leadership.

“Each year more of our PDMSTA students are attending and competing at the State Junior Convention. I am so proud of our PDMSTA scholars and look forward to our local clubs’ growth and our students increase in confidence as leaders,” said E. Keith Bailey, executive director, PDMSTA. The Pee Dee Math, Science & Technology Academy (PDMSTA) is a tuition-free public charter school established in fall of 2013. PDMSTA offers a unique approach to students located in the heart of rural Pee Dee region of South Carolina and serves students kindergarten through ninth grade. PDMSTA is located at 101 Docs Drive, Bishopville, SC 29010. For more information, you can contact the school at (803) 428-8400 or visit their website at www.pdmsta.org.



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Eric George
Cyber Security Specialist
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TECHNICALLY SPEAKING – MAJOR, CAREER CHOICES AT HGTC *by Angela Crostrand*



April Garner was named HGTC's Educator of the Year in the Staff Member Category at the South Carolina Technical Education Association's Annual Conference

CONWAY – One of the most important decisions a person will ever make in life is the choice of career. Research has been conducted the world over about which occupations are in greatest demand and the role of higher education in meeting the needs of an ever-changing workforce. Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is among those that take that responsibility seriously.

Dedicated solely to the mission of finding the path to a career and employment for students and alumni is April Garner, director of the Career Resource Center at Horry-Georgetown Technical College. Nine years into this occupation after a major career transition, Garner says she is well-equipped to assist those trying to find their way. “(It was) after a layoff from the advertising world. I call

it a career reinvention.”

She had been a senior media buyer, public relations specialist and director of marketing, all of which seem to go hand-in-hand. The knowledge, abilities and experience were all a part of one skill set. When students come to the Office of Student Affairs at Horry-Georgetown Technical College, they are assessed to determine which occupations are best suited for their cluster of skills. When asked what they might find upon arrival Garner says, “Career and professional development resources, preparation for the work world, (and) employment assistance.”

The goal is to give students a thorough understanding of their choices, she adds. “Students tend to choose careers based upon something glamorous that appeals to them or because someone in their family did it, so they are pressed to maintain the legacy,” says Garner. “Every individual has options. These options should align with their interest, personality, values and goals.”

The career assessment is designed to provide the alignment. It not only highlights the skills of the individual but also how those aptitudes impact their potential for success and satisfaction in a given profession.

“Our students need to be educated on how to filter through those options and all this information to choose pathways that are right for their goals and ideas of success,” says Garner.

Within the next year, HGTC’s Office of Student Affairs hopes to increase student engagement at the first year level. Networking is one of the most important aspects of the career planning journey.

“Students don’t understand how important it is to start the career and professional development process on day one. It is extremely devalued,” says Garner. “We have to elevate the importance. This requires collaboration and mandates to become engaged and involved in career and professional development activities, day one.”

From a collegiate level, they get the academic foundation (textbook), and they can get the hands-on experience as well, she says. “That’s why we stress internships and work experiences,” Garner says. “These options, for example, help students to make solid, rational decisions about a career choice. That’s the beauty of community and technical colleges.”

Through the Career Resource Center, time and energy are invested in the “real world” conversations with students, researching the job market to gather employment facts, and exploring what options truly exist for the potential student or graduate.

“We then fill in the blanks with the professional pieces that help tell their unique stories in an attempt to make them as marketable as possible,” she adds.

There is a selling of their skills and qualifications to the employer. That is why it is important to forge formidable relationships with businesses and industries in the process. Collaboration with community, faculty and students has made the process less arduous, she adds.

“What works for my team is the collaboration with faculty to get face time with the students. Within the second year of working at HGTC, I realized that no student was going to use freewill to walk into our office to get a

resume done,” says Garner. “It just wasn’t top of mind; no urgency existed. We needed to be in front of them with the ability to make a lasting impression about starting the process early.”

When faculty began to buy into the idea of working with the Career Resource Center and utilizing class time to deliver presentations and topics on career and professional development, there was real progress.

“It was a ‘GO’ from there. We’re still trying to get everyone on board,” she says. “It’s important that this type of student support is elevated to a new level now more than ever.”

That’s where the Quality Enhancement Plan proves most beneficial. Garner, co-chair of the plan, describes it as an initiative undertaken by higher education administration to improve student success and learning. “Think of it as a focal point for student learning or success,” she says. “It’s based upon on-going research from a broad base of constituents who are vested in the college experience – students, faculty, staff, and employers.”

HGTC’s plan, Effective Professional and Interpersonal Communication (EPIC), was created out of a necessity to help students understand the importance of having strong communication skills, both written and oral. It supplements any instruction given on the topic of professional and interpersonal communication with exercises that demonstrate how to apply best practices in the workplace and social settings. The plan has been approved with the highest recommendation by The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and HGTC administrators are excited about its future implications.

SCTEA EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR RECIPIENTS

Submitted by HGTC

CONWAY–Horry-Georgetown Technical College recognized three standout employees at the South Carolina Technical Education Association’s (SCTEA) Annual Conference on Feb. 15.

HGTC’s Educator of the Year Award recipients were Heather Hoppe, registrar, in the administrator category; Chef Geoffrey Blount of the International Culinary Institute of Myrtle Beach in the faculty category; and April Garner, director of HGTC’s career resource center, in the staff category. Professor Casey King was also a finalist for the A. Wade Martin Innovator of the Year award for his work with the HGTC Addiction and Recovery Series. The award recipients were nominated by their peers for their outstanding leadership in their departments, their quality work and their community involvement.

“We are so proud of these individuals and their accomplishments,” said HGTC President Marilyn Fore. “Their hard work and dedication have made HGTC and our surrounding community a better place.”

HGTC offers college transfer and skilled associate degree programs in more than 65 fields of study, and many with online class options. Nearly all programs feature internships that lead to jobs. Ninety-five percent of students either transfer to earn advanced degrees or start careers in their respective fields of study. Horry-Georgetown Technical College prohibits discrimination against students and employees. Please direct discrimination and accessibility issues to the Office of Student Affairs at 843-349-5228 or Building 1100C, 2050 Highway 501 E., Conway, SC.



Pictured left to right: Heather Hoppe, April Garner and Chef Geoffrey Blount

HORRY ELECTRIC CREATES \$25,000 ENDOWMENT FOR HGTC PROGRAM Submitted by HGTC



Kevin Gore

CONWAY—Horry-Georgetown Technical College announced the creation of a \$25,000 endowment for its electrical lineman technician program, created by Horry Electric Cooperative in honor of one of its employees, Kevin Gore. Gore, an advance line technician who has worked for Horry Electric for over 30 years, is battling stage four pancreatic cancer.

Representatives from Horry Electric surprised Gore with the news. “Kevin was overcome by the news of the endowment and the scholarship that will be awarded on an annual basis in his honor,” said Burroughs Nobles, manager of operations for Horry Electric Cooperative. “Kevin asked me to be sure to tell everyone what a privilege it is to be able work for a company like Horry Electric Cooperative where everyone cares about each other like family and where the leadership values each person’s contribution to the organization.”

Horry Electric created this fund in his honor because of the impact he’s had on his coworkers over the years. “Kevin was always the first person I saw as I pulled into our parking lot. He always had a smile on his face, a positive attitude, and started your day making you glad to be a part of Horry Electric Cooperative,” said Pat Howle, executive vice president and CEO of Horry Electric Cooperative.

The endowment will make a difference in the lives of future generations of electrical line workers.

“I am so very thankful for this endowment, as it promises a fantastic and bright future for line workers in the industry,” said professor Scott Shoemaker. “Some of our students are challenged with the cost of the

program and the required tools. Because of donations like this, students are able to begin their career debt-free. It is very heart-warming for myself and our students that Horry Electric chose to honor Mr. Gore’s legacy in this way.”

The electrical lineman technician program at HGTC is a one-semester certificate program that prepares graduates to enter the electric utility industry as an apprentice with a broad understanding of the skills, knowledge, safe work practices and physical ability required to perform line work. Students must be 18 years of age and hold a valid driver’s license to enroll in the program.

Horry Electric Cooperative is a not for profit, member-owned cooperative dedicated to providing information and energy-related services on a fair and equitable basis. Founded in 1941, Horry Electric provides service to more than 79,000 meters across 5,291 miles of line. In 1999, Horry Electric Cooperative joined with other cooperatives across the nation to become a Touchstone Energy Cooperative.

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PATE ELEMENTARY COUNSELING PROGRAM
RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY AS "RAMP" SCHOOL

Submitted by Christopher McKagen, Communications Specialist DCSD



DARLINGTON—A nationally recognized counseling program is now serving the students at Pate Elementary School after the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) announced recently that the school is a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP).

The RAMP designation recognizes schools that are committed to delivering an exemplary comprehensive school-counseling program. Honorees are awarded for aligning their program with the criteria in the ASCA National Model, a framework for a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling.



Jennifer Dunn, the school counselor at Pate Elementary School, works with students at her school. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) announced recently that Pate Elementary School is a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP).

Pate Elementary Principal Shannon Fraser praised the school's counselor, Jennifer Dunn, for the hard work necessary to earn RAMP status. "I am honored to have Jennifer Dunn represent Pate Elementary School as a distinguished school counselor who is being recognized by the American School Counselor Association for her outstanding work and relentless dedication to children," Fraser said. "Mrs. Dunn

goes above and beyond to ensure our students are provided with both the academic and social-development skills they need on a daily basis. She exemplifies all of the attributes of a counselor who is committed and driven to always putting children first and doing whatever it takes to make each one reach their fullest potential."

"It is an honor to serve the Pate Elementary School community. I was thrilled that ASCA recognized the achievement of Pate's school counseling program by designating it as a RAMP school," Dunn said. "This gives me confirmation that what I do every day truly makes a difference in the lives of my students at Pate Elementary, which is why I do what I do."

Pate Elementary will now be honored during ASCA's annual conference in Boston, Mass., on July 1.

"This year's RAMP honorees have shown their commitment to students and the school counseling profession," said Jill Cook, ASCA assistant director. "These schools used data to drive their program development and implementation so all students can achieve success. The RAMP designation distinguishes these schools and encourages school counselors nationwide to strive for excellence."

RAMP applications are reviewed once a year and assessed in 12 different program areas. Since the program's inception, more than 820 schools have been designated at RAMP recipients. For more information on the program, visit www.schoolcounselor.org/ramp.



Dunn works with students at her school.



Jennifer Collins

When it comes to balancing a career, parenthood and classwork, Jennifer Collins is a professional. She has learned, firsthand, the challenges of having multiple responsibilities. Originally from Johnsonville, Collins lives in Florence with her 14-year-old son. She works full-time as a legal assistant and studies part-time in Florence-Darlington Technical College's (FDTC) paralegal degree program.

Collins first enrolled at FDTC in 2010 to study accounting, but after completing that program, she felt uncertain about what she wanted to do. Accounting just didn't seem to be the right fit. After taking a position as a legal assistant at Jebaily Law Firm in Florence, she became inspired to consider a new career path. She felt much more at home in the legal field and decided that she wanted to become a paralegal.

Collins knew that in order to advance in her career, she would need more education. In August of 2016, she returned to FDTC to pursue her associate degree in paralegal studies. "I definitely want to go on and become a certified paralegal," Collins said. "Once I finish this degree, I can actually get the certification I need and then narrow down the certification to an area of law that I especially like."

Collins said that her work place has been supportive of her decision to study and allows her to take time off for classes. Even so, she said that balancing work and school has been challenging, and that it isn't easy juggling a full-time job, part-time student schedule and full-time parenting. Fortunately, FDTC allows students to enroll in part-time course loads as well as online and distance learning courses. A part-time academic schedule and supportive instructors offered Collins the flexibility she needed to work and study well.

Collins said that being able to work in a law office and attend school gives her an advantage in her studies. "I come to school, and I hear the terminology that I've already been hearing at work, so it's been better to come through the program and have some idea of what goes on in a law firm, as opposed to just coming in here and taking classes and not being able to use it until graduation," she said.

Like many other students, Collins faced another challenge: how to pay for school. Even with a full-time job, she wasn't always sure where the extra money to pay for tuition and books would come from.

Then one day, Collins received a pleasant surprise: a letter informing her that she had been awarded the Turner Padgett Paralegal Scholarship, sponsored by Turner Padgett Law Firm through the FDTC Educational Foundation. One of her instructors, Tracy Evans, had submitted Collins' name for consideration.

"I was really happy, and then I found out Tracy had submitted my name. It meant a lot knowing that she thought that well of me," Collins said. "It made me feel like, 'okay, I really am doing a good job.'"

For Collins, the Turner Padgett Scholarship relieved some of the stress and financial burden of buying textbooks and supplies. But it also encouraged her to believe in herself and continue her studies. "Sometimes you go through the hard classes and you feel like, 'Okay, maybe I can't do this. What was I thinking?'" she said. "But the scholarship also helped me feel like I'm doing the right thing. It kind of justifies those long, long study nights and time away from my son."

The scholarship assistance gave Collins extra motivation to perform well, and she hopes to pass that motivation on to her teenage son. "I tell him all the time, 'Look, I made a good grade on this. Maybe you should do this too!' And it kind of challenges him to want to do better in school," Collins said. "If I can do it at age 40, then there's no reason you can't do it too."

Collins said that once she completes her degree program, she plans to obtain her paralegal certification and, hopefully, focus on personal injury or worker's compensation law. While not completely certain what the future holds, she is confident that her investment in her education will open up new opportunities. "Being able to come to Tech helped drastically. Being able to come back here for this second degree was great," she said. "It helps to be able to come back at any age. It's going to advance my career."

Collins said she is grateful to her instructors and her employer for helping her navigate a complicated work and study schedule. She also expressed gratitude to Turner Padgett Law Firm for sponsoring her scholarship.

"Thank you," she said. "It really means a lot to get extra help as a student who is entering this field, and to know that a local law firm is behind the local students, helping us out."

Collins added that she hopes other law firms and businesses will consider investing in scholarships at Florence-Darlington Technical College: "This is where we live, and if you help invest in your local students' futures, then your citizens are more educated," she said. "And that opens the door to jobs. If you help support local students, it's better for [the Pee Dee], and you're helping to grow the local community."

For more information about how you can help support students like Collins, visit www.fdtc.edu/donate, or contact Celeste Nunn at 843-661-8111 or celeste.nunn@fdtc.edu.

To learn more about the paralegal program at FDTC, contact Tracy Evans at 843-661-8047 or tracy.evans@fdtc.edu.

FDTC HONORS ITS OWN



Andrew Kampiziones

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) honored its top faculty and staff members Feb. 7 at the Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology (SiMT). The highlight of the annual College Awards was the honoring of FDTC's first ever Faculty Emeritus of Philosophy and Ethics. FDTC's Faculty Senate voted the award to recently retired instructor, Andrew Kampiziones. The well-known

Florentine taught philosophy and ethics at FDTC and is still a part-time faculty member.

"Of course, the honor, by extension, goes to all my colleagues," Kampiziones said. "Thanks to the Faculty Senate for deeming me worthy of such a high honor."

FDTC leaders also paid tribute to its Outstanding Employees of the Year. The three categories were administrator, faculty member and staff member. Outstanding Administrator of the Year was Jeronell Bradley, director of the Wellman INC. Library at FDTC; instructor of physics, Joshua Phiri, was the Outstanding Faculty Member of the Year; and registration coordinator, Turkesha Green with the Registrar's Office, was the Outstanding Staff Member of the Year.

The three winners were nominated and chosen by their peers. They will compete for statewide honors at the South Carolina Technical Education Association's conference. Runner-ups were also honored during the event. They were Emery DeWitt for administrator, Leroy D. Gibson, Jr. for staff member and Bob Indrihovic for faculty member.



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WHEN A KIND-HEARTED ATTORNEY ANSWERS HIS CALLING by Dawn "D.A." Goodwin



Charlie Blake

A man who has been referred to as “the complete package” by his friend and colleague graces our April 2019 Diversity Works Magazine© cover. Originally from Twin City, Ga., Charlie Blake is currently a partner at the Finklea Law Firm in Florence and the president of the Florence County Bar.

Blake graduated from Davidson College in 1996 with a degree in political science and then the University of South Carolina’s School of Law in 1999. After graduating from law school, he was awarded a fellowship by Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough. As part of the fellowship, he worked a year in legal services in Charleston. Blake said, “Legal aid allows an attorney to give individuals access to the law who could not afford it. It is not glamorous work, and sometimes resources are limited, but my clients during that fellowship really appreciated my assistance, and I realized that I had a chance to make a difference in people’s lives as an attorney.”

And we honor Blake for doing just that--making a difference in so many lives. He served as the county attorney for Florence County from 2003 to 2006 and was the interim county administrator in 2005. He also worked with the Richland County Department of Social Services, the Neighborhood Legal Assistance Program and the Korn Law Firm. Before being hired at the Finklea Law Firm, Blake already knew that it had a good reputation in the community. And because Blake knew Gary Finklea, one of his close friends, was looking to grow the firm, it made sense for him to join. “We talked and realized that I would be a good fit. I have been at the Finklea Law Firm for 12 years, so I am confident that I made the right decision.”



Charlie and daughter Hannah

And, that it was...Blake’s work as an attorney and friend has not gone unnoticed, and those close to him, including Gary Finklea have much to say about it: “The qualities that make Charlie an outstanding lawyer are the same traits that define him as an outstanding person. He has a great work ethic; he is a man of impeccable character; he is not only well educated, but also wise beyond his years; he has common sense and can apply his knowledge and understanding to any life or legal situation; he is caring, particularly about his clients’ causes; he is fair and reasonable; he is calm, cool and collected but ready to

argue and defend his clients with passion; he is a great communicator with those from all positions and walks of life and backgrounds; his attitude and outlook are exemplary; he’s invested in our community; and he is a Christian with a Godly worldview. Charlie lacks nothing that precludes him from being the best of the best! I consider him a partner, a colleague, a friend, and example.”

These words represent the true reflection of the level of honor Blake embodies and how he has touched others around him. But this selfless individual relates much of his success to his parents. Blake said, “They instilled in me the strong values that I exhibit today. My dad is a minister, so I always felt the burden of representing myself in a manner that would make my family proud. That sense of responsibility has stayed with me even as I became my own man.”

While Finklea also said that Blake is “undoubtedly one of the best dads and husbands” he knows, the one woman who knows that firsthand also had nothing short of high, much-deserved praises for her husband. Florence City Councilwoman Octavia Williams-Blake said, “Charlie is a

dedicated professional with a calm demeanor which contributes to his success as an attorney. At home, he is a doting husband and father who spends most weekends driving his family to out-of-town volleyball games. When not cheering for his daughter’s volleyball team, you can find him enjoying watching the Georgia Bulldogs play football.”

A devoted family man, husband and father, Blake wants his daughter, Hannah, to always feel confident knowing that even though he might have lost some cases or made mistakes, his heart was always in the right place.

Through it all, this kind-hearted attorney believes in diversity and inclusion and even sees being a minority in his field as an opportunity. “Our area has a small group of black male attorneys, so I am aware of how I represent as a black male. I aspire to set a high standard with the way that I handle my affairs and how I treat people. If I stay focused on the things that I control, I do not have to worry about anything else. My job involves the public, and that encompasses people from different backgrounds and experiences, so I definitely have to deal with certain prejudices in people. I just stay committed to doing the right thing and assisting those people that are willing to give me a chance. Diversity means dealing with



Charlie and his wife, Octavia

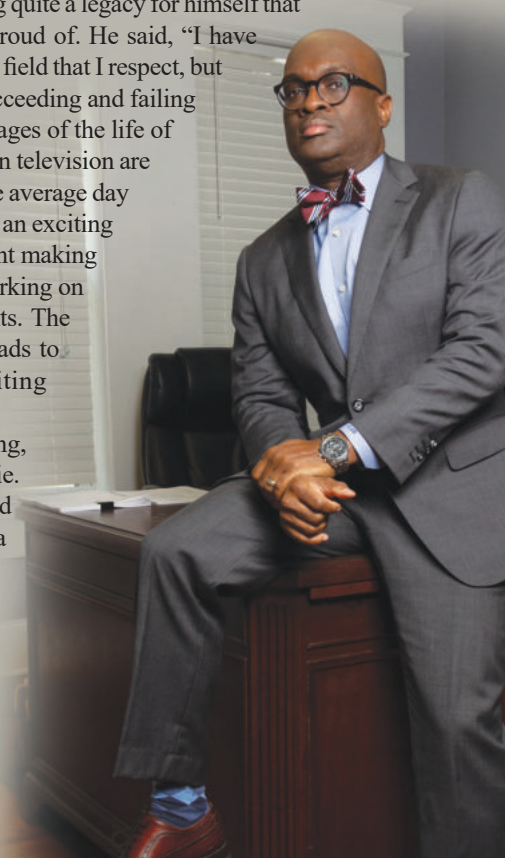
people of different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, ages, political beliefs, and ages. Inclusion deals with the ability to appreciate and respect those differences. I have a set of core values that govern my life, but I understand that not everyone views the world through the same lens as me. I think that it is beneficial to at least be open to learn and try

to gain understanding and sometimes even evolve.”

Even though Blake is so open and is an active member of the community with a job that requires interaction with the public, he is actually an introvert. “I always have a certain degree of apprehension around strangers. Over the years, I have challenged myself to open up to people because the community has really embraced me, but there is still that side of me that always wants to be home with my wife and daughter all the time.”

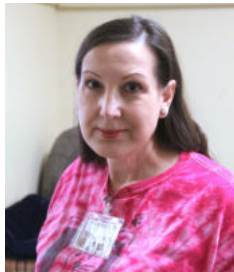
Blake is already building quite a legacy for himself that his family and friends are proud of. He said, “I have good role models in the legal field that I respect, but I learned many things by succeeding and failing on my own. Many of the images of the life of a lawyer that are portrayed on television are distorted. We don’t spend the average day in a huge trial or working on an exciting case. My average day is spent making phone calls, researching, working on files and meeting with clients. The daily grunt work is what leads to those rewarding or exciting moments.”

When he is not working, Blake is quite the sports junkie. “I thought a law degree would be a good starting point to a career in sports management. Ultimately, I realized that there were different options for me in law and that advocating and helping people was my calling.”



Celebrating Our Volunteers

PET TLC *by Jennifer Robinson*



Frankie Mizell

TIMMONSVILLE - Frankie Mizell is a champion for pets whose work as a volunteer is being highlighted by Honda of South Carolina (HSC) and Diversity Works Magazine©. Mizell is fond of cats and has given her time to volunteer for the Florence Area Humane Society (FAHS). Her name was submitted to Diversity Works by the team at HSC because of her dedicated work with FAHS. Her passion is strong for the care of pets because she wants

to bring more awareness to adoption.

Mizell stated that her work with FAHS is mostly motivated by the Core Values of Joy she has learned by working at HSC. The three "joys" express Honda's belief and desire that each person working in, or coming into contact with, the company--directly or through our products--should share a sense of joy through the experience:

The Joy of Buying - To experience this joy, customers need to receive a product that exceeds their expectations.

The Joy of Selling - This joy occurs when those who are engaged in selling and servicing Honda products develop relationships with customers based on mutual trust. Through this relationship, Honda associates, dealers and distributors experience pride and joy in satisfying the customer.

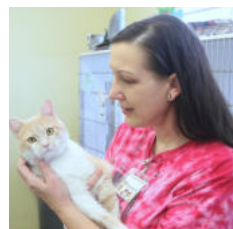
The Joy of Creating - This joy occurs when Honda associates and suppliers produce quality products that exceed customer expectations and experience pride in a job well done (www.hondaofsouthcarolina.com).

Mizell says, "HSC believes in giving back to the community and supports volunteerism."

Mizell has been volunteering with the Florence Humane society since 2010. She said there are many reasons why she gives of her time, but her initial reason was because her beloved cat, Miss Kitty, died after

being with her for 15 years. Mizell went to the society to give away all of Miss Kitty's belongings and saw other people volunteering there. That's when she inquired about how she could serve. After her orientation to the society, she worked in the cat room. The cat room, she stated, is an area where families can visit with a cat before adoption to get better acquainted with their pet. Mizell also recycles the cardboard drink trays to use for bedding for the smaller animals and disposable litter trays.

Mizell currently works with the cats two days a week after work and from 12:30-4p.m. on Saturdays. Though she says she has an affinity for cats, she will work in other areas as needed. Because of her passion for cats, she has adopted two rescue cats, JoJo and Princess Karma, from the FAHS. JoJo was not being adopted and Princess Karma needed vet care, so Mizell decided to take them home and give them additional foster care.



Frankie Mizell enjoys caring for the animals

When asked why she selected the FAHS as the place to volunteer, Mizell stated that she enjoys the feeling of knowing she has saved a life. She shared another passion she has in working with pets is to collaborate with hospice. She said that when she lived in Charlotte years ago, she helped hospice find care for the pets of the patients who did not have anyone to care for them. When patients are struggling with illness, pets are often not the priority of the families or those people caring for the patients, Mizell stated. She filled that particular need there and hopes to partner with Hospice of Florence to assist with pet care of patients.

Then, when asked what the future holds for her and her work with pets, Mizell simply stated, "I will continue to bring awareness to pet adoption, especially rescued animals."

We honor Frankie Mizell for not only bringing awareness but also caring enough to take action and provide care for our pet friends.

WHEN LIVING UP TO WHAT OTHERS SAY GOES RIGHT *by Les Echols*



Ray Taylor

From playing characters in local plays to serving the less fortunate in the Florence community, for the past 20 years, Ray Taylor has cemented a great legacy in the Florence community. Always cordial and sincere, when someone brings his name up, there is always a smile, and people always have great things to say about him.

Having made a career change recently, Taylor is a mortgage loan officer for Finance of America Mortgage. He has been in that position since December of 2017. "In my previous life, I was the general sales manager for Florence Toyota. I was with that company for 23 years. In fact, the Toyota store is who brought my wife and me here to Florence in 1997," said Taylor.

Taylor sums up his dedication to community in a Winston Churchill quote: "You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give." Taylor is involved with a plethora of productions at The Florence Little Theatre, from *Les Misérables*, to *Little Shop of Horrors*. He has enjoyed a 20-year stint as a member of the Florence Breakfast Rotary Club and is a past president of the prestigious organization. He has served on boards for the Salvation Army, Boy Scouts and the YMCA,

along with serving on several church boards. In addition, Taylor currently serves as a board member for CAREHouse of the Pee Dee, a child advocacy center whose mission is "to promote help, hope, and healing in a nurturing environment to child abuse victims and their families, through supportive services and prevention."

When asked about the strides his community has made in diversity, Taylor said, "I think we have made strides in the right direction--some of them small and others large. We can all do better by just loving one another. I think if people in need can witness people that look like them working alongside people that don't look like them coming to their aid, it would greatly impact their feelings of inclusion and what that should look like for them," concluded Taylor. He mentioned another of his favorite quotes by an unknown author: "Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."

Taylor has been married to his wife Laura for 21 years (22 in September). They have three children: Jordan (18), Houston (17) and Tripp (15). "My kids are by far my greatest gifts," said Taylor. Taylor earned his bachelor's from Western Carolina University, double majoring in computer information systems and business management.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

MCLEOD FOUNDATION NAMES VOLUNTEER AND PHYSICIAN CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

Submitted by McLeod Health



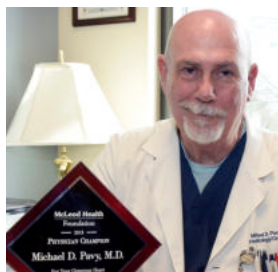
Pictured left to right: Jill Bramblett, executive director of the McLeod Health Foundation; Ginger Sullivan with the 2018 McLeod Foundation Volunteer of the Year award; and Roxanna Prezioso, development officer

enhanced patient services in one of McLeod's seven hospitals or planning special events. Many improvements in patient care would otherwise not be possible.

In 2018, the McLeod Foundation honored two very deserving individuals: Ginger Sullivan as the Volunteer of the Year and Dr. Michael Pavy as the Physician Champion of the Year.

In presenting the Volunteer of the Year award, Jill Bramblett, executive director of the McLeod Health Foundation, said, "The intent of this award is to shine a light on the extraordinary generosity of an individual that has made a remarkable difference in bringing about a positive change in our community."

"Ginger Sullivan, this year's Volunteer of the Year, has been a shining example of the very best that can be accomplished through philanthropy. Webster's Dictionary describes philanthropy as 'love of mankind.' Most of us think of it as giving something of value away. However, it has become more than simply supporting charitable causes and purposes. Philanthropy promotes the quality of life and includes volunteer service in addition to gifts. It is a human experience that is fully appreciated, not only by those in need of help or assistance, but by the giver that impacts the lives of others." "Ginger is very special woman who leads by example every day. She inspires the best in us," added Bramblett. "Ginger dedicates her time and resources to make a difference in the healthcare needs of our region. Her generous heart has led to amazing work in the McLeod Cancer Center, the McLeod Hospice House, the Guest House at McLeod, the HOPE Fund for cancer patients and McLeod Children's Hospital. Through Ginger's work on committees and boards, she has used her generosity to effect change rather than to preserve the status quo. Her work has made a lasting impact for the 'love of mankind.'"



Dr. Pavy with the Physician Champion of the Year award

dedicates his time and energy to his patients, serves as an ambassador for the Foundation and gives generously from his heart. Clearly understanding the need for philanthropy, he has gone that extra mile to make an impact on cancer care at McLeod Health."

Each year, the McLeod Foundation honors special individuals whose consistent leadership has contributed significantly to the work of the organization. Volunteers are instrumental in helping the Foundation raise funds needed to support the programs and services of McLeod Health. These volunteers serve in championing the need for

When the Helping Oncology Patient Everyday (HOPE) Fund was established in 2014, Pavy immediately had a stake in the success of the fund, according to Prezioso. "While he, his partners and staff provide the very best clinical care for their patients, Dr. Pavy is well aware of the many life-changing financial issues that are barriers to care when a patient is undergoing cancer treatment. It was clear to him that donors to the HOPE Fund could provide assistance to patients who are struggling. He quickly grasped the concept of the healing power of gratitude and embraced the idea that physicians are the number one influencer for grateful patients. Through his encouragement and support of grateful patient efforts, Dr. Pavy has influenced hundreds to give to help McLeod cancer patients in their often difficult journey," added Prezioso.

BUSINESS PERSON & ROTARY CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Submitted by the Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce



(L to R) Leigh Ann Bizzell, Jamie Kelly and Murphy Monk

Meeting. The new format of the evening included delicious hors d'oeuvres, cocktails and desserts catered by Hidden Treasures and a ceremony celebrating the Chamber's 2018 accomplishments and 2019 goals. In addition to this, both the 2018 Will Woodham Business Person of the Year and 2018 Rotary Citizen of the Year awards were presented at the meeting.

Presented by Leigh Ann Bizzell of Bizzell's Food and Spirits, the 2018 Will Woodham Business Person of the Year was awarded to Jamie Hendrix Kelly. Kelly is the chair elect for the Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce Board and is the owner of Hartsville's Indigo Salon and Day Spa. She has been an integral member of the Chamber for many years and has catapulted Indigo Salon and Day Spa into being one of the biggest staples of the Hartsville business community.



(L to R) Charles Saverance and Bob Braddock

community, volunteering and making a difference in the lives of others.

The 2019 Annual Meeting was a success and highlighted not only the Chamber's wonderful accomplishments of the 2018 year, but also two extremely deserving members of the Hartsville community. The Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce would like to thank all of its sponsors for providing the Chamber membership with this momentous event, including: Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center, Duke Energy, Hartsville Country Club, Hospice Care of South Carolina, McGee Financial Group and Raceway Automotive. Lastly, the Chamber would like to extend a special thank you to Hidden Treasures for catering this event!



Celebrating Our Volunteers

DAVISON GAINS GREATEST FEELING EVER *by Les Echols*



Brian Davison

Diversity Works had an opportunity to catch up with Brian Davison, director of sales for the Florence Center. Davison is an energetic and vocal advocate for community and local non-profits. His story, like him, is exciting, energetic and endearing.

DW: Tell us about how you became involved in community.

BD: I have dedicated a lot of my service through the years to the Boy Scouts of America, where I am currently serving as an executive board member for the Pee Dee Area Council and VP of Finance. I believe this program is needed now more than ever. There are a greater number of single-parent households. It gives young people the perfect platform to find mentors in their own community. Under these mentors, they get the chance to learn practical life skills, self-growth and achievement through hard work.

DW: How did your journey bring you to the Florence Center?

BD: Several years ago, I worked for a costume character company in town, and I was asked to help the Pee Dee Pride Mascot, Paws, out. The gentleman who was the normal person behind the mask needed me to fill in. After taking over the mascot job full time, I was then asked by two of my mentors, Debbie Hyler & Jack Capuano, to be their Game Day Operations and Community Affairs coordinator for the Pee Dee Pride. I worked for the Pride for a few years until the team dissolved in 2005. I stepped over to help the start-up of the Pee Dee Cyclones and Florence Phantoms arena football team as their assistant general manager. After a season of working for the Phantoms, the general manager of the Florence Civic Center, Kendall Wall, approached about having an opportunity for me on his staff. I accepted the position of assistant box office manager. I was the assistant for several years before earning the opportunity to help in sales as a sales coordinator, then box office manager. Then the business development manager position opened in the sales department about two years ago. I accepted the promotion into the business development manager and moved forward. It was a great full circle journey. I then was asked to become the director of sales of the new crowned "Florence Center."

This is the quickest version of how I became the director of sales for the Florence Center. The wildest thing about this ongoing journey is it has no true ending, and there is no limit to where you can go in this industry. There are some awesome people I get to work with who work hard to keep things going on behind the scenes. We have a very energetic general manager in Paul Beard. It's a true blessing to work with the many individuals that keep the Florence Center moving.

DW: Tell us about the Center's involvement in the community.

BD: The Center works with many local non-profit organizations. For example, earlier in 2019, we did a large fundraiser with the House of Hope. Their guest speakers were Willie & Korie Robertson of Duck Dynasty fame. We do a number of other fundraising events throughout the year. We pride ourselves on the numerous organizations who hold their social or networking events at our facility throughout the year.

The Florence Center staff helped in the United Way Day of Caring this past year. It was an awesome time. We went over to do yard work at two houses in our Northeast Florence Community.

DW: What can the business community and community at-large do to help?

BD: There are numerous non-profit organizations in our community who need help, and the best way to assist is to get involved. They don't always need money, but they also need volunteers and donations. Mercy Medicine Free Clinic in downtown Florence hands out toiletries to the homeless. Empowered to Heal is a non-profit organization that helps adult survivors of domestic and child abuse situations. They are a free service for those in need. It's a growing problem that is not always noticed in our community. Organizations, Harvest Hope Food Bank and Manna House, help feed our communities and homeless population. While that is true, they also donate food to Florence Darlington Technical College for their population of students who don't have enough food to eat while trying to improve their living conditions with a different career. If I wouldn't have enrolled into the Leadership Florence Class of 2019, I would never know about these three organizations. I would've thought all I needed to do is donate some canned goods and maybe some money to the Salvation Army or volunteer at Christmas time in front of Wal-Mart. There is a great need in our community to help the underprivileged. Numerous organizations in the Pee Dee Region would love to have you volunteer and not have to give money. If you want to know how to get the greatest feeling ever, volunteer. It will change your life.

DW: Tell us about the Ambassador of the Year award you earned and what it meant to you.

BD: The Ambassador of the Year is an award given to someone who has achieved being the most active in certain Greater Florence Chamber events throughout the course of the calendar year. If you want to see, firsthand how an organization that single-handedly changes what goes on in our town, look no further than the Chamber. The president of the Chamber, Mike Miller, and his staff work countless hours with every business they can to push Florence forward. We have a budding downtown area that is announcing new development, it seems every day. As part of the ambassador, I get to see this firsthand.

I am blessed to live in a community like Florence. I am lucky to be married and raise my two children in this town. I always used to say I was born in Columbus, Ohio and moved to Florence a month before Hurricane Hugo. After taking the time to think about all of this, I am proud of my hometown. I guess I am going to have to say, I grew up in Florence, SC.

Brian Davison lives in Florence with the love of his life, Ashley; their son, Tucker; and their daughter, Ellie. He earned an associate of arts from Florence-Darlington Technical College and is pursuing his bachelor's degree in business management from Southern New Hampshire University online.





Sommer and mom Cheryl

AUTISM FROM THE EYE OF A SIBLING

Submitted by Jamie Sullivan, Project Coordinator at SOS Health Care

MYRTLE BEACH-

Autism is a spectrum disorder, which means there is a range of symptoms and severity. Every individual with autism is different. According to the Mayo Clinic, “Autism Spectrum Disorder is a condition related to brain development that impacts how a person perceives and socializes with others, causing problems in social interaction and communication. The disorder also includes limited and repetitive patterns of behavior.” Autism has been diagnosed at a higher rate in boys than girls. So, stories about girls with autism are rare.

Sommer, who is the middle child of three, was diagnosed with autism at a young age. While many people recognize boys with autism as not being very social, Sommer is the opposite. Sommer is a girl who loves to be around people. However, she struggles with communication and social skills. Like many people with autism, it takes Sommer extra time to process what someone says to her and to think about what she wants to say. She has a hard time understanding social cues and questions that are posed to her.

When Sommer was diagnosed, autism was not as common as it is now. Her older brother, Wayne, Jr. credits his father’s medical background for catching the signs early. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy was hard to come by at that time, so their mom, Cheryl, began her own Applied Behavior Analysis Therapy program for Sommer. Sommer’s therapists helped her to develop language and functional skills. In school, she had staff “shadows” to help keep her on task.

According to Wayne, earlier parts of grade school were difficult for Sommer because of her struggles with social skills. At the time, he didn’t realize how it would impact her, but because he was only one year older than Sommer, he was part of her ABA learning process, helping her navigate social cues all while he was growing up and learning about them himself. He says that he and his brother have a different perception of what it is like to grow up with a sister because Sommer has autism, an experience most brothers don’t have. Wayne did not have so-called typical experiences like arguing with his sister because it did not come up. Instead, he grew up teaching his sister how to navigate social experiences including teaching her how to ask friends to do something she wanted to do or how to dress appropriately for a specific event.

As Sommer reached adulthood, she began attending SOS Health Care’s Life Skills 1 program. Here, she learned about money and time management, how to do laundry, grocery shopping, how to cook meals and more. In addition, Sommer worked as an assistant fitness instructor in SOS’s adaptive fitness program, Fit for Life. Sommer loved working out and teaching others with disabilities how to do different exercises.

Eventually, Sommer decided to attend Horry Georgetown Technical College’s Digital Arts program. While she is talented and enjoyed her projects, Sommer found it difficult to keep up with her classes.

About three years ago, Sommer enrolled in SOS Health Care’s Job

Coach program. She worked with the job coach to develop job skills, practice interviewing, develop a resume, and apply for jobs. She obtained jobs working at a local dress shop. This allowed Sommer to work on her communication and customer service skills, which is a struggle for her. But, she dreamed of being a mermaid at Ripley’s Aquarium. With the help of her job coach, Sommer was hired as one. Once she was hired, the job coach attended training with Sommer, including swimming in the aquarium alongside her to help her learn the routine. Sommer has been working as a mermaid for two years now and loves her job.

Sommer has a close relationship with her brothers, especially Wayne, Jr. He is just one year older than her. He is especially proud of her progress in the last five years. Sommer has learned the turn-taking we experience in everyday conversations. When asked a question, not only will she answer, but she will also ask a question back, showing her interest in the conversation.

As an older brother, Wayne looks out for Sommer. So, when he got engaged, he and his fiancé had an important conversation about what would happen to Sommer if Wayne’s parents passed away. Together, they decided that they would either live close by if Sommer lived independently, or she would come to live with them. Wayne’s fiancé, Anna, says that Sommer is very helpful with cooking and cleaning, so she would be able to help around the house. She wonders if the couple were to have children if Sommer would be able to watch the children. As the sister-in-law of a person with autism, Anna says it would be an emotionally difficult situation because she would want to make sure that Sommer would be happy living with her and Wayne, Jr. and not wanting something else such as a husband or family.

Sommer has high anxiety about driving, so she has not taken the test to get her license. Transportation would be a big concern. Wayne, Jr. says he wants his little sister to be able to fully contribute to society and not have to wait on him or other family members to do things.

Wayne, Jr. notes that while he and his younger brother, Luke, will both be involved in their medical studies and training for the next 5-10 years, assisting Sommer on their own would be difficult, but there’s no question that they would be there to help her. Wayne says that one of the other difficulties in helping Sommer would be navigating the world of government resources such as social security, which is often difficult for families of individuals with autism and other disabilities.

Sommer has applied to live at SOS Health Care’s Oak Tree Farm community. At Oak Tree Farm, she can live alone or with roommates who have autism or intellectual disabilities. There will be resources on-site, including job coaching, social skills development and adaptive fitness, which is Sommer’s favorite. Here, she will be surrounded by supports designed to help her thrive and be as independent as possible. The community is also close to transportation, features walking trails, and has a Community Training Center. One of the biggest resources, however, is the community of peers that Sommer will be surrounded by.

Currently, the next step for Sommer is SOS’s intensive workshop, Life Skills 2, which focuses on skills necessary for life at Oak Tree Farm. Some of the lessons in Life Skills 2 focus on fire safety, managing your own healthcare, household maintenance, and developing relationships with other potential residents of Oak Tree Farm. With the support of her family and SOS Health Care’s programs for individuals with autism, the future is bright for Sommer.

ONE PARENT WHO WOULDN'T TRADE THE JOURNEY Submitted by LaTanya Goodson, mother



William Goodson

GEORGETOWN-The journey started for the Goodson family in 2013 when our pediatrician gave us the diagnosis that our 2 1/2 year old son was on the spectrum. Being educators, we were aware of autism and the misconception of what a child with autism should act or look like, but we didn't know exactly what it meant for us because William had reached all his milestones, so we didn't quite know what being on the Autism Spectrum meant for him. As parents,

we didn't know what to expect or what lay ahead, but we knew that we were going to do everything we could to ensure that William got the assistance that he needed. Being in denial wasn't an option for us because we had seen to many parents in the school system that didn't think anything was wrong with their child.

We made the decision to take him out of the private pre-school he was attending so that he could attend the Special Needs 3K and 4K program that was offered in our school district. In addition, with the help of our case manager from BabyNet, we were quickly able to secure ABA services (a method of therapy used to improve or change specific behaviors). While trying to maximize the number of ABA hours he qualified for at times it was challenging due to the lack of trained or qualified line therapists, yet we started seeing him master several skills.

Currently, because of the limited number of line therapists, William no longer receives services (a struggle for most autistic families) and has been placed on waiting lists for other ABA providers. We still use the strategies we were taught, and hopefully, he will be afforded the opportunity to receive services again because we don't want him to

regress in any way.

While in school, academically William was learning along with normal peers. However, he struggled slightly with his comprehension. As a result, he is served in a regular education classroom with the exception of being pulled for 40 minutes to receive services with a special education teacher for ELA. As a third grader, we are proud that he is able to maintain his grades with the help of his support system (grandmother, parents, and 1-1 assistant).

When William is around other children, you can tell his language is not as developed as others and his socialization skills are not strong. These are the daily struggles we try to help him overcome. Whenever possible, with the help of companies like SOS, we have him attend social groups that are geared to teaching necessary skills for socialization. In addition, he is a part of our local Therapeutic Horse-riding Program, Hugs for Horses.

So often, my husband and I have debated whether having another child would help him with his language and social skills, but we have opted to let the focus be on him and making sure he gets all the necessary attention/skills that he will need.

Our journey with autism may be rough at times, but we are grateful for the skills that William has. We are able to travel and go to restaurants without him having major meltdowns. While he prefers routines, he can adapt to new changes. Even though William can get fixated on something for a while, eventually, he moves on to something else. For our family, every skill or social cue that comes naturally to other children has to be taught so that he is able to navigate his way through society, which is not easy at times. This journey is not easy, and we joke all the time that we work to ensure William is exposed to the world, but I wouldn't trade it for anything, and we are honored to take it with William.

MUCH THANKS TO SOS HEALTHCARE Submitted by Melissa Ward, mother



Camden Ward

MYRTLE BEACH-Three years ago, we sat in a developmental pediatrician's office for two plus hours searching for answers. AUTISM. We didn't know anything about it, nor did we realize this was just the beginning of fighting to get our son everything he needs to be as successful as possible in life. The road has been long and hard with countless battles, but the successes are like the warm sun on our face. Our faith in the Lord has become a firm foundation

in our home.

Biomedical interventions have been successful. Tackling corporate insurance companies to actually have true "autism" coverage by covering ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) therapy--Thank you Cigna and Davita for truly hearing me. Countless therapy wins. SOS Healthcare has been a life-changing experience for Camden. Their kind and caring staff have a special place in our hearts. They have helped Camden grow in more ways than we could have ever imagined, from the simple things like watching our son get his hands dirty, playing in the mud and being grateful because he's finally able to cope with textures on his hands to the bigger wins, like talking and playing with his peers,

SOS has been there all the way, encouraging Camden, reinforcing his positive behaviors and teaching him how to cope in a world that is so different from the world we see.

Would I change it? No. Through our faith, we have become stronger. We fight with a vengeance, and we refuse to back down. I have been blessed with this life to be the voice for those that cannot be heard and to win these battles through Christ's guidance and love.

We cannot thank the team at SOS enough for their hard work and dedication to the autism community. They have been life changing for our family and many others. Their superior care has given Camden more opportunities in life than I ever imagined. When your child is diagnosed with autism, the future becomes scary. Early intervention and consistency with care is so important. The future is no longer scary. It is full of endless possibilities, ones that I never imagined three years ago. If there's one thing we've learned, it's to never underestimate Camden's abilities. He shines in ways we never expected.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL by Kim Williams



Thomas Merzlak speaking at the Junior Beta Club induction. He is the secretary this year.

Thomas Merzlak is a young man who is doing extraordinary things in his community through his personal experience with autism.

For years, his parents knew that he was different from other children his own age, as he met and exceeded various milestones at differing rates from his peers. He spent his early years as a Montessori school student at McLaurin Elementary where he grew and flourished under the direction of his teachers.

Towards the end of his second grade year, his teacher, Melody Haigler, approached the Merzlags about Thomas and the way he

seemed to learn differently from most children. Through the love and care Haigler had for Thomas, she came alongside his parents to ultimately help them receive a diagnosis of him being on the autism spectrum. That summer after his diagnosis, they were able to begin developing an IEP, or Individualized Education Program, for him. The IEP would assist in ways that would more effectively help him to learn. Thomas continued to flourish at the Montessori School of Florence through sixth grade. Although he struggled with some social interactions, he came to understand more about his autism and was never shy about it. A desire began to grow in his heart for the need to help people understand others like him and the way they learn. While in elementary school, Thomas shared a book with his classmates about autistic



Academic Challenge Team

children and possible tendencies that they may have. It was activities like this that have helped shape him into the leader he is today.

Upon completion of elementary school, he joined the IB, or International Baccalaureate, program in middle school. One way he leads is by being the captain for his school's academic team. Last year, they competed at the state level and won. This year is shaping up in much the same way, as they remain undefeated and have recently won their regional tournament. They are heading to Winthrop University for the state tournament in March.

After Thomas' family learned from the school principal and various teachers that there isn't much information provided for district staff to better care for children like him, an opportunity arose for him to give those children a voice and speak on some of their needs. He bravely stood in front of a group of about 100 parents and district employees, suggesting a safe space where children could go to be able to help calm down or escape from being over stimulated. Thomas' message was well received.

Thomas is also trying to impact the teachers in his community through



Immersing himself in books helps to lessen the effects of over-stimulation in his environment.

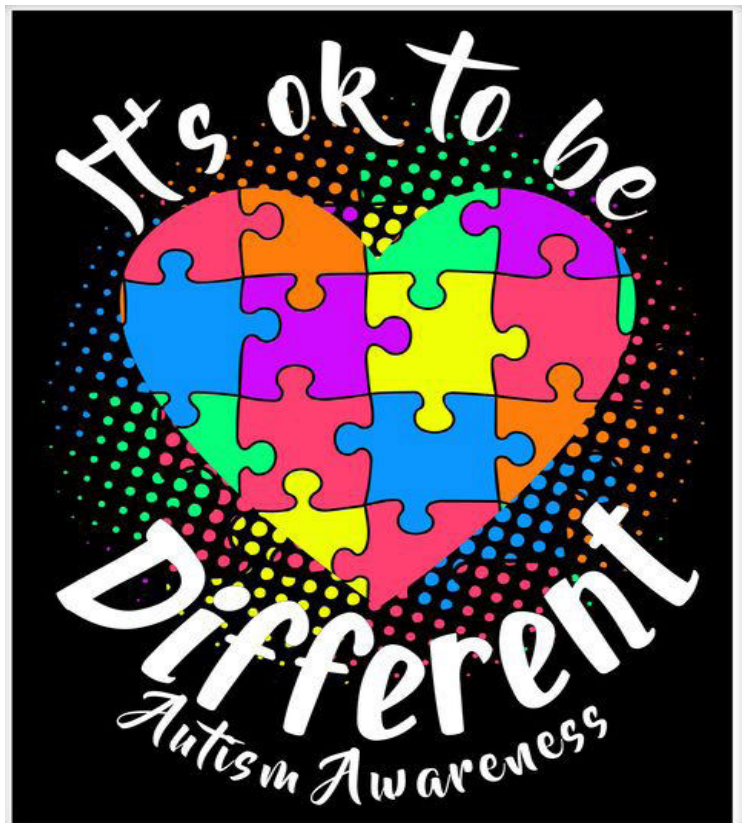
an independent project in the IB program. He says that, "...mostly what people think about autism is wrong; it's a spectrum of a lot of disorders and that there are no two autistic children the same." He is in the process of creating a booklet with a compilation of tips that teachers can use to identify and relate to students like him.

Outside of school, Thomas enjoys many activities. He loves to share with others about the local advocacy group, All 4 Autism. It raises awareness, provides resources, and support for those of all ages that are on the spectrum. For three years he has fundraised for the group and has surpassed his goal each time. Thomas is also a voracious reader. He learned early that having a book in his hand and fully focusing on it allowed him to immerse himself into the story and escape the over stimulation of his surroundings. He also enjoys anything and everything related to LEGO. He can share multiple facts like how many pieces come in the different boxed sets. His attention to detail is amazing.



Thomas Merzlak did a project on author Terry Pratchett at the 8th grade IB wax museum

Thomas aspires to be an author or a LEGO designer. If the past is any indication, there is simply no stopping this young man.



A HOME FOR MEDICALLY FRAGILE CHILDREN Submitted by Amanda Braunwalder Heaven's Hope Inc. Media Director



One of Heaven's Hope Inc.'s goals is to help end the stigma against special needs children. All children deserve to be included in school events, birthday parties, social events and on playgrounds. Just because a child may talk differently, think different or even look

different does not mean they deserve to be treated any differently. Every special needs child deserves and desires to be treated the same as a typical child.

Many people are unfamiliar with the terms "special needs" and "medically fragile," which is completely understandable. These are newer terms in our society. The term "medically fragile" refers to someone who has a chronic illness that requires close observation and frequent nursing or medical care. The members of Heaven's Hope Inc. want to help educate people on what it means to be medically fragile or to have special needs. We want to help end the stigma. These children and their family all live fulfilling lives. It just may be done with a few extra tubes and wires.

This is why we desire to create a homelike atmosphere for medically fragile children. All children deserve to have a monogram on their

bed, even if it is a specialty bed that keeps them safe. Every child deserves to have his or her artwork displayed on the nightstand, even if it is next to a special feeding pump. Heaven's Hope Inc. will be the first home for medically fragile children in the state of South Carolina.

Not all parents are able or willing to take care of their medically fragile child. Since our state does not have a long term care facility for medically fragile children, these children end up living in the hospital. Would you like to live in a hospital? Not many people would, so why should medically fragile children? At this time, the state of South Carolina also does not have a home for children who are classified as medically fragile. Our home will provide 24-hour nursing care while also providing the daily therapies and treatments these children require. They will also be able to receive all supportive therapies needed to give them the best quality of life. These children, who fight for their life every single day, deserve a loving home that can meet all of their medical, emotional and physical needs. Our home will be staffed by licensed professionals who can care for the children's intricate medical needs.

The group of people who are in the process of opening Heaven's Hope Inc. come from a variety of backgrounds, all with one common cause: caring for children with critical medical needs. At this time, our needs are primarily financial. Finances are needed regarding application fees for licensing, marketing, establishing the building, customizing the building to meet state regulations and children's needs, legal necessities and coverage for executive and staff positions. Every contribution is appreciated, and the board members are extremely thankful for your support!



ROAR AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

Articles by Ta' Meeka Epps



Kioca Reed

HARTSVILLE - Sexual assault is a lot of things. It comes in different forms, looks like something different for every victim and sounds foreign for everyone not involved in the situation. However, there is one thing sexual assault is not: it is never the victim's fault.

The phrase "sexual assault" refers to sexual contact or behaviors, which occur without explicit consent of the victim. There are several forms of sexual assault which are not limited to attempted rape, fondling or undesired sexual touching, forcing a victim to

perform sexual acts such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator's body as well as penetration of the victim's body: rape.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). This year's campaign theme is "I Ask." SAAM's theme champions the message that asking for consent is a healthy, normal and necessary part of everyday interactions.

The Pee Dee Coalition of Florence County houses many initiatives in its commitment to ending sexual assault. One such initiative is ROAR. The acronym ROAR stands for Reducing Our Assault Risk. The mission of the program is simple: to educate, bring awareness to and provide preventive tactics to individuals in response to the issue of sexual assault. ROAR services students in grades six through 12. The coordinator of ROAR is Kioca Reed.

As ROAR coordinator, her duties include providing adequate information at community events and educating organizations/community members on sexual assault (SA), the affects, red flags and preventative methods. She provides educational sessions on topics such as self-awareness, gender stereotypes, teen dating violence and sexual assault/harassment. She provides students with adequate information in response to SA and dating violence through certified curriculum.

ROAR provides teens and young adults with practical ways for protecting themselves against victimization from any form of assault. Discussions, presentations and group-facilitated activities are all incorporated in sessions to empower and educate individuals on reducing their risks. ROAR presentations are provided to middle and high school students, college students, faith-based organizations and civic organizations. ROAR also offers trainings for school staff, parents and law-enforcement.

As coordinator, Reed spends the majority of her time with ROAR in the classroom where the students complete four sessions with her over the time span of a month. "ROAR is a very versatile program, and I have used it to educate churches, summer programs and youth groups."

"Young people in the areas I service are discouraged from reporting any assaults. They are conditioned to believe abuse is normal behavior when in a relationship, or a sign of love. Other times, they are reluctant or do not know how to be a helpful bystander when they spot abuse, all of which they have to deal with by either being exposed to abuse within their home life or lack of education on the matter," stated Reed.

Young people who have experienced some form of abuse should seek assistance from either a mandated reporter, law enforcement or an advocate at a Child Advocacy Center (CAC).

When asked why she chooses to serve, Reed replied, "I chose to serve individuals in these vulnerable situations because it is important they know someone is in their corner that is always willing to go the extra mile. I chose this population because there are not enough people holding others to an ethical standard when it comes to sexual assault."

RAD TEACHES WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE



Mackenzie Clementson

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) is about more than awareness, and its ultimate goal is prevention. With prevention as the end result, it is clear that consent is a concrete example of what is needed to eradicate sexual assault, abuse and harassment. The theme of SAAM is centered on empowering everyone to put consent into practice.

Whenever someone goes through a sexual assault, there is a loss of power and control. The goal of the sexual assault program is to empower sexual assault survivors by supporting them, advocating for them, asking what they want, listening and respecting their decisions.

Mackenzie Clementson is a certified instructor for Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) Systems. RAD is a women's only self-defense class that is offered to females ages 12 and older. RAD classes are offered in all seven counties of the Pee Dee Region. Classes are for nine hours and include four hours of safety education and five hours of physical education. An aggression piece is offered in which participants are placed in simulated scenarios to use the skills they have learned.

As the Sexual Assault Program coordinator, Clementson is responsible for ensuring the sexual assault program in all seven counties (Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marlboro, Marion and Williamsburg) is running smoothly and efficiently. This includes making sure all staff and volunteers are up-to-date with the latest sexual assault protocols and information as well as ensuring they are trained on how to respond to hospital calls. Clementson also ensures they keep in contact with their network of community workers and are up-to-date with hospitals and law enforcement agencies.

Prevention and community education/awareness is a critical component for the coordinator. As part of the prevention program, Clementson is a certified RAD instructor. The RAD classes commence with an educational classroom section. Sexual assault definitions, self-defense and the law, the four risks of personal safety, risk awareness, risk reduction techniques are covered. The RAD class concludes with hands-on skills instruction--simple movements that are adaptable and can be taught to any woman.

"The importance of teaching self defense is to empower women to feel comfortable standing up for themselves or simply saying 'no.' It allows us to teach boundaries, the awareness of risks, reduction of risk and, if need be, how to defend themselves."

The goals of the sexual assault program is to increase awareness of sexual assault, decrease stigma regarding sexual assault survivors, support sexual assault survivors in any and all ways needed (at the hospital, with law enforcement, during the criminal proceedings, emotional support-trauma counseling and support groups) while empowering the survivors.

Clementson has served as the Sexual Assault Program coordinator since November 2018 and has served as the Sexual Assault Services coordinator and the Marlboro County volunteer coordinator. However, long before she began her career with the Pee Dee Coalition, she was serving those affected by traumas, specifically sexual assault survivors by volunteering at rape crisis centers during and after graduating college.

Clementson was born in Boston, Mass. and now calls Florence home. If you would like more information on the work being done with R.AD. or any other programs offered through the Pee Dee Coalition, visit www.peedeecoalition.org.

Sexual Assault / Child Abuse Prevention

PEPS HELPS PARENTS AND CHILDREN HEAL FROM ABUSE by Ta'Meeka Epps



Brittany Graham

The Pee Dee Coalition of Florence County has another initiative dedicated to reducing and preventing child abuse and neglect within the Pee Dee Region. The Pee Dee Coalition believes the process of reducing and preventing child abuse in our families and communities must begin with education.

With education as its cornerstone, the Parent Education/Parent Support (PEPS) PEPS is a free, 12-week program for parents of children ranging from birth through 17 years of age. Parents meet for two hours, once a week, for 12 weeks. Topics of education include self care, understanding your own wants and needs, positive discipline techniques, anger and stress management, as well as other related topics. Each participant receives a certificate for completing a total of 12 weeks.

The prevention educator/facilitator of PEPS is Brittany Graham. She has been facilitating for four years and serving as the coordinator/prevention educator for nearly three years. She facilitates a total of four classes between Kingstree, Marion and Florence. She also serves as supervisor of the facilitator for Hartsville and Chesterfield. The program targets parents who are at-risk for child abuse and neglect however PEPS offers family strengthening strategies relevant to all parents, grandparents, guardians, foster parents and caretakers.

During Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), Graham will reiterate both sexual assault awareness and child abuse prevention month during her weekly classes. She will collaborate and participate in all events that have been scheduled by Pee Dee Coalition and Durant Children's Center to further the mission of SAAM.

Through PEPS, Graham is striving to decrease child maltreatment by teaching parents the necessary skills they need in order to protect their child. Parents have the responsibility to heal the hurt for a child recovering from any form of abuse. Through the extensive training proved by PEPS parents are given strategies to assist them with creating a safe environment for their child that is free from blame, harm and judgment.

It is common for parents to feel a wide spectrum of emotions ranging from anger, anxiety, fear, sadness and even shock when they learn their child has been abused. How parents manage those emotions to make it to the other side of healing are the tools they leave equipped with through PEPS.

Brittany Graham enjoys the work she does with PEPS as she gets to see parents and family transform and become resilient, which strengthens not only their ability but also their child's ability to adapt to or cope with adversity. "The best part of my job comes from knowing I'm making a difference in someone's life! I have parents tell me of the impact I have made in their lives. Parents come into my classes not knowing what to expect, or feeling their situation is horrible, but when they meet the other parents, they realize they aren't the only ones having a difficult time."

Through advocacy directed towards supporting and educating the entire family, especially the parents, you move them toward creating lifetime stability for the child. As the child continues to develop, his or her view of the abuse will change, and it will hold a different meaning making protecting children from abuse and neglect a community responsibility.

Brittany Graham was born and raised in Florence, and she still calls it home. She graduated from Wilson High School in 2006 and received her bachelor's in social work from Limestone College in 2012. For more information on the Pee Dee Coalition and the work she does with PEPS, visit www.peedeecoalition.org.



Pee Dee Coalition
24 Hour Crisis Line
800-273-1820

Durant Children's Center
The House Where Healing Begins
843-664-4357



April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month

Help stop sexual assault and child abuse in April and all year long

PeeDeeCoalition.org



DURANT CENTER DIRECTOR SPEAKS UP FOR CHILD VICTIMS by Ta'Meeka Epps



Denise Faye Casley

According to the Center on The Developing Child at Harvard University, when a child has a traumatic experience, his or her brain becomes stressed and fear-related hormones become activated. Therefore, when a child is exposed to severe trauma, such as abuse or neglect, the child's brain remains in a heightened state.

This heightened state can impact the emotional, behavioral and cognitive functioning of the child, which maintains

and promotes survival. As time passes these traumatic experiences can affect a child's future behavior, emotional development, mental health and physical health (http://developingchild.harvard.edu/key_concepts/toxic_stress_response/).

The Durant Center is a program of the Pee Dee Coalition, guided by its mission as a non-profit volunteer organization that is dedicated to the reduction of family violence, sexual assault, child abuse and the safety/welfare of the victim.

The Durant Children's Center motto, "The House Where Healing Begins," individualizes its approach to each child. At the Center, the staff and volunteers respect the development stage of each child, the child's rights and dignity, and the needs of the family for safety and healing.

The clinical team at the Center is responsible for providing specialized trauma-informed and specialized trauma-focused counseling individualized to the needs of the victims and their families. Denise



Faye Casley has been the clinical director of Durant Children's Center since Dec. 17, 2018.

As director/therapist, Casley is responsible for the management of the clinical

services provided by the counseling staff of Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, which is the Pee Dee Region's sexual assault, family violence and child abuse center. The clinical director also provides vision and leadership to ensure quality service provision and coordination of services to adult, child victims and their families impacted by sexual violence, child abuse, dating violence, domestic/family violence and human sex trafficking. As a therapist at Durant's Children's Center, Casley, provides quality individual, family and group counseling in accordance with professional standards to clients and their families.

"A child who needs the services of the Durant Children's Center will also require a sense of balance restored to his or her life as quickly as possible," Casley stated.

Children exposed to traumas may experience a range of reactions or responses to the traumas. When a child perceives a threat has been posed against his or her life, body, personal integrity or even a loved

one, that event becomes a trauma to the child because the child's sense of security is directly tied to the safety of those responsible for the care and protection of him or her.

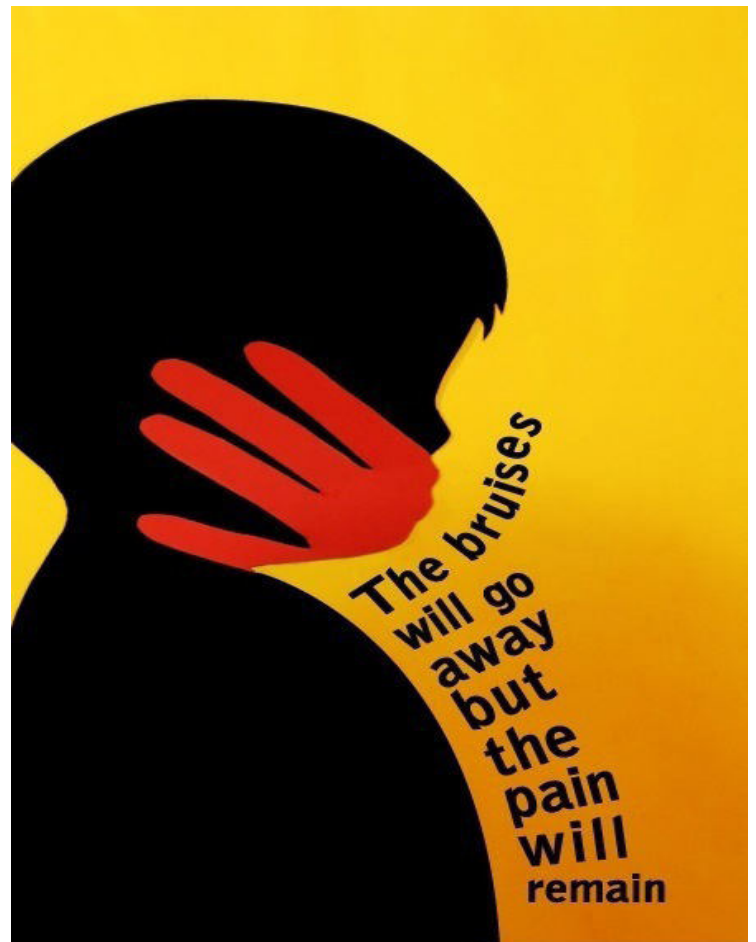
The trauma experienced will then create strong emotions and physical reactions that may persist long after the event. However, the manifestations of any traumatic event will vary for each individual. They may range from an inability to self regulate due to feeling overwhelmed by the intensity of their physical and emotional responses to physiological reactions such as vomiting or accelerated heart rate.

Children who are exposed to traumas may experience triggers that remind them of the initial event, and without proper treatment and adequate care to repair the child's sense of safety, the manifestations of undesirable behaviors may follow the child into adulthood.

The Durant Children's Center is all-inclusive and provides forensic interviews, clinical evaluations, therapy and other needed services by highly trained, licensed professional counselors.

Denise Faye Casley has been serving for over 28 years and feels it's her duty to support individuals as they work through their healing process even through a private practice. She resides in Florence, where she was born and raised. She loves God and being a blessing to others.

For more information on The Durant Children's Center visit <https://peedeecoalition.org/durant-childrens-center/>.



LET'S STOP TURNING A BLIND EYE Submitted by Naomi Project



Did you know most women who leave their abuser will return to them mainly because they have nowhere else to go?

In the state of SC, there are 46 animal shelters in 46 counties and only 18 shelters for women and children in the

whole state. Most shelters or transitional homes have a time limit of 60 days. Now to some, 60 days can seem like a sufficient amount of time; however, in that 60 days, these women--mothers--have to find child care, then a job, then try and save enough for a deposit and the first month's rent, not to mention the healing process. 60 days? Imagine having 60 days to get your life together, and if you run out of time, where do you go? What options do you have?

I found it very difficult to leave my situation, knowing I had very few to no options for my son and myself. Unfortunately, my situation ended in the death of my child and me being homeless and in need of counseling. However, this doesn't have to be the case for future victims. We need to raise awareness about domestic violence and stop ignoring this pandemic. Domestic violence has become too common, and too many of us choose to "stay out of it" or "turn a blind eye," not realizing that most of us "domestic violence victims" are just too afraid to ask for help. We need to open our eyes and our mouths and work towards a solution.

Thanks for listening.

When most hear the words "domestic violence," they think of how sad and unfortunate it is. They wish more could be done. For some women such as myself, I used to think of the word "debilitating." Now, I think of words such as "change," "growth," "power" and "knowledge." Domestic battery is an issue that can be seen much deeper than my skin and for much longer than after the bruises have worn off.

For me, domestic abuse has crippled my self-esteem, self-worth, trust, faith...all of the feelings of worthiness shattered. It has made me unconfident. My weight has fluctuated drastically. It has caused me to lose my sobriety and permanently caused damage to relationships with everyone around me, including myself.

First and foremost, I would like women to be aware of domestic violence. Domestic violence is not simply something tragic. It is life threatening, much deeper than the physical wounds. The importance of knowledge is the willingness to take any resources that can help soothe the trauma caused by our abusers. Today, I am a proud survivor, mother, daughter, sister and spiritual believer.



TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH by Jennifer Robinson



Kristina Bryant

Sharing a story of surviving trauma is inspiring. To overcome abuse and then be able to tell people about the experience can help not only victims, but it also creates a conversation about prevention. Kristina Bryant is a champion in the world of survivorship. Following her assistance from CARE House of the Pee Dee, Bryant is thriving. We are proud that she allowed Diversity Works Magazine© to share her story.

Kristina, will you share your

experience with us?

Yes. I lived with my second oldest sister, Donna, and her husband, Chris, for about ten years because my mother could not take care of me. It seemed that everything was as normal as it could be in our family. However, some things were happening behind the scenes. Chris was abusing my older sister, Wanda, and me. It was not physical abuse, but sexual abuse. What I went through was not the same as what my sister went through.

On September 7, 2016, I said something--first, to my friend at school. I did not know that it was wrong in any way. I never really had a parent to do the right things in my life. My librarian at school overheard me talking to my friend and urged me to talk to her about what happened at home. She immediately went to the preacher of my school to ask if it was enough to be reported. It was. The next day, I had to leave school to get some clothes and necessities to go live somewhere else. I stayed with the preacher and his wife for two weeks

until we found someone who I could stay with for a more permanent time frame. There is an amazing couple at my school who were foster parents at the time. What a perfect home to go stay at! This couple was my volleyball coach, Ashley Spencer, and the athletic director/my teacher/my old basketball coach, John Spencer. On September 19, I went to stay with them. I had to change churches to avoid seeing Donna and Chris. They did not think that Chris did wrong, but that I blew it out of proportion. After several months, it was evident that nothing changed. DSS would not allow me to go home. About seven months after I moved in with the Spencers, they got full custody of me! We became a family on April 11, 2017. Just a few weeks later, I accepted Christ as my Savior, and a month after that, I went to work at a Christian camp where I got to give my testimony and even had the opportunity to talk to a young girl who went through what I did. By the end of the week, I had the amazing opportunity to lead her to Christ!

What was your experience with CARE House?

My experience with the CARE House was one that I will not ever forget. After I was removed from my home, I was unsure how to deal with all of the emotions that I felt. Mrs. Melissa Brady helped me learn several methods to control my emotions. She, as well as all the staff at the CARE House, encouraged me and helped me realize that I was not to blame for what my abuser did to me.

What has life been like for you since CARE House?

Since the CARE House, I have been able to use the coping methods that I learned and even share them with some friends who were having a hard time. I was able to work at a Christian camp the following summer and the summer after that. I shared my story with several of



TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH CONT'D

the campers there! I spoke with a 13-year-old girl who went through a situation similar! I had the chance to lead her to Christ at the end of the week. I plan to return to that camp this summer and will be excited to share my story again! It has always been very encouraging to help young girls who go through abuse and other difficult times. I am now attending Bob Jones University and have had the opportunity to share my story with several people!

If you come in contact with other survivors, what do you share with them about your experience?

I love to share my story with other people, especially survivors. My story includes what happened to me, my receiving counseling, being adopted by a Christ-honoring family, my accepting Christ as my Savior, graduating, and then going to college. The awesome part is that my story is not over yet! God is still writing my story. I have shared my story at the Capes for Kids event that the CARE House hosts annually. I had a sweet young woman even come up and thank me for sharing because she was a survivor!

How has your experience shaped your life?

Going through counseling at the CARE House has shaped my life by helping me see that life goes on even though it feels like it is falling apart. That is such a vital thing to know in life because many obstacles invade what we think to be our normal. God has a plan for our lives and allows us to go through trials even though it hurts Him and us.

These trials may require us to have counseling. My situation did, and the CARE House helped me prepare to move on to the next step of life despite the hard times that I endured and will endure.

Kristina Bryant's story of strength and courage continues to be an inspiration to those who face trauma.



STOP CHILD ABUSE

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QUESTIONS? Email jajohnston@thecarehouse.com. Find us on .

All proceeds will be donated to The CARE House of the Pee Dee in memory of a Carver student who lost her life due to child abuse, and will directly benefit abused children in our community.

HOW CARE HOUSE HELPS CHILD VICTIMS HEAL by Jennifer Robinson



Meg Temple

As a children's advocacy center, CARE House of the Pee Dee's mission is to promote help, hope and healing in a nurturing environment to child abuse victims and their families through supportive services and prevention. The CARE House began in 2004 when local referral sources determined a need for child abuse services in Florence. A location was identified, and renovations began, and by October of 2006, the CARE House opened its doors at the new facility.

Non-profit status was awarded in December of the same year. To date, CARE House has served over 5,000 children in need of their services.

CARE House started with its primary focus on investigative services, interviews and medicals, and it has now broadened its focus to encompass therapies to help children through the whole process of healing from trauma. CARE House provides Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Alternative to Families a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy. It also provides advocacy to every family that walks through its doors. As CARE House has grown, it has maintained its focus on helping children of the Pee Dee and will soon be adding a working dog to create an even more comforting environment for children who have experienced abuse.

Meg Temple is the executive director of CARE House. She was hired at CARE House of the Pee Dee in 2013 after being in the Child Advocacy Center movement since 2009. It was CARE House's goal to create a therapeutic program that drew Temple in, knowing this was an area in which she could make an impact. As a licensed counselor with previous training in treatments for children with trauma, it was a great fit for Temple. She was excited to be able to build on the strengths that CARE House already possessed. Since the spring of 2013, it has grown in more ways than one, including changing the location, increasing services to surrounding areas, growing a therapy program that provides four scientifically-based treatments/interventions, reestablishing medical services and growing staff. "The most exciting piece of all of this is that it allows us to better serve child victims of abuse in our community," Temple states.

When asked about her history in child advocacy and counseling she shared, "I went to Presbyterian College being not quite sure where the path would lead me. Along the way, I found that psychology classes came more naturally to me, and I found them interesting. As I prepared for graduation, I knew that I wasn't done with school quite yet. My senior year of undergrad, I went back and forth between taking the test for graduate school or one for law school, and I'm not sure why I finally chose the graduate school route. Interestingly, the work in a CAC mixes legal issues in with counseling much more than most other counseling roles. As I finished graduate school at Francis Marion, I once again was unsure of what type of counseling I should do and was much more sure of what I didn't want. I applied for different jobs and took a job providing sexual assault prevention education in the schools. That is where I became connected with the issues, and I have spent most of my career in this field."

Temple believes that working with child victims of abuse is a

calling. She shares that it is tough to hear and see the horrors that people do to a population that cannot take care of themselves. However, she also sees that children are resilient, and with the right tools and support, they can and do heal. Temple loves being part of helping them to overcome and being part of CARE House, a place that provides a safe, comfortable environment for them to get all their services while also teaming with investigative and prosecutorial teams to make sure staff stays focused on the child.

It is important to remember that awareness is a major component of eradicating child abuse. Temple shared, "Child abuse is an epidemic. It is just one that people don't like to admit exists, and until our culture is ready to admit that it happens and have a conversation about what to do, we cannot expect to see major change. The #MeToo movement appears to be opening up dialogue about child sexual abuse, but we have a long way to go. Child trauma, in general, impacts society in many ways and has correlations with many societal issues in adulthood. If we can turn attention to the underlying factors and how to really prevent them, we can change the world. I am not saying it will be fast or easy, but I fully believe, in the long run, it will be cheaper. Prevent Child Abuse America suggests child abuse and neglect affects 1 million children every day and costs the U.S. \$220 million daily. Putting resources in ways that can prevent abuse will keep people out of hospitals, jails and rehab. Educating the community helps get support behind big initiatives. People understanding child abuse, its dynamics and its repercussions helps victims to be believed and supported, and that is a big piece of healing."

April, Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month, is a busy time for CARE House. We use this time to create discussion about the issue. We have partnered with Central United Methodist Church to hold a training for area clergy and will be sending out practical information for churches to prevent and deal with abuse. We will use social media to share local #MeToo stories to show that abuse is real, and it is here. Downtown will hold an awareness wall that will be visible throughout the evenings in April. It offers a chance for pedestrians to take their stand against child abuse. And lastly, we are gearing up for our annual CAPES for Kids Run, which will take place May 4. It is a Super Hero themed 5K and 10K that allows everyone to fight child abuse and be a hero.

The big thing that is hard about prevention is the lack of funding. We hope to have the opportunity to have more involvement in the future as funders see that prevention is where we all should be heading.



POVERTY AND SEXUAL ABUSE CORRELATE by Jennifer Robinson, Director Empowered to Heal



Jennifer Robinson

I don't think people ever consider the conditions surrounding poverty. We see homeless or desolate people daily, but few of us think about what circumstances led them to that position. When we are at stores and see people panhandling, there is often a quick judgmental demand for that person to "get up and get a job" or "go get some help...there are plenty of shelters around."

There are many demands that can be made on homeless, but what is seen is often not

what is being felt. Sexual trauma is hard to be identified unless disclosed. What often occurs is that victims of abuse do not have or seek assistance. Therefore, they are not able to obtain the resources they need to heal. Without assistance, the repercussions are often unsafe and can be fatal. In addition, trauma victims are often depressed, which can lead to a lack in work productivity that leads to homelessness and poverty. Then once they are homeless, they may seek shelter in unsafe places. Within those places are possibly predators who seek out vulnerable people.

"There is a strong relationship between sexual violence and homelessness. Sexual violence can be both an antecedent to and consequence of homelessness. Victims and survivors are often dependent on their perpetrators for basic needs such as housing and shelter. This is particularly salient for children, teens, immigrants and refugees, migrant workers, victims of sex trafficking, sex workers, and victims of marital and intimate partner rape. Escaping sexual violence often means becoming homeless. Once on the streets, individuals are at greater risk for sexual victimization. Sexual assault victims who are homeless or marginally housed have to deal with the trauma of their assault within the context of societal alienation, isolation, lack of access to legal and medical resources, and other struggles associated with meeting basic needs." (https://www.pcar.org/sites/default/files/pages-pdf/poverty_and_sexual_violence.pdf)

According to Goodman, Fels, & Glenn (2006) and Browne & Bassuk (1997), the following statistics are reported causes when sexual abuse victims face homelessness:

1- The risk of adult sexual victimization is increased for homeless women due to a number of factors including childhood abuse, substance dependence, length of time they are homeless, coping strategies used for economic survival, location while homeless, mental illness and physical limitations.

2-Ninety-two percent of a racially diverse sample of homeless mothers had experienced severe physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lives with 43 percent reporting sexual abuse in childhood and 63 percent reporting intimate partner violence in adulthood.

If sexual abuse is not reported, it is challenging to assess how to eradicate it. The key to helping survivors is to be educated about the issue and learn how to prevent it. Unfortunately, the lack of access to resources permeates the possibility of poverty and homelessness for sexual assault victims. Without

insurance, victims will not receive medical and mental health assistance. Without this care, they face challenges that limit their quality of life. Therefore, it is important to examine the current state of poverty by observing the origin the economic struggle. Circumstantial examination can possibly help understand the problem of sexual abuse victim homelessness.

In the Pee Dee, there are homeless shelters and transitional homes for survivors of abuse. In the homes that are specific to abuse victims, they provide services to help victims get back on their feet. Unfortunately, shelters that address homelessness only provide referrals to care and do not have programs specific to wellness, but identifying and offering proper care for sexual trauma survivors helps with the healing process.

Jennifer Guiles Robinson is executive director of Empowered to Heal, a 501 C3 agency that provides post trauma recovery care for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.



"Healing is a journey that begins with you"

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HILDEBOLT USES HER EXPERIENCE TO HELP OTHERS by Adaila Ellis



Jody N. Hildebolt

CONWAY -Nothing prepares a person for the care of others better than life experiences that create empathy, compassion, wisdom and understanding. All of these virtues can be used to describe Jody N. Hildebolt, an associate professor of nursing at Horry Georgetown Technical College. She holds a master's degree in nursing education and is a registered nurse. She was inspired to pursue a career in nursing after having multiple experiences being

hospitalized for a condition called endometriosis, a painful disorder where tissues that normally line the inside of the uterus grow outside of the uterus. This condition led to Hildebolt having to have several surgeries. She vividly describes her experiences saying, "When you're hospitalized and away from everything and everyone you know, you become incredibly vulnerable. Your every need is at the mercy of a stranger. You lose a lot of your independence and dignity—you're afraid. That first-hand experience has allowed me the perspective of the patient and an understanding of how they feel. I wanted to become a nurse to help patients to make the best out of their circumstance and to show them that their care matters."

Anyone who has spent any time in a hospital can relate to Hildebolt's experience, and it was these experiences that ultimately led to her decision to go into education. How future nurses are educated about care plays an important role in the quality of care individuals receive when they find themselves hospitalized. When speaking on what inspired her to move from direct care to nursing education, Hildebolt says, "I decided to become a nursing educator to be an influence on the future nurses, to not only teach the clinical skills required, but also instill in them the importance of the soft-skills every nurse should live by."

As a nursing educator, Hildebolt has replaced patients with students. Now, instead of making her patients feel confident in the care they are receiving, she is teaching students to feel confident in themselves, which translates to their future patients having confidence in the care they are receiving. As a nurse, Hildebolt advocated for five patients at a time, and they trusted her to make the best decisions for them. Now as a nursing educator she has 30 students whose trust she gets to gain-trust that she will keep them safe, teach them correctly and advocate for their success.

An important area of healthcare for Hildebolt is the area of addiction and mental health. Her life has been personally impacted by the effects of alcoholism. Growing up, she witnessed the rollercoaster of addiction because her stepfather was an alcoholic, and he committed suicide while Hildebolt was in her last semester of nursing school. Despite this tragedy, Hildebolt had to push ahead to achieve the goals she had set for herself. It opened Hildebolt's heart to others dealing with addiction, directly or indirectly, and she realized that there is a vast spectrum of addiction, and the need for mental health is great.

When reflecting on her upbringing and addiction she says, "My experiences allowed me to see, firsthand, what it can do to a person and their loved ones. It's a real disease; it isn't something people go out seeking or praying for, and it certainly doesn't discriminate. In

some way, we all have at least a foot caught in the web of mental health whether it's ourselves or a loved one. Had my stepfather stuck to the program (AA) and sought out the appropriate counseling or therapy he needed for his childhood demons he harbored, he would still be alive and well today."

Heildebolt's stepfather's outcome has driven her to advocate for better mental-health education and well-being for us all. She believes that this starts with eliminating the stigma attached to mental health and addiction. "We all need to be brave enough to speak up and ask for help when we need it. We don't always know what's best for us, but we DO know when we are in pain, and we shouldn't feel embarrassed or ashamed to be honest about it."

The importance of addressing the negative impact of alcoholism on a family cannot be understated. Family members become so involved and engulfed in getting their loved one sober and well that they lose sight of their own needs and own well-being. Boundaries to protect themselves are not set. The addicted individuals are enabled by their family members being their designated drivers, bailing them out of jail or lying for them to keep their alcoholism a secret. When describing this dynamic in more detail Hildebolt says, "We panic every time our phone rings. We become dangerously co-dependent and put all of our energy in to keeping them happy and trying to prevent triggers, which might lead them to drink. We don't want them to drink. We want them well, so we tread lightly. We even justify to ourselves that 'it's not that bad.' What families need to realize is that a true alcoholic doesn't need triggers—they will justify a reason to drink every time."

When discussing care and how to help someone with addictions to become sober, Hildebolt emphasizes that you can't force them. It is something that they have to need for themselves. Without the determination and perseverance that comes with initiating change on their own, the lifestyle change is not permanent for the addict. The family members must not forget about their own health. It is hard but so important for family members to not feel guilt when making the alcoholic accountable for himself or herself. Hildebolt goes on to say, "It is so important for family members of the alcoholic to realize they are not in control of that person. You can only control yourself. Take care of yourself. Set healthy boundaries. Don't be afraid to be honest. You are there to help them when they are ready for sobriety, and encourage them with everything you've got, but they need to want it for themselves."



EYES OPEN FOR THE VALUE OF SERVICE *by Les Echols*



Steven Burritt

IRMO - Steven Burritt is the executive director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) South Carolina. "My career has been about protecting youth and communities from the harms of substance abuse, and that work continues with MADD," stated Burritt. "We serve a diverse population, people whose lives have been torn apart by the 100 percent preventable crime of drunk or drugged driving. Sadly, none of us are safe when others

make that reckless decision, and we proudly serve those of all races, religions, incomes, etc. It's an honor to serve them all, but I wish none of them needed our services."

Today, MADD continues the work started by one mother in 1980 whose daughter was killed in a drunk driving crash. The grassroots movement that is MADD began then and has been instrumental in helping to cut drunk driving fatalities by more than half since then. The mission of MADD is to end drunk driving, help fight drugged driving, support the victims of these violent crimes and prevent underage drinking. Its main activities today are to support high visibility traffic enforcement; push for stronger DUI laws; advocate for the development of technology that will prevent drunk drivers from operating their vehicles; monitor the outcome of DUI cases in South Carolina courts; advocate for victims in the criminal system and provide emotional support; educate parents and youth about the importance of not using alcohol before age 21; and keeping awareness of the issue high. According to Burritt, South Carolina has the ninth most DUI fatalities in the nation, despite being 23rd in population. We had more DUI fatalities than New York, which has four times our population (15 million more people).

When asked how he became involved in community service, Burritt said, "My mother got me started doing community service as a young child, helping her teach reading at an after-school center in Greenville. I've never had a private sector job because public service calls to me so strongly. What I'm doing has to matter to me to feel fulfilled, and my work at MADD certainly motivates me every day. In jobs like mine, we certainly preach about the problems in our state and communities, but I do believe that there are so many good news stories that just don't get told with the same passion. Reductions in global illiteracy, eradication of some diseases, more diversity among our elected officials, and technology's boost to education are just some of the underappreciated gains taking place. We want to see the end of drunk driving added to that list," continued Burritt.

Burritt also feels that to serve the people it helps to give them hands-on assistance in some capacity. "Many years ago, someone impressed upon me the importance, for example, of someone having served food in a homeless shelter if they're going to make decisions about homeless policies or volunteered in a school in disrepair if they are making decisions about school-funding formulas. When we serve, we learn so much about those we serve and those we serve beside. I credit my three years working for the City Year organization for really opening my eyes to the value of service," concluded Burritt.

Steven Burritt grew up in the Greer area. He attended USC for undergrad and UNC (Chapel Hill) for his master's in public health. He came to MADD in 2013, feeling a real call to help build the capacity of our state office back up again. He lives with his wife, Edie, and his two daughters in Lexington, S.C.



RUBICON EMPOWERS THROUGH EDUCATION *Submitted by Theresa M. Curtis, MJECHO Coordinator*



HARTSVILLE-Rubicon Family Counseling Services offers a variety of services in prevention, focusing on underage alcohol and tobacco use. We also have our Empowering Communities for Healthy Outcomes (ECHO) program, which focuses on education for safe storage and disposal of prescription drugs.

Our prevention department works closely with Darlington County Sherriff's Department, Hartsville and Darlington law enforcement, Darlington County School District and the Fourth Circuit Solicitor's Office to provide programs to educate the community on the risks of harm caused by underage alcohol and tobacco use, prescription drug misuse and on safe disposal of prescription drugs.

One of our education classes includes our Drug Awareness program, which we use for those referred to us for our Alcohol Education program

or the Pre-Trial Intervention program with the Solicitor's Office. We also have Surviving the Teen Years, which is a program to educate the parents of teens on the ways youth are getting and hiding alcohol and tobacco products.

Our Prevention Department has a prevention specialist, Scott Johnson, and an ECHO coordinator, Theresa M. Curtis.

If you would like information on any of the Prevention Department education programs or would like us to come out and do a presentation, please contact us at 843-332-4156.



GOD HAD A PLAN FOR ME Submitted by Kim Williams



Terry Curtis in 1998

HARTSVILLE - It all started with my first drink around the age of 14. I began sneaking drinks as I watched my dad's struggle with alcoholism. Soon, it became second nature to me and escalated quickly from just alcohol, to alcohol and weed. I drank, and I smoked. I smoked, and I drank. There were days that I couldn't remember where I had been or what I had done! However, even then, God had a plan for me.

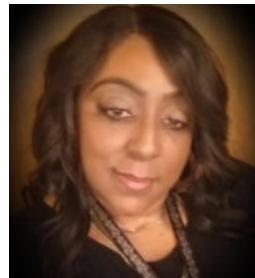
By 18 years of age, cocaine was added to my roster of addictions. At the time, I had a "friend" who encouraged me to only participate in smoking crack when I was with them. Looking back, I know "friend" was too loose of a term, which really should have been described as dealer, pimp, abuser and controller. Still, I know that God had a plan for me.

As time and years passed, my life began a deeper downward spiral as I added other things, like smoking PCP and taking pills, to my habits. The inward drive to get the drugs into my system pushed me to do whatever I had to do to calm the addiction. I rented my car out and sold my jewelry, clothes, and even sold AND gave myself away for a little white rock, a blunt or a drink. Realistically, I should probably be dead because of the hits, overindulgence of drugs, and domestic violence situations I found myself in. I still have physical scars that will always be reminders of my past. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

God had a plan for me through all those years. While some remember me because of my past, my past is DEFINITELY not my destiny. For those who may be fighting the disease of addiction, I want them to know, you don't have to live like that forever. In Jeremiah 29:11, it says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." God had a plan for me and for others that struggle in addiction as well.

After marrying in 2002, I began to want more out of life. Although I still struggled, I am proud to share that 13 years ago, I turned away from the drugs, alcohol and abusive relationships that had me bound for too long. I had given too many people too much power over my life, and it was the turning point for me. Psalm 118:17 says, "I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done." Since then, every day has not been easy, yet I am thankful to be able to live each and every day.

In 2009, I was blessed to become founder and CEO of a ministry called Hurting Women Healed Ministries. My passion is to help other women who find themselves in similar situations like I have lived through. I understand the shame and struggles associated with living a drug dependent life style. I want others to know it's okay and that a drink or drugs does not define who they are. Ultimately, my desire is to meet them where they are without judgment or condemnation and help them to know that they will be okay, and there is a better life ahead for them.



Terry Curtis now

Currently, I have a job that I love and consider to be a very important job in my world. My position as the intake coordinator allows me to be one of the first impressions a person notices upon arriving at Rubicon Family Counseling Services. Rubicon strives to help citizens ages 12 and above avoid the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and drug usage. Rubicon also provides a variety of outpatient services for clients as well.

I am thankful for every opportunity I get to speak into others' hearts and pray that at least one word I say will help someone get the help they need.

For more information about Hurting Women Healed Ministries and speaking engagements, contact me, Prophetess T L Curtis-McQueen, at hwh.ministryinfo@gmail.com, or call 843-544-5606.

If you would like more information on Rubicon and its services, please call 843-332-4156 or email info@rubiconsc.org.

DON'T LET UNDERAGE DRINKING RUIN YOUR PROM

Submitted by Randy Cole, Chief Executive Officer, Circle Park Behavioral Health Services



Randy Cole

Many teens dream of their high school years being full of traditional and memorable events. Few are as eagerly anticipated as prom night and its associated rituals. Unfortunately, many teens and parents feel that including alcohol with these events is an acceptable rite of passage. Underage drinking, by far, continues to be the most common risky behavior challenging youth today. Alcohol remains the number one drug of choice for teens statewide

with 65 percent of high school students consuming alcohol at some point during their high school years.

Even though a lower percentage of youth are drinking today than in years past, those that are consuming alcohol, are doing so at an

alarming rate. In fact, the latest research shows that many youth are participating in the growing epidemic of binge drinking. Binge drinking is defined as consuming four to five drinks during one event, causing the BAC level to rise to dangerous levels. Those that participate in this activity are much more likely to be involved in acts of violence, unwanted sexual activities, and are more likely to drive a vehicle and be involved in a crash. Surprisingly to many, females participate in binge drinking at a higher rate than their male counterparts, leaving them particularly vulnerable.

In order to minimize the potential dangers and consequences involved with underage drinking during the prom season, Circle Park Behavioral Health Services and the Florence County Coalition for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention, along with local law enforcement agencies, have joined forces to support the "Don't Let



DON'T LET UNDERAGE DRINKING CONT'D

Underage Drinking Ruin Your Prom” Campaign. This campaign emphasizes that it is illegal if you are under the age of 21 to purchase, possess or consume alcoholic beverages.

Prom night parties and activities tend to provide an opportunity for many high school students to participate in this dangerous activity. In an effort to address and minimize these potential incidences in our community, the 12th Judicial Circuit Alcohol Enforcement Team (AET), a multi-jurisdictional team of various agencies throughout Florence and Marion Counties, will be utilizing a series of enforcement activities during prom nights that may include:

- Source Investigations – AET members will be utilizing their resources to identify the source of alcohol that is being possessed or consumed by underage youth at prom activities. Those found to be providing alcohol to minors will be charged and prosecuted.
- Party Patrols – AET members will be patrolling neighborhoods, rural areas, bonfire sites, etc. where before and after prom parties may be taking place.
- Parking Lot Patrols – AET members will patrol parking lots of local establishments and locations where prom activities may be occurring to ensure that underage alcohol possession and consumption is not taking place.
- Restaurant Walk-Throughs – AET members will be visible, making walkthroughs at local restaurants popular to prom goers and interacting

with them to ensure that they understand the importance of having an alcohol-free prom night.

- Compliance Checks – AET members will be checking local establishments to ensure that alcohol is not making it in to the hands of underage consumers.

Underage youth also need to be aware of the constructive possession statute in which anyone under the age of 21 can receive a citation or be arrested for possessing alcohol products, having them in their car or being at a party or event where underage drinking is taking place, EVEN if they are not drinking themselves.

We hope that all youth and parents participating in this year’s prom events will work together to make smart, legal and healthy choices to ensure that this year’s prom events in our community are fun, safe and alcohol free.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month



DON'T LET UNDERAGE DRINKING



Developed with funding from the federal Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Block Grant (#3808T010048-1851).

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Appreciating Our Teachers

FSD1 2018-2019 TEACHER OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED

Submitted by Pamela Little-McDaniel, Director of Public Relations, Florence 1 Schools



Sharri Duncan

John W. Moore Intermediate School Art Instructor Sharri Duncan has been selected Florence 1 School's 2018-19 Teacher of the Year. Duncan was selected from over 20 applicants in Florence 1 Schools. Florence 1 School Superintendent Dr. Richard O'Malley made the announcement at the Annual School Foundation Gala.

Prior to the culminating announcement, the teacher of the year selection panel reviewed all school teacher of the year applications, and the four teachers whose applications received the highest scores emerged as Honor Roll Teachers. The four teachers, including Sharri Duncan, Lynn Perkins of Southside Middle; Kim Cimney of West Florence High and Lenora Rivers-Davis of Wilson High, all underwent classroom observations and interviews conducted by an external, three-member selection panel with Duncan emerging as the Florence One Teacher of the Year.

"Every child is an artist," said Duncan, who teaches art at Moore. "Being an artist doesn't mean you must master drawing or painting to prove you are an artist, but to keep open your mind to creative thought. Every career a child chooses depends on creativity to exist. I see developing the child's mind to think creatively as the greatest contribution I can give a student."

Duncan has 14 years of teaching experience and has served at John W. Moore for the past 14 years. She is also a National Board Certified Teacher. "The rewards I find in teaching are when I see students remember,

years later, the thing we did in class and talk to me about that special day in their memory at Walmart," Duncan said. "Small things that the students say to me that make me know that they have understood the lesson and internalized it into their lives are rewarding." Duncan went on to say that smiles are her best reward. Duncan also explained a part of her teaching philosophy: "All children are creative, and it is my responsibility to nurture their creativity so each one can express personal ideas, beliefs, and aspirations toward becoming the best citizen of this world they can be by contributing to the quality of our community."

When asked about Sharri Duncan, fifth and sixth grade students at John W. Moore shared their opinions:

"Ms. Duncan is the best art teacher I have ever had," said Savannah Johnson.

Sophia Haselden said, "There is never a moment when you're not learning something in Ms. Duncan's class."

According to Matthew Edwards, Duncan is kind and understanding.

Alisa Zhu said, "She always helps the students and brings out the best in them."

Duncan received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in interior design from Texas Tech University; a master's in art education from Converse College; as well as alternative certification for educators and art education program studies at Francis Marion University. She has served as a presenter of art-related educational topics, both state and national conferences. Duncan will represent Florence 1 Schools in this year's South Carolina Teacher of the Year Program.



Florence School District One

2018-19

Teacher of the Year

School Art Instructor

Sharri Duncan

John W. Moore Intermediate



319 S. Dargan Street
Florence, SC 29506
(843) 669-4141 Fax (843) 673-1108
www.fsd1.org



Appreciating Our Teachers

PRIVETTE NAMED 2018-19 DCSD TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Submitted by Christopher McKagen, Communications Specialist



Laura Privette

DARLINGTON – North Hartsville Elementary School’s Laura Privette will represent Darlington County School District as Teacher of the Year for 2018-19. The announcement came during the district’s annual Teacher of the Year Awards Banquet, held in September inside Mayo High School for Math, Science and Technology’s Conference Center.

Privette is a school counselor at North Hartsville Elementary School. She earned the selection after an intensive judging period that included an application process and a face-to-face panel interview.

Superintendent Dr. Tim Newman made the exciting announcement before presenting Privette with a plaque. Privette then told the other teachers and counselors in attendance her plans for the coming year.

“I just love kids like we all do,” Privette said. “I’m looking forward to representing your voice as teachers as well as the needs of our students. So, this is awesome. Thank you very much.”

Privette holds a Master of Education in school counseling from The Citadel Graduate College. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Winthrop University and a specialist degree in School psychology from The Citadel Graduate College.

She explained her approach to school counseling in an extended application required for consideration. “I believe that we are all born with special talents and gifts, and I believe mine is a deep empathetic compassion for looking past the human behavior while focusing on the reasoning behind it,” she wrote. “It is with this trait and belief that I provide counseling support to examine those reasons and provide self-awareness that will stimulate change in behavior.”

Judges, which included past Teachers of the Year, district administration and community leaders, selected Privette from among five finalists. The four remaining finalists will serve as the district’s 2018-19 Honor Roll Teachers of the Year. They are:

- Amber Atkins, Spaulding Elementary School
- Rhonda Bailey, Washington Street Elementary School
- Christina Ewing, Carolina Elementary School
- Nancy Fletcher, Mayo High School for Math, Science and Technology

Judges selected the five finalists from the pool of 2018-19 School Teachers of the Year. These peer-selected teachers will serve on the district’s Teacher Forum and Leadership Council, acting as teacher leaders and advisers for the district.

All 23 School Teachers of the Year are:

- Allison Geddings, Brockington Elementary Magnet School
- Rebecca Watson, Brunson-Dargan Elementary School
- Peyton Walsh, Cain Elementary School
- Christina Ewing, Carolina Elementary School
- Daren McKenzie, Darlington County Institute of Technology
- Sgt. 1st Class Victor Morales, Darlington County Intervention School
- Frank O’Shea, Darlington High School
- Nicole Grant, Darlington Middle School
- Jaron Sanders, Hartsville High School
- Kim Roos, Hartsville Middle School

- Tina McElveen, Lamar Elementary School
- Kristen Rebollar, Lamar High School
- Nancy Fletcher, Mayo High School for Math, Science and Technology
- Laura Privette, North Hartsville Elementary School
- Melissa Morris, Pate Elementary School
- Whitney Williams, Rosenwald Elementary/Middle School
- Melissa McLain, Southside Early Childhood Center
- Amber Atkins, Spaulding Elementary School



- Lamonte Curry, Spaulding Middle School
- Kimm Mack, St. John’s Elementary School
- Ellen Blackwell, Thornwell School for the Arts
- Rhonda Bailey, Washington Street Elementary School
- Sarah Davidson Kelley, West Hartsville Elementary School

FCC TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2018-2019



Blondell Singleton

Blondell Singleton was voted by her peers “Teacher of the Year” for the 2018-2019 school year for Florence Career Center. Her educational journey includes: a bachelor’s degree in family and consumer sciences from South Carolina State University, Orangeburg; a master’s degree in education from Cambridge College, Boston; a master’s certificate in gerontology from the University of South Carolina, Columbia; and an advanced educational degree in educational leadership and supervision from Cambridge College, Boston. She has taught school in Williamsburg, Orangeburg and Florence counties for the past 18 years.

Singleton was nominated and received The Silvan’s Learning Center award for teachers in 2006 (Kingstree Senior High School). She also received the “Most Inspirational Teacher” award and Teacher Cadets 2010 (Kingstree Senior High School).

And her journey continues...

FSD2 2018-2019 TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Sandra M. Welch, HPHS
Math Teacher

PAMPLICO- I have been teaching for 20 years in public education but 25 years total since I started in private school. I have taught high school math classes from pre-algebra to AP Statistics and everything in between. I have been employed with Florence School District One and currently employed with Florence School District Two now. I teach at Hannah-Pamplico High School. I help run our APEX (Credit recovery) program here at the high school as well. I have two children and one grandchild.

JENNINGS NAMED FCSD3 TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Joshua Jennings and Superintendent Laura Hickson

LAKE CITY-A third-year English teacher, who almost called a courtroom his home as an attorney rather than a classroom as a teacher, has been named Florence County School District Three's Teacher of the Year.

Joshua Jennings, an English I, II, III, IV and creative writing teacher at Lake City Early College High School, was named Teacher of the Year during the district's annual Opening Ceremony welcoming back teachers for the new school year. He will represent FCSD3 in the State Teacher of the Year competition.

Jennings was among the three finalists, along with Amy Wiggins, a fifth-grade math teacher at Scranton Elementary STEAM Academy, and Teri Burgess, a second-grade teacher at Lake City Early Childhood Center School of Arts.

"I am thrilled for Mr. Jennings," said Ned Blake, who served as principal at the school until recently. "He always put students first and is very innovative in his teaching pedagogy. His willingness to involve students in community activities speaks volumes of who he is as a person. Being a very gifted and self-driven educator, I am convinced Mr. Jennings will have a profound impact on student achievement and learning for years to come."

Jennings said he always knew he wanted to be a teacher. "I enjoyed helping my peers and later my little brother and sister with their work for as long as I can remember," he said. "However, I set off for college with every intention of becoming a lawyer because my family told me I needed to make money and have a lucrative career. Little did I know that the history degree I was pursuing would be just as useful in the classroom as in law school."

Jennings always knew he wanted to be a teacher but instead planned to become an attorney because of the higher earning potential. After graduating from college a semester early, Jennings said he got a job as a substitute teacher at a school where he already was coaching track. "I started just to make some extra money on the side, but before long, I found myself loving the grind of teaching," he recalled. "Once I found myself in the classroom, I had very little desire to get out."

That was when Jennings applied for an alternative teaching certification program through Teach for America (TFA). After three interviews, he was accepted into the program. "Although my commitment with TFA was only for two years, I had absolutely no desire to leave whenever my cohort had fulfilled its obligation," he said. "I had found my passion, and leaving the classroom was never a thought that crossed my mind."

Jennings said his philosophy of teaching is summed up in a phrase all teachers hear at some point in their careers: teaching is all about relationships. "This phrase could possibly be the greatest understatement in the field of education," he said. "Becoming a successful teacher is a multifaceted conundrum that I doubt anyone will ever quite solve. However, the great teachers always come back to this idea of relationships. It is this relationship-first mentality that I believe has come to define my brand of teaching."

That need for building relationships with students led Jennings to start the school's first cross-country program for both male and female students and establish the school's Fellowship of Christian Athletes program. He also sponsored the Beta Club chapter and revived the school newspaper because he felt there was a need for academic achievement to be highlighted.

"I did and sponsored all of these activities for one reason: students needed to see that I cared about them before they were going to be willing to listen to me in the classroom," he explained.

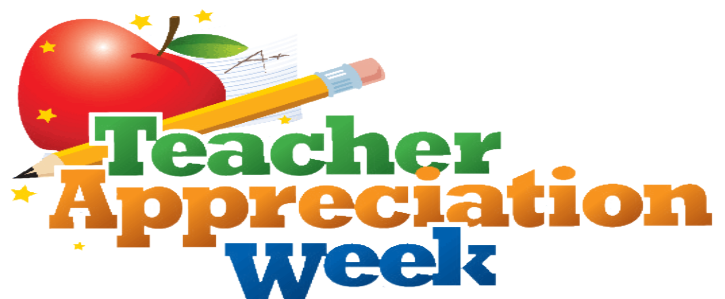
Jennings has also focused students on giving back to the community. "I have been blessed to be a part of a school where our principal has pushed students to get out and be involved in our community," he said. "As a member of that community, I immediately immersed myself and sought out local initiatives to serve alongside my students." He and his students have partnered with a local church for a program known as Hope for the Holidays where they assisted community members who were struggling to make ends meet look for Christmas gifts for their children. In addition, they helped establish a venue where these community members could come in and get free toys for their kids.

The students also volunteered with Home Works, which involved spending a weekend to help repair homes of those in need. "The students came out in droves to assist community members to repair not only their homes, but in many cases their lives," Jennings said.

Jennings and his students also partnered with Soles for Souls, an organization whose mission is to create sustainable jobs and provide relief through the distribution of shoes and clothing around the world. "These partnerships have taught my students that giving back to their community is one of the greatest acts of love that they can ever embark upon," he noted.

Jennings earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of South Carolina, a Master of Education degree in instructional accommodation from Francis Marion University and a Master of Arts degree in English from Southern New Hampshire University.

He has served as a mentor teacher and as a Teach for America Ambassador. In addition, he was a 2018 finalist for Coker College's Excellence in Teaching Scholarship.



Appreciating Our Teachers

FSD5 TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Deannie DuRant

JOHNSONVILLE - The Florence County School District 5 Teacher of the Year for the 2018-2019 school year is Deannie DuRant. DuRant teaches English 8 and English 1 at Johnsonville Middle School. She has been teaching for 21 years and has a wide range of teaching experience. Deannie has taught five-year-old kindergarten, grades five through nine and 11, and she tutors on the college level. She feels that this broad variety of teaching gives

her a unique perspective on education and students. Deannie said, "I know that every child can learn, but learning is not a one-size-fits all endeavor. Learning must be adaptable to the needs of individuals."

DuRant graduated from Robert E. Lee Academy in her hometown of Bishopville. She attended Columbia College and finished with a BA degree in English with a minor in German with an emphasis on secondary education. She has done extensive graduate study and has



Deannie DuRant: 2018-19 Teacher of the Year

obtained teaching credentials in early childhood education, middle level English, Gifted and Talented, and literacy. Deannie is passionate about reading and the study of English. "If you can read, you can accomplish anything."

She has been happily married to Bethel Carey DuRant for 36 years and they

are the parents of three children: a son, Brandon, and his wife, Melissa, and two daughters, Catherine and Rachel. Deannie is also Mimi to two granddaughters, Amelia and Lydia. She loves spending time with her family on their farm.

Deannie is an active member of her church, Union United Methodist. She is the chairperson of the Family Ministries Committee, president of the Women of Faith, a member of the Administrative Council and a member of the Chancel Choir.

DuRant enjoys cooking, reading, spending time with her family and all things Clemson. "I am humbled to represent the District 5 family as Teacher of the Year. It is an honor and a privilege to serve my school district."



MCS D'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2018-2019



Paula Keith Page

MULLINS-Paula Keith Page, a reading coach at North Mullins Primary School, is Marion County School District's Teacher of the Year for 2018-2019. After earning her undergraduate degree in elementary education from Francis Marion University, Page began her career teaching kindergarten for the United States Department of Defense Schools at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. The following year she taught third grade at Nichols Elementary School. In 1995 she earned her master's degree in special education (learning disabilities) and began teaching resource classes to first and second grade students at North Mullins Primary School. Page completed Clemson University's Reading Recovery program in 2018 and is now serving the students at North Mullins as a reading coach.

Page believes in building close parent-teacher relationships as well as close student-teacher relationships. "Developing positive relationships between all involved parties allows the students to be well aware of expectations across the board," Page states. "I not only want to nurture my students' academic success, but I also desire for them to develop positive social skills, which allows them to prosper as community members." She also believes in high expectations, not only for her students but for herself as well. "We strive for all of our students to be successful in the skills that we teach them," comments Page. "If they fail as a student, we fail as a teacher." Page has the unique perspective as both a special needs teacher and the mother of a child with special needs.

As an active participant in her community and church activities, you will find Page volunteering in area organizations for the elderly and handicapped citizens, as well as the Mullins Recreation Department. She lives in Mullins with her husband and three children.

We ♥ our teachers



Marcus Ford

MARION-Recognizing how challenging the first two years of teaching can be, the Marion County School District developed a method to recognize an early teacher that has done a tremendous job. Marcus D. Ford, Jr. is the district's Emerging Teacher of the Year. A graduate of Francis Marion University, Ford teaches social studies at Johnakin Middle School. He believes in building relationships with his students, taking an interest in their activities both inside

and outside of the classroom. He is the co-sponsor of the Jr. Beta Club and is often seen at student sporting events after school. Ford is the son of Latonya Yates-Ford, a former Teacher of the Year for the Marion County School District



Appreciating Our Teachers

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION STEM CAMPUS AND HIGH HILLS TOY Submitted by Shelly Galloway



Shasta G. Smith

SUMTER-Shasta G. Smith, a math instructional coach at High Hills Elementary School, has seven years of experience as a professional educator. Smith believes every child needs a champion--someone in their corner to fight for them, to cheer them on and to lift them up.

Smith earned a Bachelor of Science in disciplinary studies, a Master of Education with a focus in reading education and the Read to Succeed Endorsement.

Professionally, Smith has served on the Council for Elementary Science International, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Science Teachers Association, South Carolina International Reading Association, ASCD and Palmetto Teachers Association.

A leader by example, Smith has led a variety of professional development activities including Class Dojo, Fifth Grade Curriculum, Kagan Cooperative Learning, Nearpod, Mastery Connect, and Train the Teacher Google Applications. She has presented at the TAIR Conference, Oklahoma Reading Association Annual Conference and MSU Colloquium Fair.

Her honors and awards included being named the 2018 Air Force Association STEM Campus Teacher of the Year, 2018 High Hills Elementary Campus Teacher of the Year, 2018 My Hero Award from

Cub Scout Pack 320, Nearpod Certified Educator, MSU Graduate Education Student Merit Scholar, President's Honor Roll for Graduate Students, MSU Parent Fund Scholarship Recipient and 2016 WLTX Technology Teacher Spotlight.

Smith strives to always embody the serving spirit both inside and outside of her classroom. At the school level, she helps sponsor food drives for our local food bank, collect can tabs for the Ronald McDonald House, donate school supplies through our local Angel Tree, shower our local airmen with cookies, raise funds for Relay for Life in hopes of one day finding a cure for cancer, participate globally in a Kindness Adventure program with young Kenyan children to raise money for their local schools, and earn pennies to support hospital patients. Additionally, throughout the year, her school participates in Genius Hour where kids explore and design school-wide initiative projects such as a recycling club, a technology club, a student produced morning news show, a campus-wide flash mob video for Autism Awareness month and a Bench Buddy system to alert other students when a peer feels left out during recess.

Personally, Smith invests in her community through volunteering at her church in the preschool ministry, sponsoring a school-wide STEM club with a focus on robotics, participating as a mentor during the Special Olympics, supporting her students in their local community sponsored activities and partnering with our local Air Force base to implement a "Math Buddies" program at her school.

SOUTH CAROLINA TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Erin Fox

GAFFNEY - Erin Fox is the 2018 South Carolina Teacher of the Year. Fox has taught English for 13 years at Gaffney Senior High School in the Cherokee County School District. She has also served as a Varsity and Junior Varsity Girls' Cross Country coach for three years.

Fox holds a Bachelor of Science in English education from Western Carolina University and a master's in gifted and talented education from Converse College.

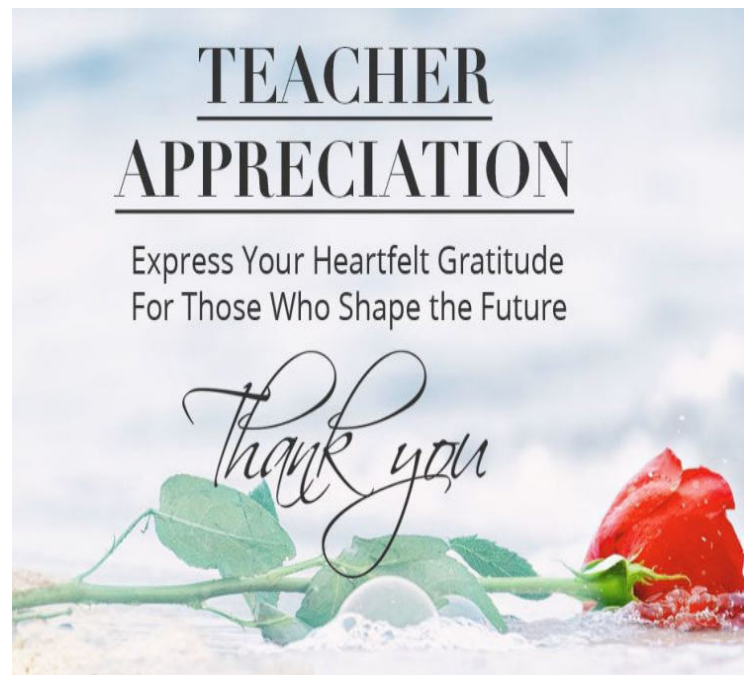
She has taught all levels of learners in English I-III as well as Advanced Drama, Drama I, Introduction to Drama, Theatrical Movement and Academic Assistance.

Fox pulls from her dramatic, dance and musical background to create dynamic lessons and units for her students. In her roles as a teacher and cross-country coach, she ensures that her students are challenged everyday. She strives to teach them "an inner drive" that will carry them further than just a 5K course, classroom or school year. Fox also believes in the necessity of optimal health and wellness and the positive overall effects it has on student achievement and success.

"Erin truly embodies the qualities and characteristics of a great educator," said Superintendent Spearman. "She is so deserving of this honor, and I look forward to working with her over the next year to continue to lift up the teaching profession and empower educators across our state."

Fox and her husband Danny have two children: nine-year-old Jack and five-year-old Scout. Fox is originally from Murphy, N.C. and is the daughter and granddaughter of teachers.

Fox will serve a one-year residency at the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement.





Appreciating Our Teachers

LCSD'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR HAS BRIGHT IDEAS FOR STUDENTS *by Angela Crosland*

BISHOPVILLE - It is common in the field of education to hear the term at-risk hurled around. The definition according to who teaches exceptional students in Lee County School District (LCSC) might be surprising. Nash works with those who have learning or physical disabilities and contends that her students are at risk of becoming future businessmen and women, educators, doctors, attorneys, nurses, cosmetologists, scientists, the president or even the person who will invent a cure for cancer.

While Nash is busy giving accolades to them, her peers were quick to acknowledge her skill in teaching, resulting in her being honored as the 2018-19 District Teacher of the Year (TOY).

"Validation from peers is one of the highest honors that can be given to teachers. It shows the love, passion, and the expectations you have for students and the love and respect your peers have for you," says Nash, who was quick to congratulate school level Teachers of the Year, wishing for them increased opportunities to exhibit passion and inspiration as they build relationships with students, parents and coworkers.

The award validates her belief that she was "called" to teach, says Nash. "I was incredibly honored to be selected as the Teacher of the Year, not only for Lee Central High School, but also for the district," says Nash. "I believe God has called me and equipped me to do this job and gave me the ability to do what I do. He gifted me with teaching and with encouragement."

Not many can say they never regretted a day of working in their chosen professions but Nash maintains just that. "There has never been a day that I have regretted becoming a teacher," says Nash. "There are some decisions as a teacher I made early in my career and now that I am older and wiser, I wish I could go back and change the way I reacted to situations and show more compassion and understanding towards students in their times of struggle."

Nash is a doctoral student of Northcentral University and will complete her education specialist degree in administration from Arkansas State in August. She earned a degree in special education (learning disabilities) from Francis Marion University and a degree in elementary education from the University of South Carolina. Her years in college and 24 years (16 with LCSD) as a K-12 public education teacher means Nash has spent most of her life in a classroom setting. She does recall a time that she entered the classroom with trepidation though. Her family had moved to a new town the summer before she started second grade, and Nash had an array of emotions going on that first day.

"I was angry to be in a new school – sad because I missed my friends at my old school, intimidated being in a new environment, and afraid of the unknown," says Nash. "I vividly remember the first day of school. My teacher, Jackie Geddings Olson, greeted me with a gigantic smile and warm hug. All of those feelings immediately vanished."

This teacher had a way of making everyone feel as if they were her favorite student and is the reason Nash became a teacher herself.

"It has been 40 years since I was in her class; however, I see her in town often, and I still believe that I am her favorite student," says Nash. "I strive to be the teacher for students that Mrs. Geddings-Olson was for me."

Nash, who lost her mom unexpectedly the week before Thanksgiving in 2017, says one of the first people to visit her mom's house during their bereavement was Geddings-Olson. "I was not at all surprised because she has always been there for me. I pray that my students know that I will be there for them until I take my very last breath," she says.

Right now, Nash is teaching at Lee Central High School, but the journey began at another school in the district. The transfer to her current position was an answer to a prayer, Nash says.

"I always wondered if I was in the right place and serving the children in Lee County effectively," she says. "I now know that the Lord was preparing me all those years to be the teacher I am today. It was not until I transferred to the high school that I found my passion and place in education."

As Nash found her place, she also developed a keen education philosophy, describing life as a book and educators as the manufacturers of the pen students use to write that book. "Each person has the same first chapter (birth) and last chapter (death); however, it is up to each individual to make the chapters in between worthy of being read," says Nash. "It is our duty as educators to ensure that students have the tools needed to make the chapters in their lives as meaningful and awesome as possible."

The duty of a teacher, according to Nash, is to be passionate about teaching and teach daily with this passion; expect the best from each student; believe that each child can achieve; challenge the students on academic and personal development levels; and above all else inspire and empower students to be the best person they can be.

"Teachers need to equip students with the tools necessary to be the unique individual that they are capable of being for their future," says Nash. "Allow students to show their creativity and give them freedom to express themselves and be creative within the boundaries of learning."

Nash further describes teaching as a walk. "Teachers walk beside students as they journey through a portion of their life," says Nash.

Students are given the tools of passion, nurture, growth and maturation by their teachers, she says, and it is done "through their smile, expectations, and motivation (which) may be the difference that our students need to succeed."

The passion, the zeal, and the love Nash has for the profession and students can only be explained in one word she says: God. "I cannot imagine being a teacher and not having faith in God. I pray for my students each morning and every night," says Nash. "I have prayed for any student that has or will ever cross my path. I use my faith and the fact that I am a mom and Gammi to guide my responses to situations at school."

The expectation is that she and other teachers treat students as if they were their very own.

As for her future, Nash has not expressed much interest in doing anything but see her students soar. "These students are eagerly awaiting, patiently to have the opportunity to spread their wings and shine," says Nash. "As part of the South Carolina team of teachers it is our duty and obligation to bring students where they need to be and ensure they love, respect, and value the reflection in the mirror."

This distinction places Nash among other TOYs who will contend for the statewide award to be presented on May 8 at the Teacher of the Year Celebration.



ABB CONGRATULATES ONE OF ITS OWN

Articles submitted by Susan Grant, V.P. Marketing Director/CRA Officer



Randy Altman

Anderson Brothers Bank congratulates one of its own, Randy Altman, for being presented by The Home Builders Association of The Greater Pee Dee the, “2018 Associate Member of the Year Award,” at a monthly meeting held in February at The Palmetto room. Altman is vice president-regional executive of our Florence offices. He brings a wealth of knowledge and outstanding service to our bank and his community.

ONEY: BRANCH OPERATIONS COORDINATOR



Jessica Toney

JOHNSONVILLE- Anderson Brothers Bank announces the promotion of Jessica Toney to branch operations coordinator of the Johnsonville office. Toney joined Anderson Brothers Bank in 2014 as a bank teller. In her new role, she will provide administrative and supervisory support within the branch office to ensure effective and efficient customer service and teller operations. She will manage work activities of branch tellers by overseeing, planning

and scheduling duties; conferring with retail sales and the service leader to resolve operational issues and extraordinary occurrences; and assisting loan officers.

COOK ADVANCES TO LOAN COMPLIANCE



Debbie Cook

MULLINS-Anderson Brothers Bank has announced the advancement of Debbie Cook to a position in Loan Compliance. In her new role, Cook will be take on a much larger role within the Bank’s regulatory compliance activities along with assisting the senior loan compliance officer with internal and external audits regarding lending compliance matters. Cook has had many years of experience in the banking industry, including the past 16 years with Anderson Brothers Bank. Since she joined ABB, she has worked in its Home Mortgage Center as a mortgage loan officer, closer, processor and as the department manager for the last seven years.

“We are delighted that we were able to advance Debbie as she has shown the willingness and the capacity to take on even greater responsibilities here at the bank,” said Christopher Carter, senior loan compliance officer with Anderson Brothers Bank. “Debbie has been influential in managing the Home Mortgage Department for a number of years and will be a tremendous asset to the whole bank in her newest responsibility. We are excited to have her accept this move and are looking forward to her joining our department.”



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GETTING BACK TO BASICS: WHY A FINANCIAL STRATEGY IS SO IMPORTANT

Many of us are familiar with the expression, “failing to plan is planning to fail.” As an agent with New York Life, I can assure you that, when it comes to financial goals and objectives, this old adage still rings true. In fact, it may be more relevant than ever.

It isn't always easy for some Americans to make financial headway. With pensions in decline and interest rates only just starting to inch up near historic lows, it usually takes persistence and sound planning in order to get ahead.

Not sure how to begin? That's okay—it's easy to become overwhelmed if you think about all your needs at once. Instead, try taking it one step at a time, starting with the basics:

Build an emergency fund—No matter where you are in life, it's important to set aside 8-10 months of living expenses. You don't have to do it all at once, but every dollar you save today is a dollar you won't have to borrow if something unexpected happens.

Protect your home and family—Most of us have people who depend on us to keep a roof over their heads and food on their plates. That's a big responsibility, but it's one life insurance can help you meet—even if something tragic takes you away. You can start with an affordable term life plan at first, and then add more coverage as your needs and budget grow.

Prepare for major expenses like college—As a parent or grandparent, you naturally want the best for your loved ones. Now's the time to start a college or wedding fund so they won't have to go into debt to make their dreams for the future come true.

Get ready for retirement—There are plenty of ways to set aside money for retirement: 401(k)s, IRAs, and fixed deferred annuities* just to name a few. But they all have one thing in common: the sooner you start, the better off you'll be in the long run. Try to increase your contributions over time—perhaps 1 percent with each raise—or, if you are age 50 or older, look into some of the “catch-up” provisions that may allow you to contribute even more.

While the economy is starting to grow, it still makes sense to stay focused on the things that really matter. A sound financial strategy can help us accomplish many things, but perhaps the most important is making sure we never lose sight of them again.

This educational, third-party article is provided as a courtesy by Julie A Cord, Agent, New York Life Insurance Company. To learn more about the information or topics discussed, please contact Julie A Cord at jacord@ft.newyorklife.com or 317.289.3010.

*Issued by New York Life Insurance Company and New York Life Insurance and Annuity Corporation.



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CONTINUING THE HEALTHY JOURNEY

Submitted by Rachel Baggett, Director of Marketing and Initiatives



Contestants in the Florence's Biggest Loser are placed into teams that not only help motivate each other, but also help hold each other accountable.

At the time this article was written, close to 50 contestants from the Pee Dee region were nearing the end of the United Way of Florence County's 2019 Florence's Biggest Loser competition. They had put in ten weeks of workouts, healthy eating and sweating, with determination to jump-start their journey to living a healthier life. While many will walk away from the competition with lower numbers on the scale, smaller waists, better fit in their clothes, or even just the ability to breathe easier, the question now is "What's next?"

Getting started on a healthy journey is a big step in itself, but often times, continuing that healthy journey can be just as difficult. Contestants in the Florence's Biggest Loser benefit from weekly weigh-ins, team support and other rules to help keep them on course during the competition, but after the competition ends, they must rely on themselves to keep that motivation going. The same is true for many individuals who start trying to incorporate healthy habits. How do you keep yourself on track in the long-term when you no longer have the momentum of starting or when the progress starts to slow down?

One of the best things you can do to keep yourself pushing forward is to set up accountability measures. Florence's Biggest Loser contestants stay accountable by having to come weigh-in once a week. For many, knowing they have that weigh-in coming up makes them second guess skipping a workout or reaching for an un-healthy snack. Take a look at the goals you have yourself, and see where you can create some accountability measures. If one of your goals is getting in consistent workouts, you may want to find a workout partner or pay for a few sessions of a fitness class. Knowing that you have someone waiting on you, or knowing that you will lose money, will help keep you accountable to make that workout. Other ideas for accountability measures include creating your own weekly weigh-in sessions, setting alarms on your phone, or sharing your goals and progress on social media.

If you struggle with staying motivated, you may want to set up rewards for yourself. A reward can be something small or large that you give yourself every time you reach a goal or hit a progress indicator. For

example, if you hit your goal of going to the gym four times a week for a month straight, you could reward yourself with a massage from a local spa. Or, if you cooked a healthy meal Monday through Friday, then on Saturday your reward could be to go out to eat at your favorite restaurant. Ideally, you would want to create a workout plan that you look forward to doing or have your healthy habits become second nature. Until you reach that point, these rewards can help motivate you to keep hitting those goals because you know you have something to look forward to if you do.

One of the biggest derailments people face during a healthy journey is hitting a plateau. At some point in your journey, you will hit a point where it seems like instead of your progress continuing to chart upwards, it feels like it is just staying consistent. This inability to improve can be incredibly frustrating, and it can cause some individuals to want to give up entirely. If you are stuck in what feels like your plateau, now



If you are struggling with your progress, take a look at your fitness and nutrition and see if there are any areas that can be improved or switched up.

may be a good time to reignite your progress by switching things up. One of the best things to switch up is usually your workout routine because as your body becomes stronger, it will no longer be challenged by the workouts you have been doing and you will start to see your progress begin to decrease. If you have been doing mostly cardio for your workouts, maybe you can try incorporating some weight-lifting or vice versa. Or, if you really enjoy the workout plan you created, maybe you can just increase the difficulty of the plan by adding heavier weights, more resistance or longer sets. When in

doubt, do not hesitate to reach out to a certified personal trainer, or a nutritionist, to see what areas can be changed or improved as your body goes through its journey.

Even if you do not utilize any of the other techniques above, one of the best things you can do for your healthy journey progress is to stay positive. There are going to be days (or even weeks) where you feel like you are making no progress, the scale is not budging, you have to skip a workout, or you are just having trouble staying on track. If you let those days discourage you, you could risk giving up on all the progress you have already made. But, if you face those bad days head on, do your best, and know tomorrow is another day to try again, it will be far easier to get up the next morning and try again than it would be if you had gotten down on yourself for getting off track.

For even more information about how you can continue your healthy journey, or start one, go online to the Florence's Biggest Loser website at www.burnandlearnflorence.com, or check out the Biggest Loser Florence Facebook page for workout, nutrition and healthy living articles. While you are there, be sure to also look for the 2019 Florence's Biggest Loser finale articles to see the finishers, the grand prize winners, the amount of weight & inches lost, and the amount of donations raised for the United Way partner agencies from the 2019 competition!



DUNCAN REFLECTS ON REALITIES OF HEALTHCARE Submitted by Andrew Boardwine, Communications Specialist



Dr. Jeniqua J. Duncan

HARTSVILLE-Dr. Jeniqua J. Duncan, DO, MBA, strives to passionately help individuals, co-workers and community members by providing a judgement-free arena with which she can assist their needs. Duncan, a native of Charleston, began her path in healthcare in high school after considering a variety of other fields. She tested her interests in becoming a teacher in several subjects, including ballet, music and special education. Duncan was exposed to healthcare by her mother, who was a community activist, and eventually joined a high school club that was partnered with the Medical

University of South Carolina (MUSC).

"I volunteered with Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach and got to see the rural area setting," Duncan said. "That's when I decided I wanted to be a doctor because I saw the need for primary care."

Duncan received her bachelor's in biology from Xavier University of Louisiana before earning a master's in business administration with a concentration in healthcare leadership from Rockhurst University and a doctor of osteopathy from the University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine.

After completing a residency in Orlando, Duncan decided to move back closer to home. She worked for several different organizations, including St. James Santee Family Health Center (staff physician); McLeod Family Medicine Residency Program (faculty/staff physician); Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (director of Student Medical Education); Medical University of South Carolina AHEC (assistant professor); Global Clinical Trials Consultants (principal investigator); University of South Carolina School of Medicine (assistant professor); Lakeside Medical Response, Inc. (medical educator); as well as several roles with McLeod Health (associate vice president of

Occupational Health Services, medical director of Onsite Services and Population Health).

"In all the different places that I've been a part of, one thing that I've found is that everything seems to work better when multiple people have ownership of the goal," Duncan said. "A lot of times, ownership gets put on one person, or people don't feel like they're helping accomplish that overall goal. Everyone has a purpose, and we're all working towards the same mission."

Duncan joined the CareSouth Carolina team as the associate medical director in February of 2018. She works to be a liaison for physicians to the organization and provides numerous other tasks on an executive management level.

"When I first came to CareSouth Carolina, I wanted to meet people face-to-face," Duncan said. "Though we are spread out throughout the Pee Dee in many different communities, I found that one big thing people wanted was community. They want to be a part of the big team. So, one of my goals is to keep everyone connected, and I want to make sure that providers aren't worrying about things that I can take care of for them."

Outside of work, Duncan enjoys dancing and spending time with her family. She said one of her favorite activities is getting some alone time, preferably to be outside on her hammock, enjoying the weather and bird watching.

Duncan has a passion for taking care of rural areas where affordable and quality healthcare is not as easily accessible.

"Economics is a driver for many of these barriers," Duncan said. "Many of our small towns were really dependent on industry and, when that industry leaves, they have to make decisions between housing, food and healthcare. Healthcare is so important, but we have to think about the people we are serving and their real lives."

"Looking at things through their perspective helps us provide better care and realize the barriers we must overcome to reach those in many rural communities," Duncan said.

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Emmanuel Quaye, MD

What is a Membership Practice?

Physician practices described as “membership medicine” are medical practices in which patients pay a monthly or annual retainer to their doctor or medical office for a contracted bundle of services. These practices, which are growing in numbers, offer an alternative model for physicians who hope to spend less time on paperwork and more time with patients and for patients who want their doctors to spend more time with them, addressing their health needs rather than completing paper work for insurance companies.

Benefits of Membership

Membership medicine is beneficial for the flexibility it affords in communicating with patients because physicians no longer need to figure out how they’re going to bill for a visit. The relationship between the doctor and the patient is less defined by a visit, because the doctor has the freedom to communicate using technology—phone, e-mail, any of these things—rather than having to come in and see the doctor.

Consultations can take place over the phone if the patient doesn’t need to be physically examined, and patients can send the doctor messages, look at their records and lab results, and in some cases, pay bills online. The doctor can discuss lab results after the patient pulls them up on the practice portal without the need to make an office visit.

In membership practice the doctor is far more accessible in person because the office visits last much longer, often as long as the patient needs.

One pernicious feature of medical care is that your doctor makes money when you get sick. In OUR practice, we want to keep you healthy, but we do not want to go out of business while keeping you healthy. If that happens, we both lose. Membership allows both the patient and the practice to win.

Why Doctors Choose Membership Practice

Often, doctors choose membership practice because of the increased paperwork load and less time with patients. Many doctors in conventional practice feel pressure to see more and more patients. Many find that the pace of work is not sustainable. Some feel they cannot provide the care that they want to provide, are not able to spend time with patients and do not have the time to properly dig into their patients’ problems to get at the root of their issues. Doctors often feel incentivized to do testing and referrals, not to spend time to get to the bottom of the problem.

With membership practice, doctors see fewer patients, which allows for more face-to-face time with patients, and more time to communicate with patients by phone or other means. This improves the practice-patient communication necessary to make care better. It makes the practice more accessible to patients and their families.

Why Patients Choose a Membership Practice

Some patients are finding the amount of time their primary care physicians have for them dwindling and look for other methods of healthcare delivery to increase the amount of one-on-one communication with their doctors. Many have turned to membership medicine to address these problems.

To gain this closer relationship and more time spent with their primary care doctor, patients pay an annual membership fee to be part of a membership medicine model. Doctors have fewer patients but spend more time addressing medical concerns and preventing disease among their set of patients. More time is available on the telephone – not just with the doctor, but with other staff of the practice.

Studies of membership practices show that patients are satisfied with their care through this reimbursement model. In one poll, 98 percent stated that communication with their primary care doctors has been enhanced through their membership practice.

Why Consider a Membership Practice?

Traditional healthcare payment options pay for procedures instead of results. Physicians are penalized financially for spending more time with patients delivering thoughtful, whole person care. What this means for patients is that you may get a lot of tests and end up on many medications without necessarily getting any better. Membership practice fixes this problem.

Health Care Costs and Savings

The U.S. allocates 3 percent of our healthcare spending to prevention, yet 72 percent of diseases plaguing the country are preventable. Membership medicine is based on the principle that up-front investment in wellness will result in a reduction in acute healthcare episodes. Experts believe that, over time, membership medicine should reduce overall healthcare expenditure. The same principle applies in our practice. One of our services in which we review and discontinue drugs we consider to be unnecessary is an example of how we directly reduce health care costs for patients while reducing the potential for drug side effects or interactions (see below).

Why Membership Medicine is Growing

Membership medicine is growing, and this growth is being fueled by both physicians and patients. Physicians are fed up with assembly line medicine in which they get paid based on the number of patients they see per day. Doctors want to practice good medicine instead of fast medicine. Similarly, patients do not want to feel like a number. They want to lock into a close relationship with a trusted physician who will do what’s right for them instead of what’s right according to their insurance company.

Membership at Magnolia Health Care, Inc.

Magnolia Health Care offers a membership option to our primary care, internal medicine patients. Patients may choose the membership option for their usual care, especially if they have complex chronic illnesses for which a doctor’s close monitoring is essential for prolonged good health. Patients who feel they need more time than the usual 10 to 15 minutes time allotted for office visits may also sign up for membership.

There is a set of medical services at Magnolia Health Care that is available only to patients who are practice members of Magnolia Health Care. These services include functional medicine, weight management, non-narcotic pain management, an auto-immune program, age management (anti-aging) medicine, a polypharmacy program and an Alzheimer’s Disease program. These services cover diseases that are often very difficult to treat using conventional medicine means, or diseases for which there are no approved successful treatments. The treatments employed at Magnolia Health Care for these conditions are treatments within the functional/integrative/naturopathic medicine fields of medicine. Magnolia Health Care also employs nonconventional treatments, such as nutrition, herbs and supplementation, and lifestyle treatments to manage and often reverse these diseases.

Prescription Drug Monitoring and Discontinuation

One feature of our membership practice, which Dr. Quaye is particularly proud of, is our prescription drug monitoring and discontinuation (polypharmacy) program. In patients with multiple chronic illnesses, especially elderly patients, it is quite common to see patients on as many as 20 different prescriptions. This is known as polypharmacy, and experts caution against it for several reasons, including safety. As part of our membership program, we review our patients’ drugs and make recommendations on which ones could be discontinued safely. We do not unilaterally discontinue any medications that patients have been taking for a long time.

Specific Membership Services

- Functional Medicine
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- Auto-immune Program
- Polypharmacy
- Non-narcotic Pain Management
- Age Management
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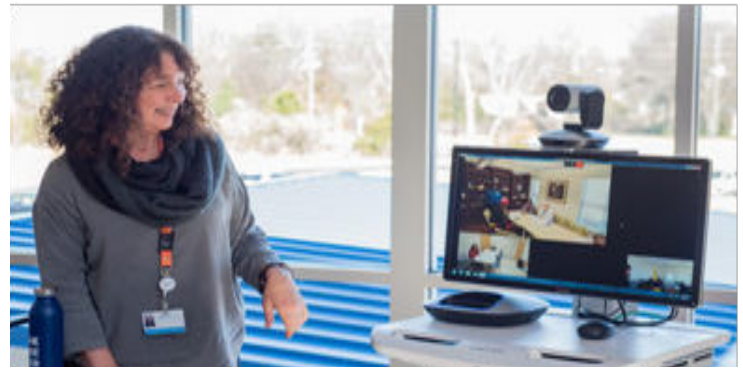


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Anita Longan, a registered dietitian nutritionist and diabetes educator conducts a telehealth session from the HopeHealth Diabetes & Nutrition Institute at the Medical Plaza in Florence for a diabetes education class with patients at HopeHealth in Manning. Longan was named Certified Diabetes Educator of the Year at the 17th Annual Chronic Disease Prevention Symposium March 8.

Anita Longan was named Certified Diabetes Educator of the Year at the 17th Annual Chronic Disease Prevention Symposium in Myrtle Beach on March 8. The award is presented by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control each year to recognize excellence in diabetes education and service to the diabetes community.

Longan is a registered dietitian nutritionist and diabetes educator at the Diabetes & Nutrition Institute at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza, Florence. "Her achievements and dedication to helping people with diabetes in South Carolina make her a very deserving recipient of this award," said Kitty Finklea, also a certified dietitian nutritionist at the Diabetes & Nutrition Institute. "She has a passion and dedication for helping people achieve their health goals and regularly goes above and beyond a traditional work environment to help others. She brings a friendly and relatable approach to nutrition and lifestyle counseling, offering insight to people from all walks of life."

Longan has more than 25 years experience in nutrition counseling and diabetes education. She helps individuals and groups learn how to balance physical activity and diet to manage their overall health. She teaches all aspects of diabetes education and specializes in teaching advanced carbohydrate counting to those managing diabetes with insulin pumps or multiple daily insulin injections.

Longan, along with HopeHealth's Mandy Floyd, quality manager, was part of a panel presentation on telehealth best practices and was surprised to receive the award, especially for a second time. She was also recognized as Certified Diabetes Educator of the Year in 2011.

"There are a lot of deserving diabetes educators out there," said Longan. "I really feel like it is recognition for all of HopeHealth because we wouldn't have a diabetes education program if it wasn't for the support of our leadership and the awesome team we have at the Diabetes & Nutrition Institute."

Longan has been instrumental in achieving accreditation for two diabetes education programs and building the diabetes education program at HopeHealth. She has helped pioneer telehealth for medical nutrition therapy and Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES) at HopeHealth and helped expand telehealth options to three HopeHealth locations in Florence, Clarendon and Williamsburg counties. For more information on these programs, visit hope-health.org/diabetes.

HopeHealth is one of 23 nonprofit, federally-qualified health centers in South Carolina. We provide quality and affordable health care services to individuals in Florence, Clarendon, and Williamsburg Counties and infectious diseases services in Aiken, Clarendon, Florence, Orangeburg, and Williamsburg Counties. To become a patient, call 843-667-9414, or visit hope-health.org.



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DID YOU KNOW THE HIDDEN DANGERS FROM RADIATION?

Submitted by C. Eric Wooten, M.D., MUSC Health Florence Medical Center Radiation Oncology



Dr. Charles Eric Wooten

There are hidden dangers for the heart in women treated for breast cancer. One danger comes from the radiation treatments used to cure it. Although highly effective, radiation therapy to the breast exposes the heart to radiation, gradually weakening the arterial walls and increasing blood pressure leading to heart disease.

Every day we see continuing improvement in survival rates for breast cancer patients. With that in mind, the focus on reducing heart

disease from treatment is taking center stage.

For this reason we at MUSC Health Florence Medical Center are proud to be the first in the region to offer a new heart sparing radiation treatment technology called Surface Guided Radiation Therapy (SGRT). A recent study published in the International Journal of Radiation Oncology confirms SGRT technology is highly effective in reducing radiation to the heart. The study also showed blood flow radiation-induced abnormalities to the heart were reduced from 27 percent to 0 percent. ^[1]

HOW IT WORKS:

SGRT uses stereo vision technology to monitor a patient in real-time with less than a millimeter accuracy. Although we have used SGRT to enhance radiation accuracy and safety in almost every cancer type for quite some time, it benefits patients with left breast cancer in a particularly important way. SGRT helps protect the heart from damage caused by unintended exposure to radiation. It does this by keeping the heart away from the breast during radiation.

Radiation treatments are delivered to a fixed point in space. However,

the chest (and breast) is in a state of constant motion from normal breathing. As the chest wall moves up and down, the heart repeatedly moves in and out of the radiation field, exposing it to injury. A specialized technique known as Deep Inspiratory Breath Hold (DIBH) can be used to reduce exposure of radiation to the heart, which reduces respiratory motion. The patient takes a deep breath, and the chest (heart) is immobilized in a fixed position for treatment. This ensures very specific and accurate radiation delivery.

DIBH reduces heart exposure because as you take a deep breath the heart is moved down and away from the radiation field. Until now, the main drawback of DIBH is its limitations to accurately measure variations in breathing and patient position during treatment. SGRT makes it possible to measure and account for variations in a patient's breathing. This also ensures radiation is delivered precisely as planned.

MORE GOOD NEWS

SGRT can be used in many types of radiation therapy with numerous publications supporting its use in breast, brain, head and neck, sarcoma and other conditions.

C. Eric Wooten, M.D. is a radiation oncologist and director of Radiation Oncology at MUSC Health Florence Medical Center. For more information call 843-674-2470, or visit MUSChealth.org/Florence.

^[1]Marks, L. B. et al. The incidence and functional consequences of RT associated cardiac perfusion defects. *Int. J. Radiat. Oncol. Biol. Phys.* 63, 214–223 (2005)



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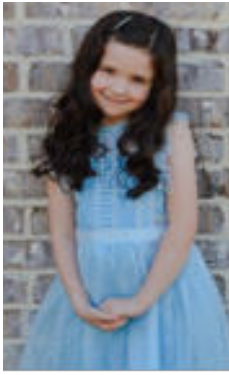
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HOPEHEALTH ANNOUNCES 50+ SENIOR LIFE EXPO PERFORMERS

Submitted by Donna Tracy, Communications Coordinator, HopeHealth



Cailin Foxworth, daughter of HopeHealth pediatrician Dr. Michael K. Foxworth II, was one of several performers at the 2019 50+ Senior Life Expo.

Wilson High School vocalist Cailin Foxworth, daughter of HopeHealth pediatrician Dr. Michael K. Foxworth II, joined Dandy Don the Singing Cowboy as performers at the 24th Annual 50+ Senior Life Expo the Florence Center, April 4-5.

Presented by MUSC Health Florence Medical Center, this premier senior event entertains and educates those approaching their retirement years or already retired. New this year is a child activities area, and grandparents are encouraged to bring young grandchildren along to play at the HopeHealth Pediatrics Kids Zone. For the second year, HopeHealth joins Chad Buffkin, owner of Golden Life Magazine, as the managing partner for the event.

HopeHealth is excited about its newest philanthropic opportunity as proceeds from the 50+ Senior Life Expo will benefit the HopeHealth compassionate care fund.

“At times, our patients have needs that cannot be met directly by our providers,” said Scherrie Cogdill, director of development at HopeHealth. “The compassionate care fund is designed to help our patients with emergency assistance; routine procedures, such as mammograms; colonoscopies; blood pressure screenings; specialty care; prescription drug assistance; and eye care services.”

Held in the Florence Center’s arena, the Expo is one of the largest shows in the state for seniors. The Expo includes bingos, prizes, entertainment, demonstrations, exhibits and seminars. Hear from

experts on topics such as healthcare, long-term care, insurance, senior housing, assisted living, home security, home-health services and hospice. Staff from MUSC Health Florence Medical Center will also offer free health screenings, medical advice and Q&A sessions.

The 50+ Senior Life Expo was presented by MUSC Health Florence Medical Center and sponsored by Carolina Centers for Sight, the Senior Citizens Association, Golden Life, Long’s Drug and KJ’s IGA. Proceeds from the Senior Life Expo benefit HopeHealth’s compassionate care fund.

NEW PROVIDERS WELCOMED



Dr. John L. Culleton

HopeHealth welcomes John L. Culleton, MD, and Supen Patel, MD, to the HopeHealth Medical Plaza and HopeHealth on Palmetto Street in Florence.

Endocrinologist Dr. John L. Culleton joined HopeHealth in early January. He serves patients at the Diabetes and Nutrition Institute inside the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence.

Culleton earned his medical degree from Harvard Medical School in Boston, Mass., and his Bachelor of Arts in natural science (with honors) from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md. He completed an internship, internal medicine residency and endocrinology fellowship at Winthrop-University Hospital. He is board certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine and American Board of Endocrinology &

Metabolism.



Melissa Felder, FNP

Melissa Felder is a family nurse practitioner who joined HopeHealth in December 2018. Felder earned her bachelor’s degree in nursing from Francis Marion University and her Master of Nursing with specialization in family nurse practitioner from Walden University.

Dr. Supen Patel also joined HopeHealth in early January. He serves patients in the new rheumatology department at HopeHealth on Palmetto Street in Florence.

Patel earned his medical degree from University of Texas Medical School at San Antonio and his bachelor’s in chemistry and biology from Houston Baptist University. He completed two residencies in internal medicine and fellowship training in Rheumatology at Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, Pa.

Originally from Houston, Patel has served patients in the Florence area for more than 20 years and is a volunteer with Ujjain Eye Clinic. He is a member of the Arthritis Foundation Board and has served as chairman of their South Carolina Leadership Council, as well as the annual Florence Arthritis Walk.



Dr. Supen Patel

HopeHealth is one of 23 nonprofit, federally qualified health centers in South Carolina. We provide quality and affordable health care services to individuals in Florence, Clarendon and Williamsburg counties and infectious diseases services in Aiken, Clarendon, Florence,

Orangeburg and Williamsburg counties. To become a patient, call 843-667-9414, or visit hope-health.org.

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Congratulations to our 2019 Palmetto Gold Honorees!



Pictured left to right: Michelle Thompson, Cheryl Dorriety, Michelle McCray, Jenny Johnson, Victoria Conyers, Michelle Isgett

With the announcement of the 2019 Palmetto Gold nurse awards, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center continues as the only hospital in the Pee Dee region to have nurses named recipients of the honor every year since the program's inception in 2002. Given by a coalition of South Carolina nursing organizations, the prestigious Palmetto Gold honors the best of the best in nursing.

These six nurses make us proud today and every day.

Michelle Thompson, MSN-Ed, RN
Education

Jenny Johnson, BSN, RN
Women's Pavilion

Cheryl Dorriety, BSN, RN
Nurse Manager Day Hospital/Endoscopy

Victoria Conyers, BSN, RN
8th floor

Michelle McCray, BSN, RN
7th floor

Michelle Isgett, BSN, RNC-OB
Women's Pavilion

WOMEN'S CARE EMBARKS ON NEW PRENATAL CARE PROGRAM

Submitted by Jana E. Pye, Director of Marketing and Public Relations



Pictured in photo: Trena McElveen, BSN, Cardiopulmonary Rehab nurse coordinator; Sandra Simmons, CPRMC auxiliary vice president; Bob Haarlow, CPRMC auxiliary treasurer; Brendan Burns, Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation exercise physiologist; and Lynn Hall, RN of Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation.

HARTSVILLE - Women's Care of Hartsville is embarking on a new and exciting option for prenatal care here at The Medical Group at Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center called CenteringPregnancy. Each expectant mother will receive an individual health check with her provider, followed by additional time in a two-hour group setting with 8-12 other women with similar due dates. The expectant mother (and her birth partner if they choose to attend) share their concerns, questions and experiences with one of the providers. Refreshments will be provided at each session.

Sarah Covington-Kolb, MSW, MSPH of the CenteringPregnancy Research and South Carolina Expansion Project at Greenville Health System visited the staff of Women's Care to introduce them to the project. Dr. Scott Daniel; Dr. Leroy Robinson; Linda George, certified

nurse midwife; and their nurses are all completing training in this program and hope to introduce it to their patients later this spring.

"We have found that mothers enjoy the sessions immensely," said Kolb. "By the end of their pregnancies, they learn things that they didn't even know to ask about. The sessions are fun, interactive, and really help the women bond."

Some of the unique aspects of the program include:

- Group sessions are scheduled in advance, which allows for easier planning and no long waits in the waiting room or exam room. Each group will start and end on time.
- CenteringPregnancy™ is a way for you as the patient to be more actively involved in your own healthcare. You will record your own health data by taking your weight and blood pressure and still have private time with your provider for your belly checks.
- CenteringPregnancy™ offers a way for you to have more time with your provider and be more informed and prepared for pregnancy, birth and how to care for your baby.
- CenteringPregnancy™ participants have higher breast-feeding rates and are 33 percent less likely to have a preterm birth.
- Groups will meet for about ten sessions during your pregnancy at the same time each month. Ultrasounds will be scheduled at a separate appointment.
- CenteringPregnancy™ is recognized by all insurance providers and involves no additional cost to participate.

More information will be forthcoming as the program sets to begin.

For more information, please contact Women's Care of Hartsville at 843-339-9222.



Women'sCare

Scott H. Daniel MD, FACOG
Leroy F. Robinson MD, FACOG
Linda George Certified Nurse Midwife



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GIVING THANKS TO DR. EVANS



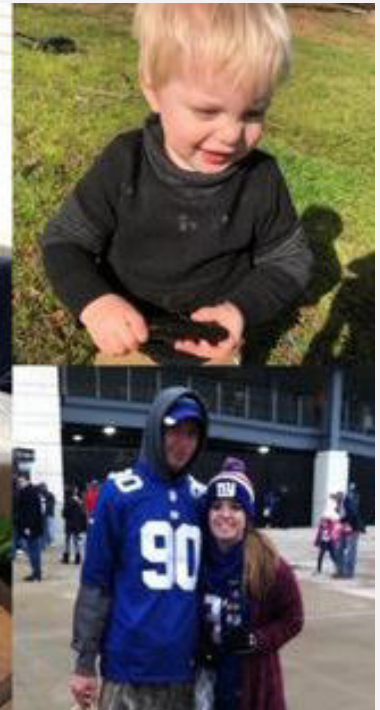
"I found out about Dr. Evans through a coworker of mine. My husband started going to her weekly for his back pain he acquired

while in the army. It was a breath of fresh air to have someone care after being through the ringer with the VA. We hit it off with her from the beginning. It was as if we had known her our entire lives. When I became pregnant with my second child in early 2017, I knew right away that chiropractic appointments would be a consistent part of the 10-month journey. My first pregnancy ended in a C-section, and I am convinced, without a shadow of a doubt, that getting Dr. Evans expertise in chiropractic care, along with acupuncture at the end to induce, was the difference between another cesarean and being able to push naturally. I have maintained appointments after delivery to speed up recovery and stay strong for the new babe, Charlie. He gets weekly adjustments too. He was having issues latching on the right breast as

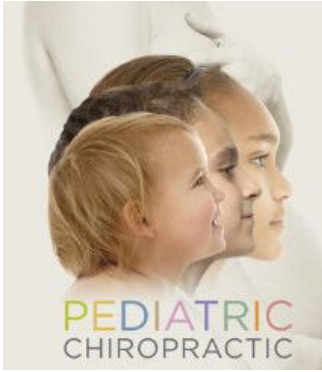


well as some gas troubles that led to some colicky evenings. Getting adjusted helped to relieve a good deal of pressure, allow for latching, and end the colic. Seeing a chiropractor for preventive care for mama and baby has been one of my top recommendations I've been

giving new and old moms alike because of the wonderful care Dr. Jennifer Evans has provided for my entire family. There's not a week that goes by where we don't see her!" -Molly Wright



THANKS TO A "MIRACLE WORKER" ALSO KNOWN AS DR. EVANS



I was first introduced to the world of pediatric chiropractic services when I was desperate to find an answer as to why my infant son was waking so frequently throughout the night. My husband and I were running on fumes, tired all the time, and it was making a considerable difference in my son's temperament and behavior. Through days and hours of research, I came across an article about the effect of pediatric chiropractors and infant sleep

patterns. After reading countless testimonials, I was convinced that this was the avenue I needed to explore. I read all the success stories and how beneficial it was for infants and toddlers, especially for infants of Cesarean births, which my son was. I was very curious and continued to research pediatric chiropractors in our area and their services, determined to give it a shot. We had nothing to lose at this point except more sleep. That's when I found Dr. Evans in Florence and called and scheduled a consultation.

The day of the visit, I was still a little nervous and apprehensive. I had never gone to a chiropractor myself, so I really was unsure of what could be expected. Dr. Evans explained her background and her training as I explained the purpose of our visit. She immediately put all fears to rest and answered ALL of my many questions. My son had his first adjustment that same day, and we were placed on a twice-a-week schedule for a few weeks. By the second week, I was already seeing improvements. I felt my son was a tough case, considering we were used to getting up with him eight to ten times a night, but Dr.

Evans continued to work her magic! After a month, he was FINALLY sleeping through the night. I never thought it would happen! His whole personality changed. He was a much happier baby, and that made such a huge difference. I sang Dr. Evans' praises to anyone who found themselves in the same position. We have to travel over an hour for our visits, but I can't explain just how worth that drive is! I call Dr. Evans our "miracle worker" because that's exactly what she is! She is dedicated to her profession and will meet with you whenever you need her, which was such a comfort. I highly recommend her services without any hesitation! I'm so thankful to her and her staff for everything they have done and continue to do for us. - Crista King

THANKFUL FOR DR. EVANS



I am so excited about giving my testimonial. I have a genetic sleep condition. I have been to three neurologists and many doctors in different fields. I have never been able to get any relief. Dr. Evans is the only doctor

that has been able to help me. When you go for months without falling asleep, it's like a miracle when you do. She has also helped with my migraines and back pain. I highly recommend Dr. Evans, and I hope, for your sake, that you will let her help you too!
-Rhonda Anders



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- Health Education Sessions

MUSC HEALTH FLORENCE MEDICAL CENTER RECOGNIZED FOR SUPPORT OF CERTIFICATION

Submitted by MUSC Health Florence Medical Center



From left: Dr. Rami Zebian, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center chief medical officer; the MUSC Health Florence Medical Center CNOR certified nurses: Julie Hart, RN, BSN, CNOR; Elizabeth A. Strickland RN, CNOR, RNFA; Meloney Munn RN, BSN, CNOR; Neva B. Lawson, CST, RN, CNOR; Melissa R. Demars RN, CNOR; and Roxie Usher RN, CNOR. Also pictured on right: Costa Cockfield, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center chief nursing officer; and Vance Reynolds, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center chief executive officer.

MUSC Health Florence Medical Center is pleased to announce it has recently earned the CNOR® Strong designation from the Competency & Credentialing Institute (CCI). The CNOR Strong designation is given to facilities having at least 50 percent of its OR nursing staff CNOR certified and provides programs that reward and recognize its certified nurses.

The MUSC Health Florence Medical Center CNOR certified nurses are Julie Hart, RN, BSN, CNOR; Elizabeth A. Strickland, RN, CNOR, RNFA; Meloney Munn, RN, BSN, CNOR; Neva B. Lawson, CST, RN, CNOR; Melissa R. Demars, RN, CNOR; and Roxie Usher, RN, CNOR.

"I am extremely proud of our OR nurses for their commitment to nursing excellence," said MUSC Health Florence Medical Center Chief Nursing Officer Costa Cockfield. "These nurses have mastered the standards of perioperative practice and advanced knowledge that positively impacts our patient outcomes. By preparing for and passing this stringent national certification exam, it is obvious our nurses value professional growth, which ultimately enhances our patient care, safety and quality. Earning this

prestigious CNOR Strong designation is just another example of how MUSC Health Florence Medical Center continues to pride itself on giving excellent patient-centered care."

The CNOR® certification program is for perioperative nurses interested in improving and validating their knowledge and skills and providing the highest quality care to their patients. Certification also recognizes a nurse's commitment to professional development. It is an objective, measurable way of acknowledging the achievement of specialty knowledge beyond basic nursing preparation and RN licensure.

Research shows that nurses who earn the CNOR credential have greater confidence in their clinical practice. Thus, a team of certified nurses who have mastered the standards of perioperative practice provides even more empowerment, further advancing a culture of professionalism and promoting improved patient outcomes. This strength in numbers is why CCI launched the CNOR Strong program—to recognize those facilities committed to making a difference for its patients both inside and outside of the OR.

Patient safety and positive surgical outcomes are of the utmost importance to any facility, and supporting nurses as they exceed expectations to achieve their perioperative nursing certification shows MUSC Health Florence Medical Center's commitment to its core values.

Established in 1979, CCI provides the CNOR® and CSSM® credentials to more than 35,000 registered nurses, making it one of the largest specialty nursing credentialing organizations and the leading certification body for perioperative nurses. The mission of CCI is to lead competency credentialing that promotes safe, quality patient care and that supports lifelong learning.

For more information about the Competency and Credentialing Institute, visit www.cc-institute.org. For more information on MUSC Health Florence Medical Center, contact John Russell at 843-674-2953.

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Florence Medical Center



UNCOVER HEALTH-RELATED DIFFICIENCIES

Submitted by Dr. David A. Gittens

What is Contact Reflex Analysis®?



Contact Reflex Analysis®, also known as CRA®, is a simple, safe, natural method of analyzing the energy flow through specific reflexes located on your body. Too much or too little energy may indicate an imbalance in your body's structure, nutritional chemistry or emotional status. An imbalance or deficiency in any of these areas could cause or contribute to various acute or chronic health problems.

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For healing and wellness to occur and be maintained, structures need to be aligned and balanced. Structural problems in any part of the body can cause a health issue because the necessary flow of energy to specific organs, muscles, and glands has been blocked.

Body nutrition and chemistry are also important factors in healing and wellness. Improper diet along with environmental agents such as viruses, bacteria, chemicals, parasites and electromagnetic frequencies from cell phones, computers, etc., all attack the cells of the body, weaken the immunities and open the door to sickness and disease.

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A great degree of accuracy is possible with CRA®. It will even uncover deficiencies at a sub-clinical level—that is, when the problem is so tiny that the person may not be aware of it, and many modern methods of testing cannot detect it.

For more information, visit or contact Gittens Health and Wellness, 333 West Palmetto Street, Florence, by phone 843-678-9394.

SPRING ALLERGIES CAN AFFECT EVERYONE

Submitted by Alvin Abinsay, M.D., MUSC Health Primary Care - Marion



Dr. Alvin Abinsay

This is the time of year when everyone is susceptible to seasonal allergies, especially when it comes to pollen. Just the other day, I had five or six patients come to my office with severe allergies. This is the time of year people can be affected even if they don't typically have allergies the rest of the year.

Even if you don't have any history of allergies growing up, it is still possible to develop them as you age. Seasonal allergies, especially related to pollen, can mistakenly cause your own immune system to perceive pollen as a threat. The body releases an antibody to attack the allergens. The antibody is essentially a chemical your body releases called histamines. This is released into the blood causing all the allergy symptoms.

Runny nose, itchy eyes, sneezing or swelling of the eyes are all a result of your immune system's response to the pollen. If you have mild allergy symptoms, there are several over-the-counter medications available. Antihistamines are typically pills you can take. Nasal sprays and eye drops can also help you get relief from allergens. It's important to be careful about decongestant medications, however. Many people think it's okay to use them all the time, year-round. Taking decongestants for an extended time period can actually worsen your allergy symptoms. This is called "rebound congestion," which means you're not getting any better using the over-the-counter medications. If this happens, it's always a good idea to go see your doctor, who will either prescribe you another medication or make sure you don't have another health-related condition.

Some believe eating local honey will help reduce allergy symptoms. The thought is it will de-sensitize the person from having allergies. Experts have proven it's not actually true. Honey is good, but there is no clinical evidence to support it working. Herbal supplements have also risen in popularity but also have not proven effective. There is a risk the supplements could badly interact with a medication you are already taking. Before you take any herbal supplements, make sure to check with your doctor first.

There is a misconception people have that all the pretty blooming flowers are the cause of allergies. The truth is the tree pollens, such as pine, maple and oak trees, and weed pollens are the main source.

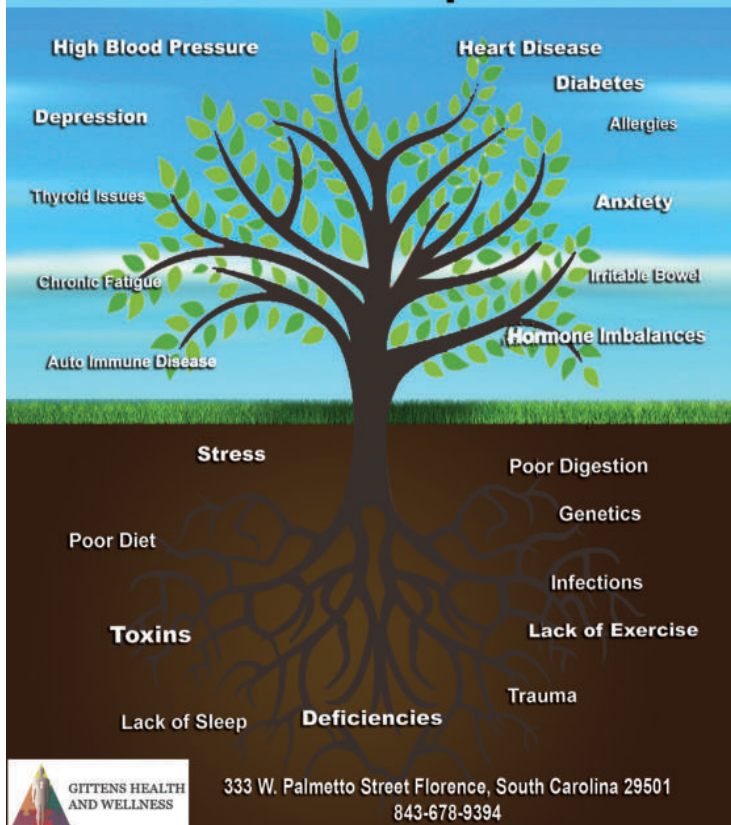
Many patients come to our office thinking they have a cold or an infection but in reality they have allergies. It's important to know the difference between cold and allergy symptoms. One of the complications of untreated allergies is infection. Allergens cause inflammation in the nasal passages of your nose, which could cause sinus infections. The signs and symptoms of seasonal allergies and the common cold can be similar, making it difficult to tell them apart. A sign of allergies is a runny nose with thin mucus discharge and no fever. For a cold, you will still have a runny nose, but there is thicker discharge and a low-grade fever with body aches.

Unfortunately, it's not possible to avoid allergens completely. You can make some lifestyle changes to reduce your exposure to them, such as staying indoors. The morning can be an especially bad time of day to be outdoors. Windy days are also not good for allergy sufferers. Close your doors and windows during the pollen season. When you come in from outside, it could be a good idea to change your clothes. If you can avoid doing yard work for a few days, here and there, it will also help. The main thing is to try to avoid exposure to allergens, which this time of year is pollen.

Dr. Alvin Abinsay practices internal medicine at MUSC Health Primary Care – Marion, an affiliate of MUSC Health Marion Medical Center. For more information call 843-423-0760, or visit MUSChealth.org/Florence.



Stop Chasing Symptoms and Get to the Root of the problem



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COUNSELING AT NO COST - RUBICON EXPLAINS by Angela Crosland



Denise Cooper

HARTSVILLE - No missing the dreaded deductions listed on your paystub each pay period. What won't be recorded there is the cost for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This is a confidential, voluntary, work-based program that offers free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals and follow-up services to employees who have personal or work-related problems.

EAP advocate and leading authority in the field of counseling is the executive director of Rubicon Family Counseling Center of Hartsville, Denise Cooper. The program is all-encompassing and an ideal way to help employees deal with work-life stressors, family and financial concerns, relational problems, addictions, mental health matters and even legal distresses, says Cooper. Rubicon specializes in workplace training and seminars.

"An EAP could mean better job security to an employee whose job performance has been poor or problematic," Cooper says. "Employees have a confidential place to go with their personal problems. It also helps employees deal with stressors from drug abuse to legal problems so they do not carry over in the workplace."

Empirical research has revealed for quite some time that happy people are more productive. Therefore, leading a healthier, happier workforce is the goal, she adds. "An EAP is a 'win, win' situation for both the employee and employer," says Cooper.

What may appear to be a foreign concept has actually been around for quite some time. The EAP industry dates back to the 1930s and finds its origins in occupational alcoholism. Cooper says this was during a time when drinking on the job was the "norm."

"People began to notice the effects it had on job performance and productivity," she adds.



By the late 30s, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was giving birth to the EAP Movement. Furthering the cause more recently were the events of 9/11 when providers began to report more people in the workforce experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), stress and depression.

"The industry had progressed tremendously

with keeping up with the trends and changing lifestyles and workforce," says Cooper. "I do not foresee any regression in this industry."

As long as employers continue to see the benefit to their company's bottom line, EAPs will continue to be utilized and, likely, to a greater extent, she says.

"An EAP properly implemented can provide significant return on investment and can help raise the productivity of your workforce, lower absenteeism rates, reduce accidents and help resolve workplace conflicts and complaints," says Cooper.

And now that the Departments of Labor and Treasury have clarified how EAPs can co-exist with employer health plans under the Affordable Care Act, Cooper says it is a good time for employees to consider adding an EAP program to their benefits package.

The Marlboro County native is abreast of these trends because of her extensive work in the field. She began working in the areas of addiction and behavioral health in 1986, after earning a Bachelor of

Arts degree from Winthrop College. She later earned a Masters of Arts degree from Webster University in Human Resource Development and Management and obtained her Certified Substance Abuse Counselor credential from the state of North Carolina in 2001.

Cooper began her career path with the Marlboro County Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Bennettsville as a School Community Intervention & Prevention Program (SCIP) coordinator, later working with the Lexington Richland Alcohol and Drug Abuse (LRADAC) in Columbia.

The majority of her work has been in the North Carolina Mental Health system where she has worked as a clinician, clinical supervisor and inpatient director. She has been employed with Southeastern Regional Mental Health, CASCADE Services in Charlotte; Pathways Mental Health in Gastonia, N.C.; and Daymark Recovery Center Monroe/Kannapolis, N.C.

It is her experience in all of these places that has prompted Cooper to boldly encourage employers to offer an EAP for higher productivity and better retention, even advising them to conduct workshops for their entire workforce. Her advice to employees is similar.

"I would urge anyone in need of service to do so and not hesitate taking advantage of this benefit," Cooper says. "Don't go through the stressors of life alone."

The greatest hindrances to employees doing so, according to Cooper, are the stigma attached to seeking help and fear of no confidentiality. She says an employee's consultation through EAP is anonymous. "The bottom line is no one has to know," Cooper says. "There is no need for employees to tell anyone."

For additional information about Rubicon Family Counseling, call 843-332-4156, or go to info@rubiconsc.org.

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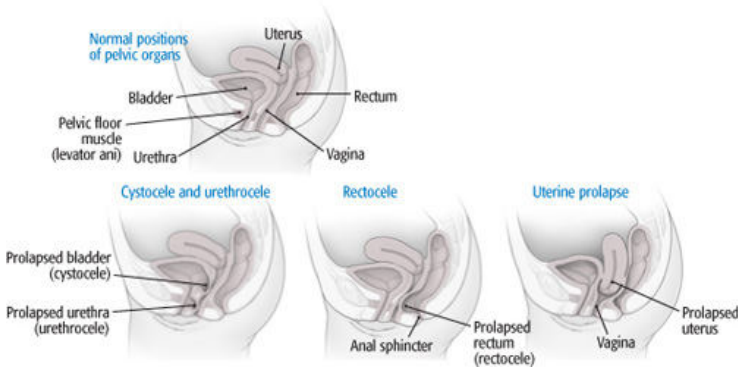
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WHAT IS PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE? Submitted by Vincent S. Scott, M.D., MUSC Health Florence Medical Center – Urogynecology



Pelvic prolapse occurs when the pelvis loses its support structure due to damage. Most often, this is related to women who have given birth because the pelvic floor is a delicate structure of very fine muscle tissue attached to the pelvis. Child bearing can cause disruption to this structure. Generally, the more children a woman gives birth to, the more it can affect them. Also, over time, gravity can play a role in pelvic organ dropping. Gravity pulls the bladder, uterus and rectum into the opening caused by child birth.

It's possible for women who don't have any children to be affected by pelvic organ prolapse. Coughing and women born with poor tissue support can also cause prolapse over the years. We don't quite know why, but sometimes women don't develop the pelvic floor strength needed to last a lifetime. Occupations requiring constant strain by lifting or exertion, chronic coughing and pulmonary disease can also play a factor in developing prolapse. Typically, women ages 40 to 70 years old can develop it. This equates to about 30 to 50 percent of women. Sometimes women may have prolapse and not know it. This is because it doesn't cause any readily noticeable problems. Among women who are in the 30 to 50 percent category, 11 percent of those will require surgery.



I recommend women get evaluated when they start to feel something protruding through the vaginal opening or constant pelvic pressure. Sometimes patients may see a bulge or have a sensation of sitting on something. Urologically, a sign of prolapse might be women who notice leaking of urine becoming a problem.

Treating pelvic organ prolapse ranges from the full scope of conservative to surgical treatment options. Remember, only 11 percent of patients with prolapse end up having surgery. Patients can participate in pelvic floor muscle therapy and learn how to strengthen their pelvic floor muscles. Another conservative approach involves fitting and placing a device called a vaginal pessary. This device is similar to a contraceptive diaphragm and is used to treat urinary incontinence or prolapse. Materials and shapes have changed over time, but pessaries have been around quite a while. It resembles a tampon and can be worn all the time. A pessary is a good option for women who are not good candidates for surgery or don't want to have surgery. The surgical side of treatment is all about trying to help restore the pelvic organs into their proper position. This involves using ligament and support structures that are already in the body. A native tissue repair involves re-attaching the vagina to the pelvis and has shown to have good success. This procedure doesn't involve using synthetic grafting material. Another option is to use permanent synthetic mesh material to re-support the vaginal wall. This option is most well-known because versions of it

have come under fire by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for causing complications after surgery. The vast majority of women who have undergone mesh procedures do very well and have better, long-term anatomical outcomes. There are also biological graft materials made from human, cow or pig tissue, which is sterilized and made suitable to implant into patients. What's different about these tissues is they are not considered permanent. This is because the patient's own biological tissue grows into it and eventually replaces the biological graft material.

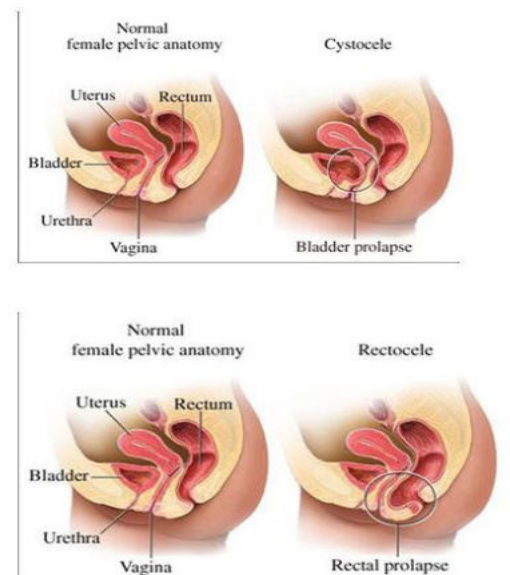
My goal as an urogynecologist is to help patients with their quality of life. Treatments are designed to help deal with discomfort, anatomical issues or even embarrassment. There are many factors that determine success rates for patients treated for pelvic organ prolapse. Studies tell us we can expect a 60-90 percent success rate. Diabetes, smoking and obesity are especially at risk for prolapse over time. Women need to know there is help available. Many don't know we have techniques that are effective in alleviating symptoms associated with pelvic organ prolapse. A lot of women live a healthy life with it. If you're willing to get evaluated, it's very likely one of these treatments will be helpful to you.

Dr. Vincent S. Scott is a board certified urogynecologist in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery at MUSC Health Florence Medical Center. He specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of urogynecologic problems and female pelvic floor dysfunction including urinary incontinence, overactive bladder, uterine, bladder and vaginal prolapse as well as voiding dysfunction. He is accepting new patients. For more information go to muschealth.org/Florence, or call 843-413-6930.

Sidebar: What is Urogynecology?

Urogynecology is the medical discipline combining urology and gynecology. It involves patients with urinary tract, bladder and kidney disorders. It also involves managing any female reproductive system disorders as well as pelvic floor medicine, which supports those reproductive organs. Urogynecology combines urology treatment for the lower part of the urinary tract and bladder and disease issues of female reproductive organs.

Pelvic organ prolapse



OAKHAVEN OFFERS CONTINUUM OF CARE *by Angela Crosland*



Melissa Boatwright, RN

DARLINGTON - The phrase “nursing home” has been used in excess over the years, so much so, that people are not quite sure where to go at the various stages of a loved one’s life for appropriate care. Seasoned professional and executive director of Oakhaven Nursing Center in Darlington, Melissa Boatwright, says a major part of her job is to ensure families find the right match and once they do, that their loved one feels welcome and well-cared for during their stay.

Families enter the double glass doors of Oakhaven, which is owned by Wilson Senior Care (WSC), oftentimes with no understanding of what their needs might be. Situated in a tranquil residential area surrounded by hovering oaks and historic homes, Oakhaven is frequented by those in search of elder or convalescent care. Is it short-term or long-term care? Is it acute care, or is the person able to perform most tasks on his or her own? These are a few of the questions likely to be asked when choosing a facility. Boatwright explains long-term care as a need for those who require around-the-clock care, whereas assisted living is for the fairly active and healthy senior. Oakhaven caters to both.

“We have some who come here to recover after a hospital stay,” says Boatwright.

That constitutes a rather short-term visit. Others have moved in with the full understanding that Oakhaven would be their last home of record. Given the rich history of the 88-bed, skilled nursing facility offering 24-hour care for short- and long-term visits, residents and employees alike have found peace in the notion. In fact, the center’s mantra is “Welcome Home.”

According to Boatwright, who has been on the job for a little more than one month, it already feels like home. “I would recommend Oakhaven and the other Wilson Senior Care facilities to those in search of care for their loved ones,” she says. “Wilson Senior Care strives to provide quality, compassionate care. We want your family to be our family. We feel like they’re our family too.”

It really is true, says Boatwright. “We grieve like family members grieve when they are gone, and we miss them and think about them,” she adds.

That’s a trait that each of the WSC facilities has, according to staff. WSC is the largest skilled nursing provider in the Pee Dee Region, with more than 506 skilled nursing beds and 750 employees. Its personnel have a vested interest in the company that operates five skilled nursing facilities, a short-term rehabilitation facility, a long-term care pharmacy and a medical uniform retail store.

Boatwright’s affiliation with the organization is a rather lengthy one. In fact, her first job with WSC was in 2003 and at Oakhaven, of all places. “The executive director at the time was Brock Oates, and she remained in that position for over 20 years,” says Boatwright.

Oates relocated to work at another facility some three years ago, and the two crossed paths and found themselves discussing their time together at Oakhaven.

“Mrs. Oates has fond memories of the facility, residents and staff of Oakhaven, so when the position became available, it was an easy choice,” says Boatwright, who currently lives in Florence and was traveling to Loris for work before accepting the position at Oakhaven.

She was previously the director of nursing at Loris Rehab and Nursing Center, which is also owned by WSC. “I have enjoyed my nursing career for the past 20 years, with 18 of that being in long term care,” says Boatwright. “I always knew I loved taking care of people even from a young age. My grandmother would take me to the local nursing home and visit with the people living there.”

Boatwright says she would stand in awe of the impact a smile and a hug could make on the life of an elderly person during those visits. “The residents that live here need the smiles, compassion, and kindness that comes with taking care of someone long-term,” she says.

Boatwright says long-term care is not for the faint of heart though. “The most important thing is to make sure it’s not just a job,” she says. “You have to want to take care of people, no matter who they are or what condition they have. They depend on you to provide quality care and to do it in a way that makes them feel special,” says Boatwright.

Each day she makes her rounds, exchanging pleasantries and calling the residents by name. Whether it be commentary on their breakfast or lunch choices or how well they rested, Boatwright says she looks forward to the exchange. “They (the residents) like to see you and want to know somebody’s checking on them,” says Boatwright.

It’s a demanding job that Boatwright would not be able to perform without her supportive husband, four children and a few occupational perks.

“The highlights of my career are the smiles, hugs, and love that I get every day from the residents that I have the privilege to care for,” says Boatwright.

The provision of quality, compassionate care of her family and the residents are the driving forces in her life, says Boatwright. Only now, the trek between the two is much shorter.



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EARTH DAY CELEBRATED IN TIMMONSVILLE by Jennifer Robinson



All Florence Four students submitted really great artwork...but this was the winning piece from Brockington Elementary!

outside. It is globally recognized to promote the importance of preserving the Earth and the environment. It is doing its part to participate in a global effort to preserve the world in which we live through education and participating in events.

In 2018, Honda of South Carolina Mfg., Inc. (HSC) began to celebrate Earth Day with associates and the local community. Rather than a one-day event, HSC celebrated Earth Day for the entire workweek of April 22. Each day of that week, HSC celebrated with specific events, including Q&A session at lunches, Honda Way cleanup of the highway, ceremonies with local schools and reusable shopping tote bag giveaways. HSC offered each associate a reusable shopping tote, promoting that they were made of recycled materials. The opportunity to share the history and meaning of Earth Day with associates was empowering for employees and the community.



Gwendolyn Kelly, Onika, and Robert (HSC Associates) announcing and distributing the prizes for the 2018 Earth Day contest student

HSC is honored to work with FSD4. Gwendolyn Woodward, HSC associate, excitedly shared about the collaboration between the school district and HSC. HSC began celebrating Earth Day with the students in 2018 and plans to continue the annual celebration together. In the first annual celebration, HSC gifted a Japanese Cherry Blossom tree to FSD4 to increase environmental interests with the students. Associates from HSC thoroughly enjoyed the Earth Day ceremony. Students who participated presented the history of Earth Day, submitted art and essays on ending plastic pollution and planted the tree. Woodward and HSC associates are so excited for Earth Day 2019.

The theme is "Protect Our Species!" Timmons ville schools have been working closely with HSC to plan other Earth Day Ceremony events and competitions to create interest and involve students in learning. HSC plans to contribute to the schools' gardens by donating some gardening accessories and flower planters to attract pollinators. The students are interested in learning about the environment, and they are eagerly preparing to participate in this year's ceremony. We are promoting that the students are the future in creating a healthy environment and a healthy planet. We are extremely excited for this year's Earth Day Ceremony with the local students. We look forward to the annual celebration and the continued partnership between HSC and FSD4.

Jermaine Rogers is a middle school social studies teacher, football and track coach. He works alongside other teachers and staff within and outside our district to coordinate, maintain and keep their garden growing. He stated, "Our school garden project initially started with the Farm to School-Certified SC Grown Grant under the coordination of one of our high school science teachers, Mr. Jason Oakes. At that

TIMMONSVILLE- April 22 will mark the 49th anniversary of Earth Day. It will be the first anniversary of the celebration of Earth Day for Florence School District 4 (FSD4) Schools. For the students of that district, Earth Day is much more than a one-day event of recycling or cleaning up

point he, alongside our environmental science students, built three raised garden beds, a raised and enclosed chicken coup, an organic composter, and six fruit trees that are currently still planted and growing. The program flourished in its beginnings with a beautiful vegetable harvest, and the chickens became a daily attraction for the students and staff here in Timmons ville. Since then, our project has grown and has experienced it challenges; our chickens were attacked and were at the mercy of wild dogs."

Through the Clemson Extension Certified South Carolina Grown



Master Gardner, Mr. Tommy Taylor speaks to the students on why planting trees is very important for our environment and encourages their active participation. (2018 Earth Day Celebration)

Community Grant, FSD4 has been able to expand our school garden and since have added four raised beds between our cafeteria and Brockington for our elementary students to care for and grow vegetables as well. Our students have really enjoyed working in their school gardens over the years, the taste-testing, and

being able to take fresh vegetables home to their family to show their talents.

Diversity Works© asked what FSD4 is planning next. "Our goals are to continually teach our students about the ins and outs of farming, providing each student with a hands-on experience in learning where their food comes from and the proper way of preparing garden foods for the table. The students actively build and maintain the school garden, which further expands development of the garden to grow an agricultural program within our curriculum," said Rogers.

"It is my hope that we can develop these areas into Zen gardens where students and staff can sit amongst blooming flowers, vegetables and fruit trees. We are currently working on getting some more baby chicks in the coup to raise, building a grape vine and, hopefully, develop our project into a full agriculture program to introduce students to aspects of commercial farming. My dream is to start a hemp crop cycle here in one year. Hemp is the future of sustainable resources. It can be used for food, clothing, fuel, and has even been used in combination with polymers in 3D printing."

SAYING HELLO AGAIN TO LIFE by Mallory Brayboy



LaDominique McFarland

DARLINGTON - LaDominique McFarland is a native of Darlington and the creator of Hello Again, a grief support group for parents who have lost children to accidents, illness, adoption, abortion or miscarriage.

Hello Again was birthed from the tragedy of losing her sons on July 6, 2016, in Myrtle Beach due to a riptide current. McFarland prayed for something that would channel her excruciating pain into something positive. In September of that year, she noticed that you could create "pages" on Facebook, so she decided to launch a small group to share what she was experiencing. This online group quickly turned into something bigger than she ever imagined, gaining up to 500 other parents within its first week. "The pain actually reared me towards purpose," says McFarland. The online Facebook group quickly transformed into a non-profit organization. "I believe that when God is involved, there is no struggle. It's natural," McFarland says of the group's growth.

HELLO AGAIN CONT'D

Hello Again had its first in-person gathering in November of 2016. The group continues to meet every three months for fellowship and participate in a prayer conference call every other Monday. Each year, McFarland also organizes a special event for the families involved. Events have included a conference in February of 2017 and a gala in February of 2018.

This year, the Hello Again Family Fest will be held on April 27 at the Darlington High School Stadium from 4-9p.m. The event will be her first to include the community and will feature spoken word, worship featuring the Darlington High Choir, vendors, food trucks, and an international speaker who lost her sister in an accident. The Family Fest will place greater emphasis on the siblings affected by loss. "Sometimes the siblings have more of a bond with each other than the parents. They know each other's secrets and things of that nature that we don't know," says McFarland. "For my daughter, losing her brothers is devastating, and she's still putting the pieces back, so this year is dedicated to our daughters."

Hello Again's members all share a commonality. "Some have lost kids 20 or 30 years ago, and they're in a different place, and they can help us. Some just lost kids last week. We learn from each other to grow, and we get different ideas and coping mechanisms," says McFarland.

The group is primarily composed of women but welcomes all parents. It has a Moms of the Month program sponsored by monetary donations. Each month a mom in the organization is selected and receives a special pampering of some sort to lift her spirits. Members also contribute and sponsor parents who have lost children by providing groceries or money for bills or gas during bereavement week. "I know what we went through that week, so I try to give back what I know I needed," says McFarland.

Hello Again is completely free and continues to grow. Parents who have lost children can get join the organization through www.helloagain23.com or through the Hello Again Facebook page. Members of the community are welcomed to follow the page on Facebook to keep up with upcoming events and different ways to donate.

The name "Hello Again" came after seeking God for the perfect name. Members of the groups are essentially saying "hello" to life again as a new person. "I'm re-introducing myself in this way. I'll never be who I used to be. A part of me transitioned with my children. I choose everyday to get up and say 'hello again' to life," says McFarland.

Aside from meeting the many demands of running Hello Again and being a full-time mom of two daughters, McFarland is attending Liberty University online for Christian counseling and psychology with plans to provide free counseling to group members.

SPRING INTO WELLNESS



Group Heart Walk

Promoting quality of life amenities for residents is essential for a healthy and thriving community. This endeavor is the motivation for the City of Florence to connect people and resources so that residents have access to healthy foods and affordable recreational activities.

FULL LIFE. FULL FORWARD. FLORENCE SOUTH CAROLINA

The City encourages health and wellness through the Employee Wellness Committee. This committee has been active for approximately 30 years and provides education and activities designed to improve overall wellness for employees and their families. The Committee recently brought new life to the program with a new logo and mission, "Live Fully," which focuses on eight key components of wellness: Social, Physical, Environmental, Emotional, Intellectual, Occupational, Spiritual and Financial.

Our employees are focusing on these components and are seeking opportunities to promote wellness in the community. We have an extremely generous work group that contributes annually to local charities (United Way, Harvest Hope, and American Heart Association) and participates in community activities such as the Pee Dee Heart Walk. The Committee also created the Flo-Town 5K, which takes place each year in April. The idea for a race developed from an interest to end a "Couch to 5K" training program with our own 5K event that showcases the beauty of the City of Florence Trail System. All proceeds benefit the Florence Track Club. Now in its fifth year, the Flo-Town 5K continues to encourage everyone to participate and invites you to join us on Saturday, April 27, and "Walk or Run, Just Get it Done!"

The City Council's decision to borrow \$15 million demonstrates its commitment to community wellness by enhancing recreational activities. This investment will allow for extension of the City's trail system to create a more walkable and bikeable city; capital improvements to parks, fields, and facilities; construction of a track and baseball sports complex; and construction of two new community centers at Dr. Iola Jones Park and Maple Park.

Affordable summer youth camp opportunities ranging from \$25-\$40 include: Football Skills Camp (March 31), Summer Basketball Camp (June 10-13) and Grand Strand Volleyball Camp (July 8-10). We also have a seniors group, the OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors), that are staying active through a variety of programs at our Barnes Street Activity Center. The cost to be a member of OWLS is \$12/year (Jan. 1-Dec. 31). Contact our Parks & Recreation office at 843-665-3253, or visit www.cityofflorenceathletics.com for additional information.

Another wellness initiative of the City is to improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables for residents and local restaurants. The City organized a Farmers Market that takes place every Saturday morning at the City Center. Because of its success and a desire by the city to designate and develop a food corridor, construction of a permanent home for the City Center Market is underway on Sanborn Street adjacent to the City's Barnes Street Recreation Campus. The market will offer residents daily access to local fresh fruits and vegetables, and it includes a commercial kitchen for rental by small business owners.

Another effort that is providing fresh produce for residents is made possible through a partnership between the City and the Eat Smart, Move More (ESMM) Florence Chapter. ESMM developed the idea and an application process to provide community gardens to interested schools and churches to provide fresh produce and also serve as educational tools.

The City's mission addresses its commitment to "elevate the quality of life in our city and region." Recognizing that wellness is an essential component of this, the City will continue addressing issues affecting the health of residents and collaborating with community partners to improve overall health for the community. Let's get moving Florence!

ICONIC BOYZ II MEN TO PERFORM IN FLORENCE Submitted by Nick Hooker, Director of Marketing

The best-selling R&B group of all time, Boyz II Men, is coming to South Carolina for a one-night-only live concert event on Saturday, June 1 at the Florence Center.

Boyz II Men remains one of the most truly iconic R&B groups in music history. The group who helped redefine the R&B industry has collected a whopping 27 music awards, including four prestigious Grammy Awards, and has also earned a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Florence Center officials say the special concert event will feature music from over 25 years of timeless hits.

“Boyz II Men is one of the most recognizable and distinguished R&B music groups of all time, and we’re thrilled to host them here in Florence,” said Nick Hooker, director of marketing for the Florence Center. “It’s incredible to witness thousands of fans singing together in harmony; it creates

an unbelievable euphoric sensation, and I have a feeling we’ll get a lot of that on June 1,” continued Hooker.

Boyz II Men’s past hits include “End of the Road,” “I’ll Make Love to You,” “One Sweet Day,” “Motownphilly” and many others. Their recent albums have earned them major critical acclaim as well. Boyz II Men have won fans the world over with their soulful multi-octave sound and incredible vocals. Given the monumental success of their albums and the timeless quality of their vocals, it’s easy to see why Boyz II Men remains the most popular R&B group of all time.

The June 1 Boyz II Men concert will be at the Florence Center. Start time is set at 7p.m. with doors opening to the public at 5:30p.m. Tickets for the live event went on sale beginning on Dec. 7 and will be available for purchase at the Florence Center Box Office, Ticketmaster.com, or fans may charge by phone at 1-800-745-3000. The Florence Center is located at 3300 W. Radio Dr., Florence, SC, 29501. Additional details for the venue and concert can be found online at florencecenter.com.

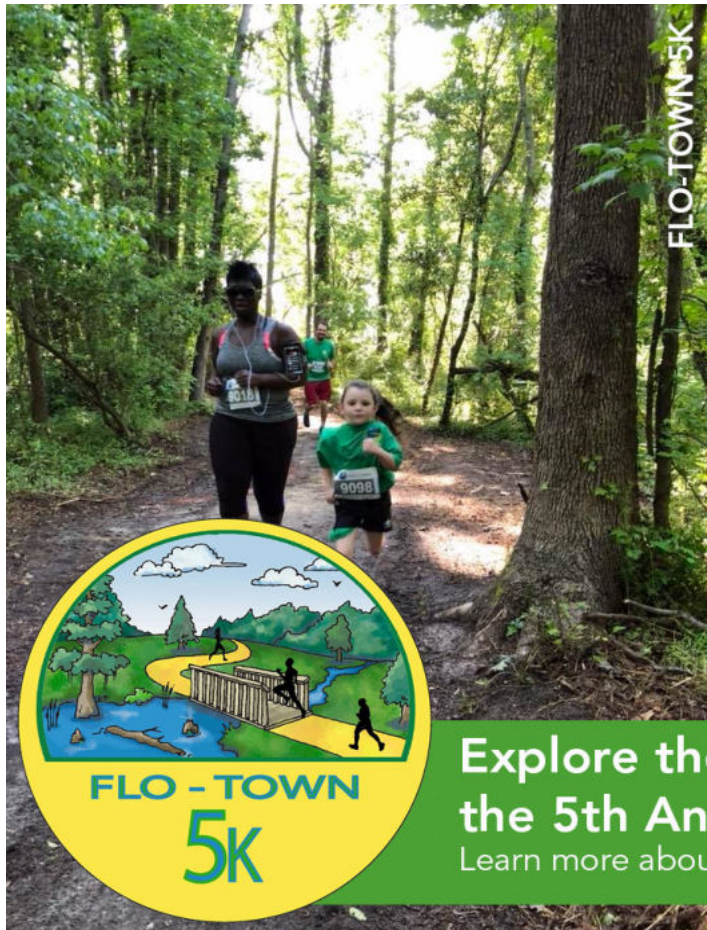


MCCUTCHEN TO SERVE AS MASTER CHEF AT SCA FUNDRAISER Submitted by Jesseca Horton, Marketing Coordinator



Chef LaTasha McCutchen working her magic

The Senior Citizens Association (SCA) is having its 15th annual Dorothy Blackwell Fundraising Luncheon honoring Florence County Sheriff’s office and the City of Florence police. Celebrity Chef LaTasha McCutchen is a Lake City native and will be our master chef for this fundraiser. She is also the Season 13 Winner of Gordan Ramsey’s “HELL’S KITCHEN.” This event is the Senior Citizens Associations primary event that supports home-delivered meals for homebound seniors of Florence County. Over 300 seniors are on the waiting list for a meal, and SCA needs monetary donations and sponsorship. The luncheon is May 10 from noon – 1p.m. at the Leatherman Senior Center located at 600 Senior Way, Florence, S.C. SCA needs your sponsorship. Platinum Sponsorship is \$1,000 and includes 8 tickets, Gold sponsorship is \$500 and includes 4 tickets and Silver Sponsorship is \$300 and includes 2 tickets. Individual tickets can be purchased for \$50 per person, and seats are limited. Call 669-6761, extension 231 or visit Jesseca Horton at the Leatherman Senior Center.



FLO-TOWN 5K



O.W.L.S. POSITIVE AGING PROGRAM



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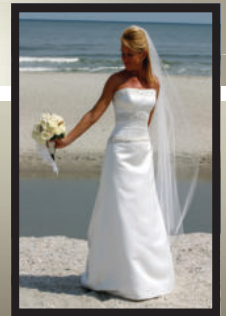
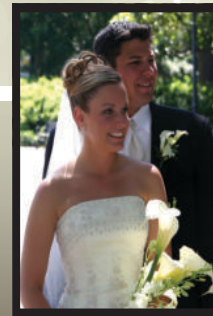
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3RD ANNUAL SISTA STRUT 3K WALK

Submitted by Jamie Ulrey, Senior VP Sales Florence/Atlanta Region



Sista Strut started originally in Detroit, Mich. and has been taking place in Detroit since 2000. The event grew to Milwaukee, then St. Louis and has grown by leaps and bounds ever since. Now, Sista Strut is hosted in

Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Memphis, Louisville, Jacksonville, Chicago, Philadelphia, Macon, Augusta, New Orleans, Houston and our very own PEE DEE: in Florence, S.C.

Sista Strut was created and dedicated to heighten the awareness about the issues of breast cancer in women of color, as well as provide information on community resources. Studies show that African American women are more likely to get breast cancer at a younger age and have a higher death rate from breast cancer than that of Caucasian women of the same age. Sista Strut recognizes the strength of survivors, their family and friends; heightens awareness; and promotes early detection and the search for a cure. Participants can register for Sista Strut at Flo 102.9, 103x and The Beat 105.5 websites as an individual or as a team using the keyword "Sista."

The cost to register is \$25 for an individual and \$20 for individuals on a team. The rally will begin at 9a.m., and the walk will begin at 10:15a.m. at the Florence Center on Saturday, May 11. A portion of the net proceeds will be donated to The Cancer Relief Fund here in the Pee Dee. This will be our third annual event here.

Raising awareness is key in combating breast cancer. One in eight women is diagnosed in her lifetime.

According to the National Cancer Institute, white, non-Hispanic women have the highest overall incidence rate for breast cancer among U.S. racial/ethnic groups, while Korean-American women have the lowest rate. Among women ages 40 to 50, African-American women have a higher incidence of breast cancer than white women, and this needs to change.

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EPSILON CHI OMEGA – 54TH DEBUTANTE COTILLION

Submitted by Earline McClary, Epsilon Chi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Ivy Leaf Reporter



Sydney Renee Bradley
Miss Debutante 2018-2020

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Epsilon Chi Omega Chapter of Florence presented its 54th Debutante Cotillion in November, its theme “Cultivating Pearls of Excellence.” Mr. and Mrs. Edward (Wilson Anne) Addison were Master and Mistress of Ceremonies.

Miss Sydney Renee Bradley was crowned Miss Debutante 2018-2020. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James (Contessa) Bradley. Sydney, a senior at Wilson High School, was presented by

her father. Her escort, Mr. Amauri Solomon, son of Miss Jameeca English and Mr. Tyrell Solomon, is a student at Darlington High.

Miss Rianna Stewart was recognized as First Attendant to Miss Debutante. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bernie (Daphne) Stewart of Florence. Rianna, a senior at Wilson High School, was presented by her father. Her escort Mr. Braxton Robinson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Wendell (Margaret) Robinson, is a senior at South Florence High.

Miss Riane “Gabby” Green was recognized as Second Attendant to Miss Debutante. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bobby (Roselyn) Green. Riane, a senior at Wilson High School, was presented by her uncle, Mr. Roderick Zollicoffer. Her escort, Mr. Deonte’ Boston, the son of Miss Theresa

Boston, is a senior at Wilson High.

Other Debutantes participating in the cotillion included: Miss Davia Denise Pugh is the daughter of Mr. David Pugh and Miss Phyllis Brooks. She is a freshman at Hampton University



L/R: Rianna Stewart (1st runner up), Miss Debutante – Sydney Bradley, and Riane Green (2nd runner up)



L/R: Kayla Moses; Jasena Adams; Rianna Stewart; Miss Debutante, Sydney Bradley; Riane Green; Juanita Allen; and Davia Pugh

and was presented by her father. Her escort, Mr. Michael Larbie, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac (Kwasi) Sarpong, is a senior at Sun Valley High.

Miss Kayla Michelle Moses is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Woodrow (Teresa) Moses. She is a junior at the South Carolina Governor’s School of the Arts and Humanities in Greenville. Kayla was presented by her father. Her escort was her brother, Mr. Woodrow Moses Jr., a junior at South Carolina State University.

Miss Juanita Teresa Cleopatra Hazel Allen is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Garnett (Palmer) Allen. She is a senior at South Florence High and was presented by her uncle, Mr. William Johnson. Her escort was her brother, Mr. Theodore “TC” Allen, a graduate of Miami Dade College.

Miss Jasena Maurissa Adams is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jason (Sacajawea) Adams. Jasena is a junior at Wilson High School. Since her father is in Kuwait, she was presented by Mr. Reginald Derry. Her escort was her brother Mr. Jason Maurice Adams Jr., a freshman at South Florence High.

All Debutantes receive scholarships and awards for talent presentations and the Electronic Portfolio competition. The first place talent winner was Miss Rianna Stewart. Second place was Miss Juanita Allen, and third was Miss Sydney Bradley. Winners of the Electronic Portfolios were Miss Rianna Stewart (1st), Miss Jasena Adam (2nd) and Miss Davia Pugh (3rd).



Saturday, April 27th

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Novel Event 2019 LIP SYNC BATTLE

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LITERACY COUNCIL TO HOST LIP SYNC BATTLE

Submitted by Christina Lawson, Executive Director Florence Area Literacy Council



2018 winner, Dr. Brenda McKinley, accepting the 1st place award.

The microphones will be off and the laughs will be loud when performers from the Florence community take the stage to battle it out for a good cause. The Florence Area Literacy Council will host a Lip Sync Battle fundraiser at the Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology (SiMT) at 6 p.m. on June 13.

A novel event, Lip Sync Battle 2019 will help the Florence Area Literacy Council raise funds for educational programs offered to adults functioning at low literacy levels. This event

is the biggest fundraiser of the year for the FALC according to Executive Director Christina Lawson. The non-profit organization is a United Way of Florence County Partnering Agency, and they also receive funding through grants and donations. However, this event helps the non-profit bridge the gap in funding needed to operate annually.



Raldex Hospitality performers, Pamona McKenzie and Jimmy Fowler, accept the fan favorite award for raising the most money.

“Fundraising events are a huge part of helping the Florence Area Literacy Council fulfill our mission of helping adults struggling to live in our community. The Florence County community has a 33 percent illiteracy rate. The need for literacy services is so very important. Our adult learners want to become educationally qualified to work, they want to participate in their children’s education and, most importantly, they want to better their lives. This fundraiser makes it possible for us to offer instruction and educational materials for our participating learners,” says Lawson.



(Spinning wheel in background) Grub Grab is a fun game played by guests. Make a donation, spin the wheel and win a restaurant gift certificate.

Contestants performing in the Lip Sync Battle will fundraise leading up to the night of the event. Every \$1 donation will count as one vote. The team that raises the most money will receive the Fan Favorite award. Judges Gary Finklea, Jumana Swindler and Octavia Williams-Blake will score lip sync performances, and awards will be given for first, second and third place. There will also be a silent auction and grub grab during the event. The grub grab is a Spin the Wheel game played by guests at the Lip Sync Battle. Participants make a \$20 donation to the Literacy Council and spin the wheel to win a gift card to a local restaurant or grocery store. The gift card amount may be higher or lower than the donation.



Jessica Mullin performing to defend her win in 2017.

Tickets are \$50 per person. Guests will enjoy a great meal, open beer and wine bar, Silent Auction, Grub Grab and a very entertaining show. According to Lawson, “It’s a wonderful way to support the work of the Florence Area Literacy Council and join the fight against illiteracy in our community. You do not want to miss this fun event. The laughs are guaranteed, and you will be so glad you attended.”

Sponsorships are also available. For questions about sponsorships or to purchase tickets, contact the Florence Area Literacy Council by calling 843-667-1908 or by email at florencecliteracy@yahoo.com.



Changing What's Possible together

MUSC Health is pleased to join the community surrounding the Florence Medical Center as well its respective clinics and health care services. Our mission is to preserve human life in South Carolina and beyond through education, research and patient care. Every day, we're changing what's possible in health care.



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