


# DIVERSITY WORKS

OCTOBER 2020 VOLUME 10 ISSUE 4

*"For All of Us"*


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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

## A CALL TO ACT



Dawn "D.A. Goodwin  
Editor

So I have been told that I've been quite quiet this year. It's true although it didn't begin that way. Once 2020 turned into an almost overwhelming whirlwind of unexpected jaw-dropping events I had to step back for a moment. With so many disturbing occurrences in the world, I was disappointed in not seeing just as many changes as a result. Therefore, I chose to silence my personal outcry and re-strategize, only speaking from the appropriate platforms that can lead to positive change. This is one of those platforms, and this is **a unified call to action.**

Our last edition of Diversity Works© was such a powerful and important piece for the times. We thank you for checking it out and for hanging in there with us, even through our challenges. I am happy to say that we are continuing to grow and are stronger than ever with so much in store **to** close out the last quarter of 2020.

In this edition, we **celebrate** several individuals and give much gratitude to them for sharing pieces of their lives with us to help us become stronger. This includes the **survivors** of domestic violence and individuals like Latrice Pringle and Justin Borrero who might be disabled, but they do not allow their disabilities to interfere with their lives or livelihood. We also **acknowledge organizations** like Maxwood Furniture and SOS that help employ members of our disabled community, giving them an equal opportunity to work in area businesses and learn self-sufficiency.

Some businesses we catch up with include the City of Florence and Leaf Cigar Lounge, whose kitchen manager reveals how it's not just a cigar lounge. United Way discusses its Annual Day of Caring, and we are appreciating Ruiz Foods, which graces our cover. The organization and its Team Members consistently **give back to our community**--and have been doing so for generations. For that, we are so grateful.

During this time of thanksgiving, it's important that we remember those who are suffering from hunger and/or homelessness. Read about individuals and organizations that fight to combat it in our community as they answer the call to end them both. Some include ECHO, House of Hope and the King's Court, whose founders are known for doing work of the scripture to help people in the Pee Dee **rebuild their lives.**

Kicking off Adoption Awareness Month, we introduce the Marlowes, who cheerfully answered the call on their lives to adopt. We give you the steps on how you, too, can experience parenthood this way and tell the joyful story of Dr. Vicki Dixon, who was adopted into a loving family. But that's only the beginning.

Also inside, we invite you to let go of those stigmas that discourage you from growing socially. Stick with us to learn how powerful forgiveness is, as Natalie Selena Bee details, and remember to always **open your heart** to those who are different from you. We **recognize** National Coming Out Day, sharing the stories of four college students who had the courage to fight stigmas against **sexuality.** We admire these young adults for their bravery and must continue to give them the opportunity to use their voices and freely express themselves.

A few weeks ago in one of my English composition courses, I had my students **vote** on whether or not they would have a quiz. To my surprise, all voted in favor of it. I realized they weren't asking **for** a handout, like "extra credit." Instead, they simply wanted an opportunity to put in "extra work" and thus improve their overall grade. You see, opportunities can breed **positive change,** and that is exactly what happened for my students.

In education-related news, we check in with several area schools and colleges. To name a few, HGTC announces additional programs. FMU recognizes staff members, FDTC lays out four learning formats that began this fall and Virtus Academy celebrates its new facility. Marion County School District's superintendent discusses an impressive new teacher recruitment and retention initiative. Your heart will surely warm from seeing the district go the mile to attract and accommodate great educators, whom I feel are truly heroes. And it has nothing to do with the fact that I'm one. I'm referring to the likes of my sons' middle and high school teachers juggling between hybrid formats and fighting with technology and sleepy children, all while trying to avoid COVID-19. I applaud them for their patience, often thanking God that most of my students are online adult learners I don't have to fight with just to get them to keep their cameras on. So, yes, I say teachers are heroes.

But what about the healthcare heroes we don't hear about? Like those on the frontlines in long-term care facilities. You'll hear about them here. In other stories, HopeHealth doctors inform us about different types of arthritis and how not knowing the causes of joint pain can literally hurt us. We invite you to say goodbye to stigmas associated with diseases as Ashley Wilson asks if you are PrEPared for HIV and advises you of the risk factors you need to know. MUSC's Erin Ward tells how stuttering affects your ability to communicate, and Carolina Pines' Tanya Baker awakens us to the life of a nurse during the pandemic. For Breast Cancer Awareness month in October, we encourage you to read about survivors Jo Ann Pugh, Linda Ellis, Rachele Barrineau, amongst others. Then pay attention to your own body, being proactive and seeking treatment when something doesn't look or feel right. Imagine being able to find an issue and receive treatment because of it being detected early as opposed to waiting until it is too late.

We **address** World Mental Health Awareness Day, teaching you how to recognize signs associated with suicide and then talk about and prevent it. It's all about managing your **mental health** as you deal with this new normal we are living in. As professional counselor, Angela Scott reminds us, "It's okay to not be okay."

How about getting your mind off of things **and** focusing on an exciting holiday season? First, learn how to financially **prepare** for the future during uncertain times by protecting your finances and retirement. Anderson Brothers Bank has a couple of announcements that can benefit its customers, and New York Life's Julie Cord discusses guarantees. But make sure your pockets are ready **for whatever** your families throw your way because Christmas is right around the corner, and 'tis the season to shop locally. Palmetto First Federal Credit Union breaks down if now is a good time to buy a vehicle, which is a great gift idea for a spouse, child or even yourself. And check out the comfort food ideas that are guaranteed to get you excited about the season. If that doesn't work, events in the area like the Dillon Wellness Center's 10th annual Holiday Goodness bazaar are sure to please.

As always, we have lots more inside, and it is a pleasure to have you join us in answering the call to create positive change in our community. Enjoy!

You can reach me via email at [admin@youreeditingpro.net](mailto:admin@youreeditingpro.net), or follow my author page on Facebook: @authordagoodwin. I would love to hear from you!

### *A Message From our CEO/Publisher*

I sincerely want to thank our advertisers, partners and supporters for another great year. We at Diversity Works Magazine© would not be here without you. Stay tuned in 2021 as we celebrate ten years of promoting diversity and inclusion in our community with your continued support.



## BREAK THROUGH SELF-DOUBT & FEAR Submitted by Simma Lieberman



Self-doubt and fear interfere with our ability to achieve or set goals. Self-doubt and fear are the voices in our head telling us, “You’ll never succeed, so why try?” and “who do you think you are?” Self-doubt and fear are also what make us listen to those voices and decide to

give up before we get started.

While many people experience self-doubt and fear at some point in their lives, they take action anyway. Others remain stuck or are confident in only one area of their life, such as work. They are too afraid to try new things like going back to school, entering new relationships or learning new skills.

When we let self-doubt and fear rule our lives, we miss opportunities. We predict and believe that nothing good will happen to us, so we don’t try anything new, and we refuse to take even low-level risks. This leads us to discount people or situations that could help us reach our goals. While self-doubt and fear can come in different forms and from different sources, we can learn to break through them.

### **The Vicious Cycle of Self-Doubt and Fear**

I know what it’s like to live with self-doubt and fear. For years my life was ruled by these feelings. I grew up in a lower income family in the Bronx, N.Y. I heard over and over again that people like us could never really be successful.

As early as kindergarten, my teacher told my mother I was slow and not to expect too much from me. I was put in the slow-learners class. In reality, I was very smart but bored. My next teacher recognized this and moved me from the slow-learners class to the advanced class. But I still had my voices telling me, “You’ll never make it. You’ll never be popular.” I felt I wasn’t as good as other people because I didn’t have the money and nice clothes that some of the other girls had. I was also shy and not in the popular crowd. I internalized outside messages and became a troublemaker.

My parents viewed my education as a pathway for becoming a teacher, social worker or civil servant. They limited my vision and left me believing that I didn’t have a choice in what I wanted for my future. I couldn’t understand how people became successful at something. But others saw potential in me. I was encouraged to study journalism and was placed in a special writing program. It could have been an incredible opportunity. Instead, I listened to my fears that I’d never make it, so I left the program and pretended that I didn’t care.

Later, I got accepted to the High School of Performing Arts in New York. Acting had always been my dream, despite the fact that people said my “blue collar” Bronx accent would keep me from success. My parents loved me but didn’t know how to give me support. They told me it was good to go to Performing Arts but that being an actor was out of reach for me. Rather than focus on the fact that I had gotten accepted to this wonderful school, I focused on the negative. My perception was that everyone else was wealthier, more experienced and more talented than me. I told myself, “You’re not as good as everyone else. If you try and don’t make it, you’ll look like a fool. But if you don’t try, you can still be cool.” I pretended that I didn’t really want to act. I didn’t try, and I sabotaged myself. I felt like I had no one to talk to about my ambition. Eventually, I gave up trying and left. I told everyone, including myself, that it didn’t matter. But the truth is, I had been afraid to try.

I spent the next two years in another high school, where I used drugs daily and became an addict. I still managed to do well on tests and graduated from high school at age 16. None of that meant anything to me because, by that time I had such low self-esteem, I thought if I could do it, it must be easy. I continued to feel that I was never good enough. My life was defined by what other people thought of me.

I had other opportunities. I was approached on the street by a magazine photographer and became a model at one of the top agencies in the world. I still carried my negative messages and told myself I couldn’t do it. I still felt that I was unattractive and couldn’t conceive of success. I gave up and dropped out. I just didn’t believe in my ability to accomplish anything.

I tried moving to Eugene, Ore. because I blamed my problems on where I lived and the people in my life. In one year I managed to gain over 90 pounds and get addicted to coffee, cigarettes and other substances. I blamed everyone else for my lack of money, healthy relationships and happiness. I lived in constant fear but was afraid to admit it.

My self-destruction finally resulted in a breakdown of my physical health, and I had to be hospitalized and undergo major surgery. Doctors told me what I already knew: I had to make a major change. It was time to look at my past and my present and to decide what I wanted for my future. If I didn’t break through negative thoughts I would always stay where I was.



### **Making Positive Changes**

I had to learn to change my attitude about myself. I read about and talked to people who had broken through their self-doubts and taken control of their lives. I got support from others and consciously

began turning my destructive self-talk into constructive self-talk. I knew that if I took certain actions, my mind and emotions would follow. I let go of people who negatively influenced my life. I told myself that I was important and began to plan and achieve my goals. I learned to have faith in my ability. I quit smoking, gave up coffee and began exercising and eating well. The people I spent time with were also making positive changes in their lives. My life began to improve. I no longer saw myself as a victim. I learned to let go of blame and started taking small risks. I stopped comparing myself to other people and began to open up to new opportunities.

Today I have a successful speaking and consulting business. I have close friends and a wonderful son. Learning from my life and others, I’m raising him to believe in himself, understand his feelings and not be afraid of his fears. I travel throughout the country talking to corporations, associations and other organizations.





# MAKING THE MOST OF WORKPLACE BENEFITS



Quite often, it is not until we have experienced a difficult situation like an accident, illness or COVID-19-related event that we start to appreciate employer-provided benefits like disability insurance and leave policies that protect income and jobs. Yet, approximately one third of employees say they don't feel like they have

enough of either to feel protected through the crisis.

Below are three points to consider about disability insurance in addition to your holistic well-being that can help you be better prepared and protected for unexpected situations.

## 1. Know what you have now

While reading your benefits package is probably not super exciting, investing the time now can make a big difference later. Start by understanding what is currently offered by your employer or your spouse's or partner's employer. This will help you make informed decisions and could even illuminate programs such as mental health support or income protection that may not have seemed relevant months ago.

Many employees do not realize that disability insurance, for example, can help cover expenses if they are out of work due to illness or injury. This is important because 61 percent of employees in the disability survey said monthly expenses, such as rent/mortgage payments, utility bills or car payments, are top stressors if they are suddenly unable to work full-time.

Also, be aware of any benefits changes related to COVID-19 as many employers have expanded their leave programs, and some increased certain benefits to further assist employees. In addition, federal, state and local leave policies have been implemented to support

workers during these challenging times.

## 2. Prevention and rehabilitation matter

Along with the financial stress imposed by COVID-19, employees are facing physical, mental and social health consequences too. From having fewer opportunities for physical activity and social interaction, to feeling anguish over the suffering or isolation of loved ones, every element of holistic well-being is being tested.

Participating in home exercise programs or virtual social gatherings and seeking mental health support are all ways to stay healthy during these challenging times. You can also take advantage of creative programs employers are offering such as nutritional recipes, fitness challenges, telehealth opportunities and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which offer counseling.

Moreover, when returning from a leave of absence, employees should understand the return-to-work programs offered by their employer, which are designed to keep you healthy after they are back on the job. These programs may offer flexible work hours, technology equipment accommodations, training opportunities and mental and financial wellness support to address related stressors.

## 3. Prepare for future decision-making

In advance, take the time to think about how you could build out your coverage for the future. Over the years, employers have introduced a number of benefit offerings that allow you to customize your coverage for your individual situation, such as if you have children or caregiving responsibilities. In addition, consider how your life has or could change in the coming year and the importance of programs that can supplement your income.

## Acting today for tomorrow

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call on the vital importance of leave and disability insurance, which offer protection against the unknown.

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Main Office Telephone: 843-665-7255

[www.fcemd.org](http://www.fcemd.org)



# SURVEY: FLEXIBLE WORK IMPROVES MENTAL HEALTH Posted by HRDive



Remote work

## Dive Brief:

- As a result of the pandemic, flexible work has gone “from being a ‘nice to have’ to an absolute necessity,” according to a survey of 800 employees by FlexJobs. Forty-eight percent of respondents with flexible work options rate their work-life balance as very good or excellent, compared to 36 percent of workers

without flex work options who say the same.

- Employees with flexible work arrangements are also more likely (54 vs. 45 percent) than those without to say they have the emotional support they need to manage stress, and also say they are much more likely (57 vs. 37 percent) to be able to change the stressful things about their work.

- Remote work is also becoming workers’ preferred method, as they are less interested in returning to full-time office work. Two-thirds (66 percent) of respondents in the survey said they would prefer to work remotely full-time after the pandemic is over, while 33 percent favored a blended approach. Less than two percent want to be in the office full-time.

## Dive Insight:

- Many studies have pointed to the popularity and value of remote work, both now and in the post-pandemic workplace. For example, 83 percent of employees in a recent Mercer survey said their companies

are considering implementing flexible work at a greater scale — potentially making remote and flexible work options a larger part of everyday life going forward.

- One reason for the rise of remote work is the way it enables worker autonomy, an important driver of employee satisfaction, according to recent research. Employers, HR and frontline managers are primarily concerned with productivity, which conventional wisdom said may be at risk when workers are remote. Some of that sentiment remains, but various studies have shown that employees feel they



From the new normal to the new necessary

are equally or more productive while working remotely.

- Employers are also increasing their awareness of work-life balance and its connection to mental health, aiming to improve retention and engagement within the workforce. Target, Postmates and Starbucks are

examples of companies that have expanded mental health benefits during the pandemic.

- A desire to improve the lives of working parents has also driven employers’ increased acceptance of flexible and remote arrangements. Windowed work has been shown to help productivity during the pandemic, and data shows working parents are increasingly in need of this and other forms of flexibility to survive in a workplace that has only become more challenging.

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## CHAPLIN AND BETHEA: COMMUNITY AWARD RECIPIENTS Submitted by The Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce held its Annual Outlook Luncheon on Aug. 27 at the Florence Center. We heard from Hugh Weathers, South Carolina commissioner of agriculture, as the keynote speaker and presented two important community awards. The awards included the Small Business Person of the Year, presented to Drew Chaplin of Palmetto Commercial Real Estate, and the inaugural Public Servant of the Year award, presented to Ed Bethea of Florence Darlington Technical College.



*Drew Chaplin*



*Edward Bethea*

The Small Business Person of the Year Award recognizes a business owner who exemplifies professionalism, strives to enhance our community and has made a positive impact on the local economy. Dedicated Community Bank sponsored the award with Jim Ivey, president and CEO, presenting the honor to Drew Chaplin. Chaplin is the managing partner and founder of Palmetto Commercial Real Estate.

The inaugural Public Servant of the Year Award was sponsored by Francis Marion University and presented by Dr. Fred Carter. The award was created to honor a Chamber member who works in the nonprofit or government sectors. Edward Bethea, interim president of Florence Darlington Technical College, received the award. Carter stated that Bethea's staff described him to be a man of integrity and substance, the type of person who brings more to the table than he takes away, and a fair, honest and dedicated leader.

Michael Miller, president of the Florence Chamber said, "The awards portion of the Outlook Luncheon was very special this year since we planned on having the presentations in April.



Obviously, the program had to be postponed. Keeping the names of the recipients quiet for 10 months was rather difficult, but very rewarding in the end."

The event typically draws upward of 500 area business and community leaders, but due to the COVID-19 restrictions, it had to be limited to 300 in attendance this year. The Chamber and Florence Center followed all COVID-19 guidelines as recommended by the CDC and the state's accelerateSC committee, which included eight-foot table separation. All participants wore face coverings while moving about and had temperatures taken when entering the facility.

## AKA & NATIONAL PANHELLENIC TOWNHALL



Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Epsilon Chi Omega and Iota Xi chapters in collaboration with the National Panhellenic Council, Pee Dee Chapter, are proud to present a virtual town hall meeting on Oct. 22 @ 6:30 p.m. showcasing local, state and federal candidates. Each candidate will introduce their platform, allowing voters the opportunity to ask questions to make an informed decision via absentee or day of voting on Nov. 3. The moderator for this non-partisan forum is Tonya Brown of the WPDE television station.

Join the Virtual Town Hall meeting LIVE on the Epsilon Chi Omega chapter's Facebook or YouTube social media pages. Use this link to view the meeting LIVE: Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/EpsilonChiOmega> or YouTube <http://bit.ly/akaecoyoutube>.

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# SURVIVING COVID-19 Submitted by Doris B. Lockhart, Owner



Our team adjusted to the state mandate of closing and followed the CDC guidelines to maintain the safety of our talent and staff. Fortunately, Spherion was flexible so that all our staff

would be able to work from home and set appointments when needed.

Spherion Staffing ensured our clients that we took COVID-19 very seriously and that we were here for them to offer assistance. Our clients trusted us and continued to support us by continuing to do business with us to keep our doors open. With so many companies having to deal with their core employees not being able to work, we were able to help them maintain some sense of survival, which is the first factor in surviving COVID-19.

We had to invest in hand sanitizer, mask, wipes and a cleaning service for our office when we returned to our office full time. We still practice social distancing and require everyone to have a mask when entering the office. Obviously, this is the new norm, and our survival as a small business depends on us being knowledgeable of all the rules set forth by our state and the CDC.



Doris B. Lockhart

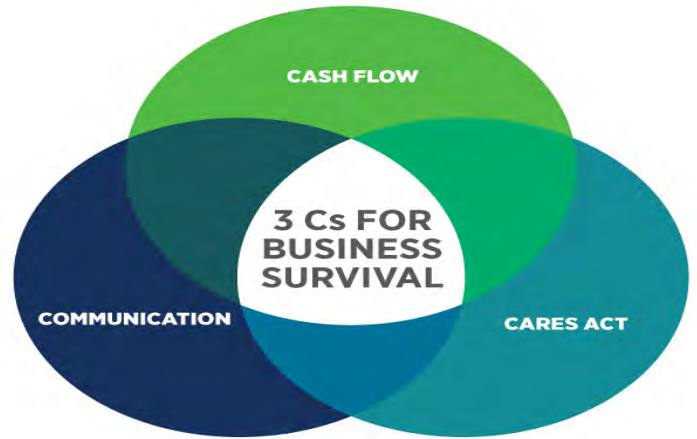
Secondly, a major factor for Spherion Staffing to have survived COVID-19 is because we are a franchise. I'm sure if we had not been supported by our franchisor, it would have been a real challenge, which would have caused us to be really concerned about our survival.

When you go to work, you shouldn't have to worry about whether

it's safe or not. As a staffing company that places more than 160,000 people in jobs every year, we take safety seriously. To keep our workers safe, employers must rethink where work is done, how it is done and at what pace it is done.

Surviving COVID-19 is forcing all of us to rethink our approach to managing our businesses, especially when the health and well-being of our staff and community is at stake. Precaution has to be a priority even when we are providing a service or product that contributes to the economy or helping others to maintain employment to care for their families.

We are grateful that we have been able to continue serving our talent, clients and community thus far. For more information about how Spherion connects people and jobs, call 843-662-8262 or 843-438-8337, email [dorislockhart@spherion](mailto:dorislockhart@spherion) or visit [www.spherion.com](http://www.spherion.com).



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# THE CITY OF FLORENCE WEBSITE IS GETTING A NEW LOOK!

*Submitted by the City of Florence*



Serving the Florence community is the City's responsibility as a municipality. In doing so, the City of Florence

recognizes the need for growth and development and the ability to present matters of public interest to our many residents, businesses and visitors. The redesign and improved functionality of the City website ([www.cityofflorence.com](http://www.cityofflorence.com)) is long overdue, for both the community and staff. Structuring content to be responsive when accessing information relevant to our target audiences and the community will help meet organizational goals. In addition, the Florence Downtown Development Corporation, in partnership with the City of Florence, is also redesigning its separate website ([www.florencedowntown.com](http://www.florencedowntown.com)).

The City of Florence staff started this undertaking last year by creating different goals for the project overview, scope of services, website needs and requirements, and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. Integrating some key factors include, but are not limited to, facilitating community engagement, incorporating interactive customer service features and creating a visually appealing website design that is user-friendly and tells a concise and compelling story. Providing a responsive design that has mobile accessibility and mobile responsiveness makes the overall experience productive since many use tablets and smartphones to access the site. Having good community engagement allows for the improvement of transparency between citizens and staff while also opening the door to a new learning experience for all users.

After gathering the necessary must-haves for the website foundation, the City advertised a Request for Proposals for the project. The bid was awarded to VC3, allowing the City to expand its

partnership with the company on the development and maintenance of the new site. VC3 is a managed service provider that has been delivering cloud computing to its clients for over ten years. For the project kickoff, the first line of business was conducting interviews with the department staff and distributing surveys both internally and externally to receive input on the site. VC3 interviewed selected city staff to gain an understanding of the specific administrative needs of each department. Each department was prompted with questions to better assist with the construction and goals of the website in efforts to create an informative resource tool for the community.

The purpose of the internal and external surveys was to collect data and determine priorities for staff and the community related to the redesign of the website. Based on the results from the survey, the top three goals for the website redesign was content organization, navigation changes, and social media integration. The top three desired looks for the new website were clean, friendly and modern. All gathered results helped provide the direction of the redesign.

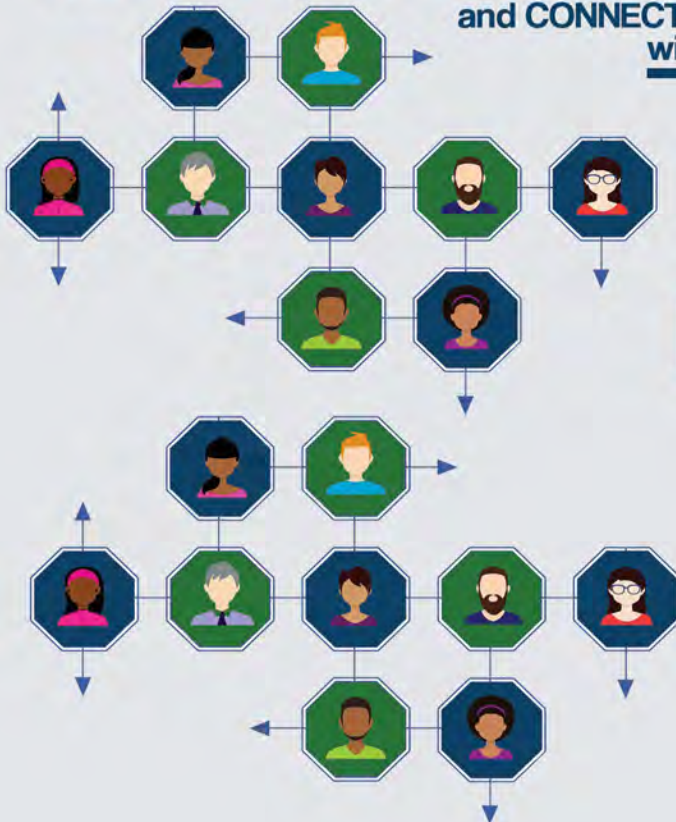
Currently, the scope of work for the website is approximately three-fourths completed with content building, testing and staff training remaining. Discovery and site navigation has been completed, as well as the design of the home page and interior pages. The estimated timeline for the website to go live is at the end of October or early November.

The City of Florence is excited about the completion and launching of this project. When the website goes live, that is just the beginning of the website's evolution as it will continue developing to meet community needs. Providing the necessary functions for a website, as well as exhibiting transparency through the process, is something that the City strives to offer. Allowing productive public access and feedback to accomplish shared community initiatives helps keep the City progressing. Full Life. Full Forward.

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# WORKING TO END PERIOD POVERTY

Submitted by Mary Grace McGee, Manager of Community Relations



SEC WIRE Ladies: Mary Grace McGee, Mary Wheeler, Heather McClary, Megan Blackburn, Stacey Clark and Angela Dominicci

**KINGSTREE**-The Period Project is a mission started by Tennessee business professor Dr. Lakisha Simmons. Once she became aware of how many American girls miss school due to the lack of feminine hygiene products, Simmons started working on a solution. Her project started in middle Tennessee but has had a trickle-down effect to reach Santee Electric Cooperative (SEC).

One of the ladies of SEC's Women Involved in Rural Electrification (WIRE) saw an ad about the Period Project on social media and suggested the group start its own form of the project. The WIRE ladies went to work purchasing collection containers, making distribution bags, soliciting donations and contacting area middle schools.

For the first year, the plan is to choose one middle school in each of the four counties Santee Electric serves. The group will provide the school nurse with the supplies to give to girls in need. Every female at some point has needed these necessary items. The goal of

this project is to take away the anxiety of those moments and to keep girls in class.

Heather McClary, the WIRE member who brought the idea to the group said, "Being a teenager is hard enough PERIOD. If something as simple as providing feminine products can keep a least one girl in class, then what we are doing is a success."

Studies show that one in five girls cannot afford to purchase feminine hygiene products. One such study by Harris Insights and

Analytics questioned 1000 teenage girls and found two-thirds of girls feel stress because they are unable to afford the products they need. The study also found that 61 percent of girls wear tampons longer than they should due to a limited supply and 25 percent have missed school because they did not have products available.

"It's unfathomable to me that in this day and age, in this great country, something like this project is even needed. I'm just happy we are able to do our part to bring awareness and to contribute assistance because no girl's education should be hindered by this natural, biological cycle," stated WIRE member Stacey Clark.

If you would like to help the SEC WIRE group collect products, please contact Mary Grace McGee at [mmcgee@santee.org](mailto:mmcgee@santee.org) or 843-355-0599.



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# UNITED WAY HOSTS 28TH ANNUAL DAY OF CARING

Submitted by Jenna Nance, Marketing Manager, United Way of Florence County



Volunteers from Otis Elevators helped paint, pressure wash, repair and landscape at Mercy Medicine Free Clinic for our 28th Annual Day of Caring.

For over 28 years now, volunteers have given back to our LOCAL community through United Way of Florence County's Annual Day of Caring by completing projects for our partner agencies, which allows them to enhance the quality of services they provide to individuals in our community.

On Sept. 18, volunteers came together to give the ultimate gift--their time--but in a way like none before. With COVID-19 still lurking, many precautions, recommendations and alternatives were put in place for United Way of Florence County's Annual Day of Caring.



This year, our 22 partner agencies posed over 80 projects for Day of Caring. Of those 80, 63 projects were picked up to be completed by 32 organizations/companies. Projects ranged from cleaning to construction, painting to

yard work, and company supply drives.

Of the 32 participating organizations/companies, half opted for a more COVID-19 friendly option. Companies that could not physically participate this year due to company restrictions still found ways to give back. Many chose to participate in supply drives for our agencies by collecting food, school supplies, hygiene products, coats, toys, games, etc.

A few companies participating for the first time this year or that have not participated in several years include Circle Park Behavioral Health Services, First Bank, Field Fastener, Florence County Library Florence County Sheriff's Office and Junior League of Florence.

We are so grateful for every individual and company that not only gave their resources, but also their time to help make our 28th Annual Day of Caring a success.



Les Ward, general manager of Pepsi of Florence and board chair for United Way of Florence County, poses with a fellow volunteer to show off our 2020 Day of Caring t-shirts generously donated by Pepsi of Florence.

We look forward to our 29th Annual Day of Caring in 2021 and encourage all individuals to LIVE, GIVE, and HELP LOCAL by supporting our agencies through Day of Caring. To get involved in the future, please contact Jenna Nance at 843-662-2407 or [jnance@uwflorence.org](mailto:jnance@uwflorence.org), and visit our website at [www.uwflorence.org](http://www.uwflorence.org) for more information.



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# SUMPTER RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Submitted by Teowonna Clifton, Marketing Communications Manager



Diane E. Sumpter

**COLUMBIA-** DESA, Inc. is pleased to announce that Diane E. Sumpter, its president and CEO, has been awarded the Abe Venable Legacy Award for Lifetime Achievement by the U.S. Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA).

DESA, under Sumpter's leadership, has operated the South Carolina MBDA Business Center for 27 years, making it one of the longest-running Center the MBDA network.

Sumpter has been long dedicated to the development and success of minority-owned businesses, even prior to her work with MBDA. One of her first opportunities to assist businesses was as an employee of MH Clarkson for South Carolina Department Transportation. When that firm did not regain the contract, Sumpter bid and won it for her newly formed firm, D.E. Sumpter

and Associates, later called DESA. "My passion for minority-owned businesses has always been there, but MBDA gave me a platform and the support that fueled my efforts. I am grateful for the collaboration; we share the same goal," Sumpter says.

Sumpter's award is part of National MED Week, a week of speakers, sessions and resources for minority business owners. Sumpter will be presented the award virtually, during a session called "How They

Did It." Registration for MED Week and Sumpter's session can be found at [MBDA.gov](http://MBDA.gov).

The Abe Venable Legacy Award for Lifetime Achievement celebrates high standards of excellence, dedication and accomplishment over a sustained period of time. The award is granted to an individual who has played an integral role in the creative, technical or professional progress of minority business development over the course of his/her life.

## About DESA, Inc.

Founded by Diane E. Sumpter in 1986, DESA, Inc. has been exceeding client expectations for more than 34 years. The company is a certified small, woman and minority-owned firm, offering services through four different divisions: Professional & Administrative Services; Strategic Marketing & Communications; Construction Management and Engineering Services, and Global Business Services. Local and national clients include city, county, state and federal governments, non-profit agencies and private sector organizations. Complete information on DESA can be found by visiting [DESAINC.com](http://DESAINC.com).

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# DISASTER RELIEF FUND SECOND ROUND OF GRANTS AWARDED

Submitted by Belle Zeigler, Executive Director



Eastern Carolina Community Foundation has announced the recipients of the second round of funding from the Pee Dee Disaster Relief Fund, totaling over \$12,000, to local non-profits in Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marlboro and Marion counties. The first round grant selection process resulted in \$18,000 in grants which were distributed in July. Lane Gilpin, ECCF board member and donor, shared, "It is very exciting to once again be a part of distributing funds to nonprofits that are positively impacting the lives of people in our area, especially during these challenging times. I am very encouraged that these nonprofit partners in our communities are taking care of those in need."

Grant recipients include Greater Lake City Community Resource Center, Three Rivers Genealogical Society, Friends of the Marian Wright Edelman Public Library, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Florence County Disabilities Foundation, Chesterfield County First Steps to School Readiness, House of Hope of the Pee Dee, Kids' Closet of Darlington, Dillon County Boys and Girls Youth Center, The Community Kitchen of Bennettsville, United Way of Chesterfield County, Child and Family Resource Foundation, Pathfinders United, Lydia's Bowel of Mercy Home, Inc., Bread of Life Food Pantry, Our Children - Their Future, Inc., Future Entrepreneurs, Willie and Betsy Bradford Community Outreach, Lighthouse Ministries, Beyond Empowerment Foundation, Seminole 6 Sports, Hartsville Interfaith Ministries, Foster Care Clothing Closet, A Moment of Magic, Operation Up, Darlington County First Steps, Pee Dee Mobile Farmers Market, My Brother's Keeper Shelter, Darlington County Humane Society and Resurrection Restoration.

ECCF Executive Director Belle Zeigler stated, "We received many applications from our nonprofit partners during this grant cycle. It was truly remarkable to realize how much need there is. These nonprofit partners are finding so many ways to help and serve. Our organization is hearing back from them stating that the grant has allowed them to faithfully continue their work and meet their mission. The foundation is proud to be part of this work."

Beth Hubbard of Kids' Closet in Darlington gratefully acknowledged the grant that their organization received, commenting, "We have been seeing children at Kids' Closet for two weeks to get them ready for school, providing them with clothes, uniforms, pajamas, socks, underwear and winter outerwear. Because of this generous grant, we feel confident in our ability to serve children in need. It is an honor and a privilege to be able to provide some relief to those in great need."

The Pee Dee Disaster Fund was first established in 2010 at the Eastern Carolina Community Foundation through a partnership with the Darlington Raceway in response to tornados that hit Darlington. In 2015, donations helped to support organizations responding to devastating floods. In more recent years, Hurricanes Matthew and Florence wreaked havoc for many families in the Pee Dee. Now, there is great need due to both a public health crisis and economic challenge.

The intent is to help organizations respond to food, shelter, health and nonprofit sustainability needs stemming from the pandemic in a quick and efficient way. Grants are made in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$2,000. "We know this can't solve all the problems that our

small local nonprofits are up against, but we hope these funds help to ease their burden," commented Rev. Mary Finklea, ECCF board chair.

Online donations to the Pee Dee Disaster Relief Fund may be made at [www.easterncarolinacf.org](http://www.easterncarolinacf.org) and checks may be sent to ECCF, PO Box 1615, Florence, S.C. 29503. All gifts are greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged to the donor.

## ECCF Mission

Eastern Carolina Community Foundation improves the quality of life in our area of South Carolina through inspired philanthropy and innovative community programs.

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# A TRIFECTA OF QUALITY AT LEAF

Submitted by Calum "Cal" Poston, Kitchen Manager



Calum "Cal" Poston

Beyond offering an array of premium cigars and tantalizing spirits, Leaf Cigar Lounge in Downtown Florence also offers decadent dishes brought to you by an exceptional staff. The cigar bar's talented kitchen manager, Calum "Cal" Poston, shares how his culinary journey prepared him to lead the spot that exceeds expectations individuals tend to have when hearing about a cigar lounge.

As a child, I was always fascinated by the culinary arts. Experiencing the satisfaction that comes from someone enjoying a dish you prepared at an early age also helped to cement these feelings. As I grew older, the idea of incorporating this growing interest of mine into a full-fledged career became too strong to ignore. My entrance into the culinary field started off the same as most cooks: waiting tables. I was a server for the first few years of my food and beverage career before finally getting a job with Marriott as a short-order breakfast cook and barista at the Florence Courtyard.

After four years with Marriott, I got an opportunity to transition into fine dining at a local downtown restaurant called Town Hall. Having never received any formal training or culinary education, I was thankful for the lessons and experiences Marriott and Town Hall afforded me.

It was a simple start with several opportunities to learn the ins and outs of my culinary career path. After joining the staff



Chicken Caesar Salad

at Town Hall, I quickly realized I was training in an entirely new league of culinary preparation. Town Hall was my trial by fire and where I really began to learn about the finer details of upscale cuisine and even simple food preparation. Even though the opportunity to work with such an educated crew was immensely fulfilling, I took a side job in a kitchen at a local brewery to fill my spare time. Luckily for me, this was how I

met the owner of Florence's only cigar bar, Jesse Wiles. Only then, it was still in development and a while off from opening day. Thanks to Jesse, I got the opportunity to oversee his kitchen for this new journey.

Almost a year later, we've managed to create a relaxing environment that gives you the comfort of being at home but provides a service you just can't get at home. Here at the Leaf we have a wide variety of top-shelf spirits, a tremendous humidor with endless cigar choices and incredible comfort food.

Our goal is to provide a comfortable setting where you can relax and enjoy good company. We pride ourselves on being a from-scratch kitchen that will always provide quality food, paired with quality service. As Florence continues to support us, we've pledged to continuously step up our service. Our business will continue to grow as well as the quality of the cuisine, cigar varieties and exotic top-shelf spirits for everyone to enjoy.



Lounge Burger and Fries

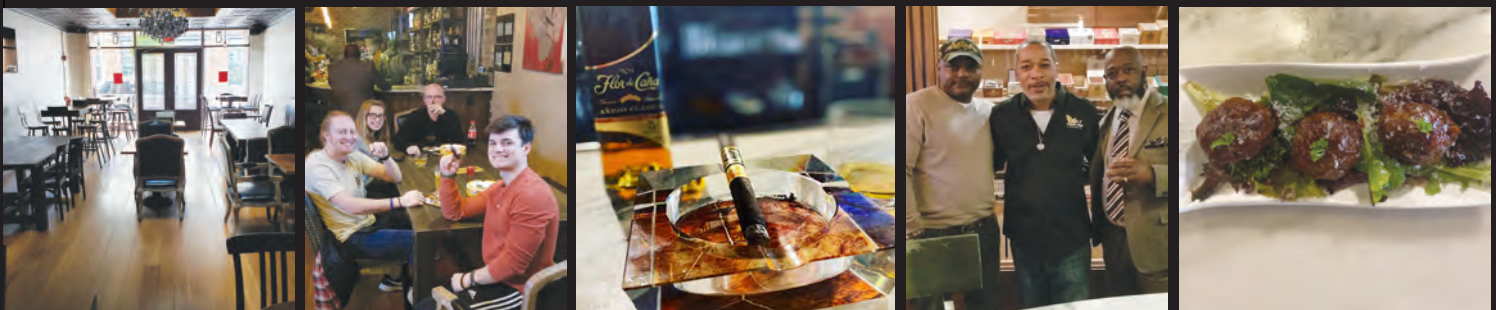


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## JEBAILY LAW FIRM: ON THE DANGERS OF TEXTING AND DRIVING Submitted by Jebaily Law Firm



If you have been injured or lost a loved one in a crash caused by a texting driver in Florence, Myrtle Beach or surrounding areas in South Carolina, **we will work diligently to seek the justice you deserve.** Don't wait to take action. Call us today, or reach us online to receive a free consultation.

### **Why Is Texting While Driving So Dangerous?**

As the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) points out, **texting while driving is particularly dangerous because it combines three types of distractions:**

- **Manual** – One or both of a driver's hands are on the phone, typing and not on the steering wheel.
- **Visual** – The driver's eyes are off the road and instead focused on a phone screen.
- **Cognitive** – Instead of thinking about how fast the car is going and paying attention to surrounding traffic, a driver is thinking about the message that he or she is reading or typing.

Numerous studies have been published during the past decade,

underscoring the risks of texting while driving. For example:

- One study, published in the journal, *Human Factors*, found that the drivers it analyzed were **six times more likely to get into a crash while texting.**
- Another study, by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, found that **texting while driving creates an accident risk that is 23 times higher** than if one was driving without any distractions.

According to its most recent annual estimate, the National Safety Council states that about six percent of crashes in the country, or around 341,000, involve texting drivers. **Given these studies and statistics, no reasonable person would text while driving.** In that sense, a driver who causes a crash due to texting should be considered negligent – if not reckless – and held accountable for the harm caused.

Additionally, South Carolina banned texting while driving in June 2014. A failure to follow a law that was clearly meant to protect motorists on our roads can be deemed negligence per se.

### **How We Can Determine If Texting Caused Your Crash**

When the personal injury attorneys of Jebaily Law Firm, take on a case, **our goal is to conduct a thorough investigation in order to determine the cause of the crash** and who should be held responsible for it. **In many cases, an accident may bear signs that distracted driving played a role.** For instance, if the driver who caused the car crash failed to stop at a stoplight or stop sign, tailgated and hit the driver in front or drifted into another lane, it can signal distraction. A lack of skid marks may indicate that the driver did not realize the risk of a crash until it was too late.

If a teen caused the crash, texting likely played a role. A recent study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that driver distraction was a factor in 58 percent of the teen driver accidents it studied. Cell phone use contributed to 12 percent of those wrecks.





As the end of 2020 (finally) draws near, it means the start of the holiday shopping season will be here before we know it. Before you start stress-scribbling your shopping list on the nearest piece of paper, take some time to think over where you will be making those purchases from. If you tend to buy from big-chain stores, check out the three reasons below why your money may be better spent at a local business this holiday season.

**1. Supports the Economy** – One of the biggest benefits to shopping local is the positive impacts it has on the local economy. If you were to go spend \$100 at your favorite local business, \$68 of that purchase would stay local and help increase your community's wealth and standard of living. In comparison, if you were to go spend that same \$100 at a business chain, only \$43 would remain local. Local businesses also tend to hire locally and utilize the services of other local businesses to keep even more money in the community.

**2. Provides Personal and Trusted Service** – Most of us probably couldn't name the current owners of the chain businesses operating in our communities, but we can probably name the owners of our favorite local businesses. That's because local owners live with us in the same community, and we can create personal connections with them. These personal connections translate into better service when you can get recommendations straight from a business owner or when an owner can custom order a product you need. Knowing whom you are buying from can also help create trust, whether that be trust in knowing you are purchasing a quality product or service or trust to provide a safe shopping experience.

**3. Creates Unique Options** – Without local businesses, every city and town would have the exact same choices for their shopping, restaurants and services. Can you imagine how mundane that would be? Unfortunately, that scenario could become a reality as local businesses struggle to stay open after temporary closures and months of reduced operations. Local businesses are what help to make a community unique and present one-of-a-kind options that you can't find anywhere else. By shopping local, you help ensure these businesses can continue to keep their doors open.

If you want to shop local this holiday season, a great place to start is on Small Business Saturday. Small Business Saturday is a national initiative started by American Express in 2010 aimed at helping to drive shoppers to local businesses on the Saturday following Thanksgiving. With nearly 40 local restaurants, retail and service businesses within walking-distance of each other, Downtown Florence is the place to go to shop local this holiday season. Join us for special deals, discounts and giveaways during our Small Business Saturday event on Nov. 28. For more information and a directory of businesses located in Downtown, go online to [florencedowntown.com](http://florencedowntown.com).

**Welcome back.**  
Our Downtown Florence shops and restaurants  
are open and ready when you are.

**I'm ready.**

FULL LIFE. FULL FORWARD.  
**FLORENCE**  
DOWNTOWN

Downtown Florence is rolling out the welcome mat and reopening our doors. Our local shops, restaurants, salons, and spas are creating safe, comfortable, and inviting spaces to welcome you back. For a complete list of downtown businesses open and waiting for you, visit [www.florencedowntown.com/openforbusiness](http://www.florencedowntown.com/openforbusiness).



## 3 KEYS TO DISCOVER YOUR FEAR TRIGGERS by Robin Lewis



**HEMINGWAY** – The year 2020 has been full of fearful events. From the COVID-19 pandemic to hurricanes to political fights to racial and community unrest, we’ve been bombarded with voices of fear from the media.



### Godly and ungodly fear: Do you know the difference?

It’s important we know the difference between Godly and ungodly fear. Godly fear is based in wisdom and is what keeps us from running into the street, touching a hot stove or stepping off a cliff.

Ungodly fear is mental, emotional and physical unrest. It can be described as anxiety, panic, trepidation and stress. Ungodly fear is not of God. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For God has not given you a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind.”

As children of God, we are to not give into ungodly fears. Fear is a bully. Fear wants to convince you to stop and run. And when we listen to the voice of fear, we will be overcome by it.

### Either fear will overcome you, or you will overcome it.

It’s important to understand that whatever we focus on grows larger, for better or for worse. Our emotions are driven by what we choose to focus on in our minds. Therefore, if you are focusing on your fears, worries and concerns, then those seem larger to you.

We become so familiar with the counterfeit lies of the enemy that we can stop recognizing the truth. If we’ve been focused on what we fear too long, we will actually reject the truth for the counterfeit because the lies seem more real than the truth.



### Where we put our faith is powerful.

When this happens, we are actually “putting faith” in our fears. If we go around talking about and expecting the worst thing to happen, it likely will. But if we return our focus to God’s promises, then our fear is reduced, and our faith in his ability to protect us grows. Proverbs 18:21 says, “The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.”

There are 365 verses in the word of God that say, “Do not fear,” a verse for every day of the year. If God has said that we are not to give into fear, then that means we have a choice. We need to practice choosing our thoughts.

### Hope is more powerful than our fears.

When we place our hope in ourselves, we ultimately will fail. But when we place our hope in God who cannot fail, we are saved even in the midst of dire circumstances. Psalm 25:5 and scores of other verses teach us to place our hope in God alone. “Guide me in your truth and

teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”

### Do you know the three keys to discovering and healing your fear triggers?

Fear is the favorite weapon of the devil, your adversary. He will aim fiery darts of fearful thoughts and emotions and even try to arrange circumstances to put you in a fearful state. Jesus gave us what I call satan’s job description in John 10:10. “The enemy comes only to steal, kill, and destroy, but I have to come to give life and life abundant until it overflows.”

Many people struggle with fears, not realizing they may be targets of spiritual attack. One solution, in addition to praying in Jesus’ name, is to discover and understand what triggers their fear. Use these three keys to discover your fear triggers and step into stronger faith in God:

**Key 1: Confession.** Just as every tree has roots, so does every fear. Tell or confess your fears to God and ask him to help you see where this fear began.



**Key 2: Discovery.** As you begin to see where your fear began or what insecurity it is connected to, you can ask God to forgive you for being afraid and ask for his help in standing strong in faith. Search out the word of God for the best verse you need to quote when you feel afraid.

**Key 3: God’s word.** The word of God is a weapon in our hands that few choose to use against their fears. But you now know and can begin wielding its power. The word of God is powerful against the enemy of your soul, and Ephesians 6:17 calls it “the sword of the Spirit.” It’s a mighty and effective weapon against fear.

### It’s impossible to worry and be afraid at the same time.

Find several Bible verses to have ready. I call these “pocket verses” because after you have read them over several times, your mind will help you to recall them when fear is trying to rise up. Not only does the word of God stop fear’s assault on your mind, but also builds your faith in God. Remember, whatever you focus on grows larger, for better or for worse. So, choose your focus carefully, and learn to maintain it. Then when fear comes knocking, get refocused on God.

### My favorite fear-fighting verses:

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (Psalm 56:3).

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

“I leave the gift of peace with you—my peace. Not the kind of fragile peace given by the world, but my perfect peace. Don’t yield to fear or be troubled in your hearts—instead, be courageous!” (Jesus in John 14:27).

### Faith Over Fear 5-Day Challenge

Join my next Free Faith Over Fear 5-Day Challenge on Facebook. You can sign up on my website at [www.RobinLewisLife.com](http://www.RobinLewisLife.com).

Robin Lewis is a certified Christian life coach for women and creator of The Christ Empowered Woman Coaching Program. You can find more information on her website.





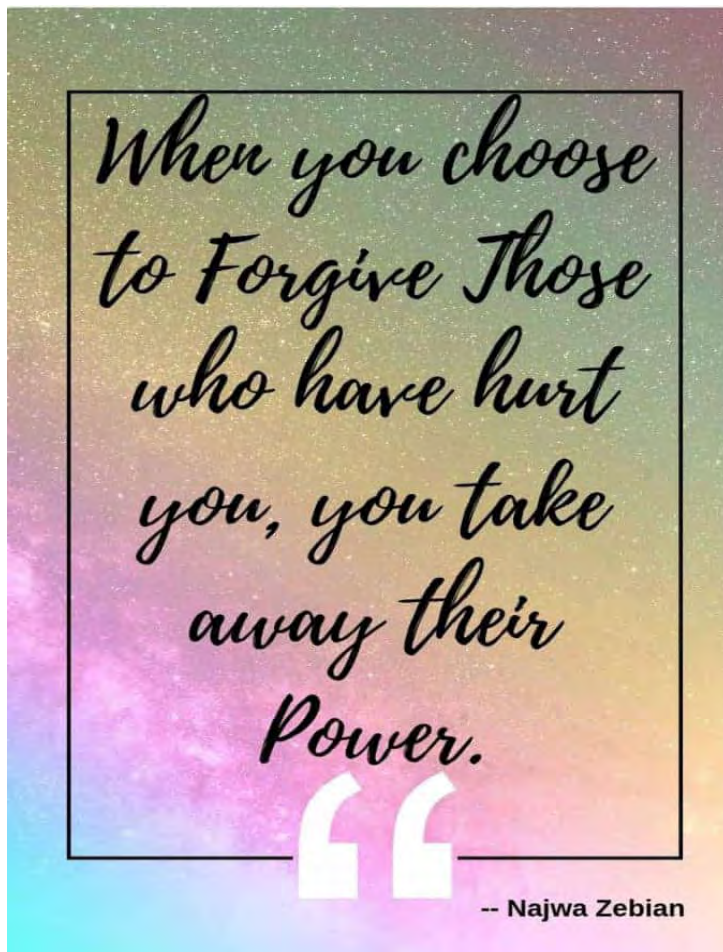
Natalie Selena Bee

For many years it seemed as though holding a grudge was normal. It did not matter who, what or why. I had the strong belief that I was done wrong. Scenarios of how to get even would flash in my mind. I felt it was normal; after all, I was not the only one feeling this way. There were people who would agree with me. They were just as wrong as I was. This was not seen as gossiping or bitterness. As time went on, I realized it was a sin of unforgiveness.

A question that remained was, "Is unforgiveness pleasing to God?" I found the answer to the question. There was a time in life when that really did not matter. I allowed my flesh and emotions to rule me. I know how I felt when someone had used foul language on me, being called everything but a child of God. I have been told, "You'll never be anything!" These were a couple of examples of what I experienced. Talk about your spirit being broken. My God! I cried many days seeking God for help. He heard my cries. I needed his guidance in changing. I learned about "forgiveness" as I studied the Bible. My faith walk with God continues to increase. Along with the knowledge comes wisdom. I am a work in progress.

As my relationship with God grew, so did my understanding of what forgiveness means. Colossians 1:14 tells me that, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Christ shed his blood for me. I have been redeemed. I had to let go of unforgiveness. I had to adhere to what the word of God was saying to me. It was time for me to become a doer of the word. I had to put my faith in action.

The more I learned, my heart was affected. I needed to forgive others. I thought about how important it was for me to let go of those emotions. They were detrimental to my health and spirit. A change came as the coldness of my heart melted away. This has been a monumental change for me. I could not hold on to those negative feelings any longer. If God was going to use me in this lifetime, I had to make a change. As I went through this process, I felt a change deep in my spirit. My prayer life increased. It opened the door for God to operate in my life (spiritually, personally and professionally).



In addition to me forgiving others, I did not want to hurt anyone.

We cannot be judgmental. God handles that. The only person we can change is ourselves. The more I study, the more I am challenged to work on me. I continue to gain a greater understanding of the word. The word says do not judge others. This scripture reminds me to check myself: "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged... The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?" Matthew 7:1-3 (NLT).

I had to realize who I was in Christ. I am a living vessel for God to use. "... you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" Romans 12:1-3 (NKJV). My mind has been renewed. My relationships have changed. I am no longer the same person. With the power of forgiveness, you are released from bondage. The door is open for love, peace, joy, happiness and much more to enter your life.

If we allow unforgiveness to remain in our heart, it will eat away at us. Forgiveness sets you free, but you must be willing to change your heart. It makes room for God's love and many blessings to flow. Allowing God to operate in my life, the changes came.

"I surrender all" is a huge declaration. God wants all of us. We are works in progress. We must watch how and what we say. Those words that we speak, when they flow unconsciously, can be damaging. There is life and death in the power of the tongue.

For me to walk in forgiveness, these are many of the lessons I had to learn. Life is never easy but walking with the Lord sustains me each time. I hope it does the same for you.





## NOW'S A GOOD TIME TO START SAVING FOR COLLEGE



With the beginning of an unconventional school year, parents around the country are faced with the daunting challenge of saving for their children's college education. The cost of college is rising, and many American households are already wrestling with their existing student debt.

Saving for college may seem like an overwhelming task, especially amid the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, but there are options available to help make the impossible become possible. One option that all parents and students should consider is a 529 college savings plan, which offers a tax advantage to encourage saving for future higher education costs. Tax-advantaged treatment applies to savings used for qualified education expenses. State tax treatment varies.

Saving for higher education is critical, even more so during times of uncertainty. A 529 college savings plan can be a valuable investment tool and offers an attractive gift option for family members who may also wish to contribute.

### How 529 plans work

With a 529 plan, the earnings are not taxed when you use the money for qualified education expenses. If withdrawals are used for purposes other than qualified education expenses, the earnings will be subject to a 10 percent federal tax penalty in addition to federal and, if applicable, state income tax. States take different approaches to the income tax treatment of withdrawals. For example, withdrawals for K-12 expenses may not be exempt from state tax in certain states. Here are a few more reasons to consider a 529 plan:

- \* Families can contribute up to \$15,000 (\$30,000 for married couples) annually, without gift-tax consequences. Under a special election, you can invest up to \$75,000 (\$150,000 for married couples) at one time by accelerating five years' worth of investments.

- \* 529 plans are flexible. In addition to standard college costs, qualified education expenses from 529 plans can be used to pay an elementary, secondary, private or religious school (for K-12 tuition up to a maximum of \$10,000 incurred during the taxable year per beneficiary), vocational school, community college, online educational courses and graduate programs.

- \* New law further expands uses for 529 plans. Under the SECURE Act, 529 plans can now be used to pay the principal or interest (up to a \$10,000 lifetime maximum) on any qualified student loans of a designated beneficiary or the designated beneficiary's sibling. For distributions made after Dec. 31, 2018, qualified education expenses include expenses for fees, books, supplies and equipment required for the participation of a designated beneficiary in certain apprenticeship programs.

- \* The account owner can change the beneficiary at any time without tax consequences if the new beneficiary is a member of the family.

- \* These accounts can be used by anyone looking to go back to school

to obtain a degree or seeking to take classes to learn a new skill. Adults can set up 529 plans to cover their own educational expenses.

- \* Anyone can contribute to a child's 529 savings plan - parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends could have the opportunity to gift a contribution that goes directly to education savings.

- \* There are also tax and estate planning benefits. Assets grow free from federal and, in many cases, state taxes if withdrawals are used to pay qualified education expenses. Your contributions are free of gift taxes and can help pare down one's estate and reduce potential estate taxes.

- \* For people living with disabilities, consider a tax-advantaged savings plan such as ABLEAmerica, which is designed to help individuals with disabilities and their families pay for qualified expenses. Tax-advantaged treatment applies to savings used for qualified disability expenses. State tax treatment varies.

### Saving early pays off

Millennials -many of whom are already impacted by their own student loan debt - are focused on saving for their children's future education. According to a survey issued by Capital Group, 31 percent of millennials report that not having enough money to pay for their children's education keeps them up at night. One in three millennials also ranked 529 college savings plans as an important benefit an employer could offer.

"Starting to save for college earlier truly pays off. Most families begin saving for college at least seven years before they expect to use the money. However, beneficiaries about to enter college (age 18 today) have typically saved less than one year's worth of estimated public college expenses. Investing early is critical to helping with minimizing the need for student loans and, ultimately, eliminating student loan debt," said Tipper.

### How to choose a 529 plan

Working with a financial professional can help with long-term financial planning. A financial professional can help families understand their choices and determine which investment approaches make sense.

CollegeAmerica®, the nation's largest 529 college savings plan. One is a strong option that offers low expenses and flexible, two easy-to-use investment options, including target date funds.

Most importantly, do your homework, and select the right 529 plan for your family--one that will pay off in the long run. Determine investment goals, and then find a plan with flexibility, low fees and low minimum investment requirements.

- 1 Largest by assets, according to the 1Q 2020 "529 College Savings Quarterly Update" from ISS Market Intelligence.

- 2 "529 College Savings Quarterly Fee Analysis," ISS Market Intelligence, 4Q 2019. CollegeAmerica's fees were in the top quartile of 30 and 18 plans based on the average annual asset-based fees for national advisor-sold and fee-based advisor-sold 529 plans, respectively.

Investments are not FDIC-insured, nor are they deposits of or guaranteed by a bank or any other entity, so they may lose value.

Investors should carefully consider investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses. This and other important information are contained in the fund prospectus, summary prospectus, CollegeAmerica Program Description and ABLEAmerica Program Description, which can be obtained from a financial professional and should be read carefully before investing. CollegeAmerica and ABLEAmerica are distributed by American Funds Distributors, Inc. and sold through unaffiliated intermediaries.



# CLAFLIN HURDLES COVID-19 DISRUPTION

Submitted by Joseph C. Cotton, Director of Public Relations, Office of Communications & Marketing



Reynolda Brown

## ORANGEBURG-Claflin

University's upward trajectory as a premier liberal arts institution has been the impetus for prestigious rankings by respected authorities in higher education and nationally-recognized publications. The university's impressive reputation also includes its focus on student success, which may explain why despite the disruption caused by COVID-19, the total of freshman students entering Clafin for the 2020-21 academic year is 9.3 percentage points higher than last year. Clafin was the school of choice for 564 talented new scholars seeking a rigorous

academic experience that will prepare them to become globally-engaged visionary leaders.

"Since March, when our lives and every aspect of culture and society were altered by COVID-19, Clafin administrators, faculty and staff have been resolute and steadfast in our commitment to sustained academic excellence and exemplary customer service to our students and our constituents and stakeholders," said Clafin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack. "This has been an arduous effort, and we have made adjustments, as needed, along the way. But we remain dedicated to fostering a transformative educational, cultural and spiritual environment at Clafin that promotes global engagement and visionary leadership. Mr. Reynolda Brown and the Office of Enrollment Management staff deserve special acknowledgement for bringing some of the nation's and the world's best and brightest young minds into the Clafin family."

Clafin's Class of 2024 comprises high-achieving scholars from 17 states, 43 of South Carolina's 47 counties and three international countries. The class also has 131 State of South Carolina Hope and Life Scholars, 49 Rudolph Canzater Scholars and three Presidential Scholars who will join 40 other freshmen as members of the Alice Carson Tisdale Honors College. The class has a combined 3.64 grade point average.

"I was a bit worried initially," said Brown, who in September 2019 was appointed interim vice president of enrollment management at Clafin. Brown looked back to March when the global pandemic's path of disruption was gaining momentum, and the term "social distancing" was becoming both a life-saving measure and a mainstream lexicon. "The busiest period for college recruiters begins in March and continues through the summer months," Brown said. "This is when we conduct most of our campus tours with individual students, student groups and parents."

However, state and municipal governments were closing businesses and prohibiting large gatherings to mitigate the potential spread of the virus. That prompted Warmack to organize a committee of campus administrators and faculty to analyze and review current trends in student recruitment. From their discussions, the committee concluded that effective student engagement could continue by utilizing interactive social media platforms and other technologies. Among Clafin's initial strategies was the production of a new virtual tour to showcase one of its vital recruiting assets – the university's historic and picturesque campus. Clafin also expanded its use of Zoom and invested in a new text messaging system. Both were instrumental in helping his recruiters overcome a major hurdle – not being able to meet in-person with students and their families due to COVID-19.

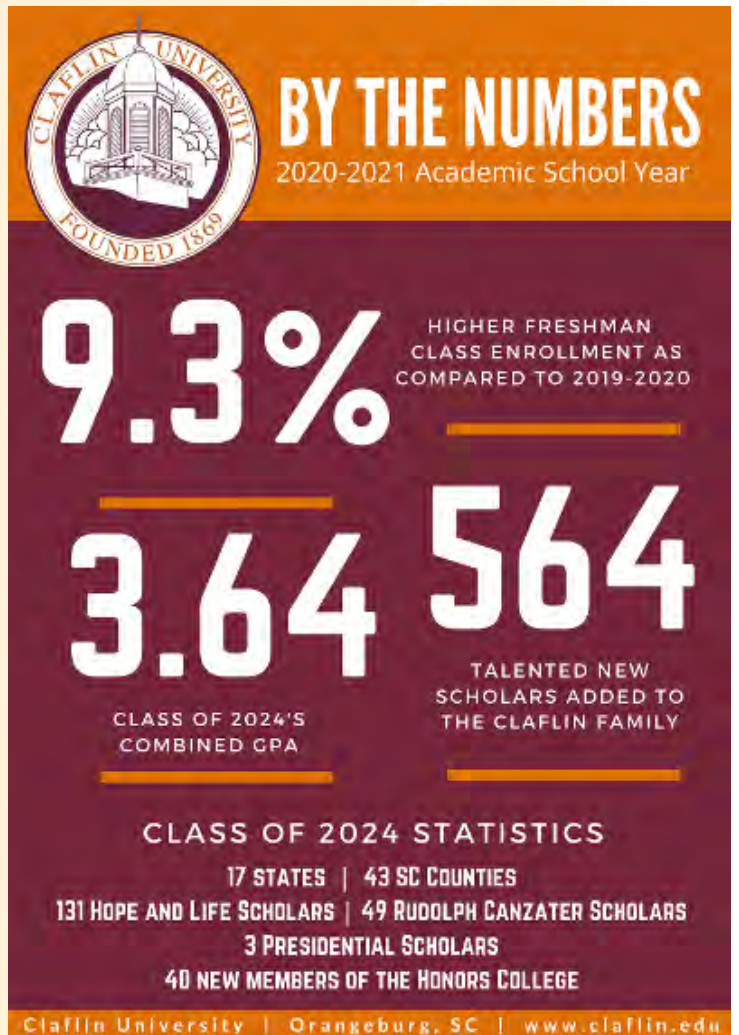
"We were forced to implement all of our recruitment strategies – related to student engagement – exclusively in the digital space," said Brown whose career in enrollment management in higher education spans 25 years. "We discovered that the texting platform was the most effective method of reaching our students. We saw a 99 percent rate of response to our text messages compared to a 30 percent response rate to our emails."

Brown said that Warmack, cabinet members, academic deans and financial aid administrators participated in Town Hall Zoom Meetings with parents and students, which expanded the university's "virtual personal touch."

"Clafin University has a very strong brand throughout South Carolina and its neighboring states," Brown said. "I heard several times how much students were looking forward to the 'Black Ivy League Experience' at Clafin. We would have enrolled at least 300 more students if not for our COVID-19 guidance, which will reduce on-campus housing."

Brown admitted that the virus has dramatically changed recruiting at Clafin and other colleges and universities. However, the university's nimble response to the crisis, including the use of emerging technology, provided Clafin an opportunity to recalibrate several processes that align with the future of higher education.

"In less than a year, Clafin transitioned from a traditional classroom and online environment to hybrid, online and digital teaching and learning platforms," Brown said. "The real credit goes to our leadership and the collective efforts of every department and program at Clafin. We took charge of the moment and turned a crisis into a success story that elevated every aspect of the university."





# CLAFLIN IN TOP 10 HBCUs & REGIONAL COLLEGES IN SOUTH

Submitted by Clafin University Office of Communications & Marketing



Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack

**ORANGEBURG**-Clafin University's rigorous, student-focused academic programs and a faculty comprised of world-class scholars contributed to U.S. News and World Report ranking Clafin ninth in its 2021 list of the nation's top historically black colleges/universities (HBCUs). Clafin has earned a place among the Top 10 HBCUs in the publication's prestigious ranking for 10 consecutive years.

U.S. News and World Report also ranked Clafin University ninth overall among the schools in the Best Regional Colleges in the South rankings. These are institutions that focus on undergraduate education but grant fewer than half their degrees in liberal arts disciplines. Regional Colleges rankings are split into four regions: North, South, Midwest and West.

"Clafin's rankings by U.S. News and World Report affirms the University's emergence as one of the nation's premier institutions of higher education," said Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack, president of Clafin University. "We are gratified by the national attention the University receives from this coveted ranking. However, our goal is to be consistently recognized as one of the nation's best institutions among all colleges and universities."

HBCUs listed in U.S. News and World Report are compared only with each other for these rankings. In order to be on the list, a school must be currently designated by the U.S. Department of Education as an HBCU. To qualify for U.S. News rankings, an HBCU also must be an undergraduate baccalaureate-granting institution that enrolls primarily first-year, first-time students and must be a school that is part of the 2021 Best colleges rankings.

In total, 79 HBCUs were eligible to be included on the list. Seventy-

seven of those were ranked, and two were unranked. Among the 77 ranked HBCUs, schools that place in the top three-fourths display their individual ranks. The remaining ranked schools display the bottom quartile numerical ranking range and are listed alphabetically.

As a part of the Best Regional Colleges in the South ranking, Clafin University is also listed as number 14 in the category of Top Performers on Social Mobility. Clafin was ranked due to its success in advancing social mobility by enrolling and graduating large proportions of disadvantaged students awarded with Pell Grants. Most of these federal grants are awarded to students whose adjusted gross family incomes are under \$50,000.

Founded in 1869, Clafin's proud legacy of academic excellence and for producing globally-engaged visionary leaders spans more than 150 years. Clafin is South Carolina's oldest HBCU and the state's first institution of higher education to provide educational opportunities to all students regardless of gender, race, religion or ethnic origin.

Clafin University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate and master's degrees. The University is also listed by the University Senate General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church.

Specific programs at the University are also accredited or approved by the following bodies:

- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)
- South Carolina State Board of Education
- Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
- National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)
- American Chemical Society (ACS)
- Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET)

To view Clafin University's rankings with U.S. News and World Report, visit <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/clafin-university-3424>.

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# ON MARION SCHOOLS RECRUITING & RETAINING NEW TEACHERS Submitted by Dr. Kandace Bethea



*Dr. Kandace Bethea, Superintendent*

**MARION**—In the last five years, school districts across the United States have faced major challenges when recruiting and retaining teachers. One challenge for attracting particularly new teachers to small, rural areas—like the one I lead in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina—is being able to find affordable housing.

Do you remember the days of old when school districts ran their own teacherage? In the 19th and 20th centuries, it was common for schools

and districts to provide housing accommodations for their educators. In our district, Marion County School District (MCSD), we have come back to those days. This year, we have responded to this need through the purchase of a three-unit apartment building called “The DEN: Dedicated Educator’s Nest.” The official ribbon cutting for this project was held in August.

For the last few years, we have observed the lack of available rental properties as an increasing need in our community, and we immediately jumped on the opportunity launch The DEN when the funding and the property became available a few months ago.

Made possible through funding from the Rural Teacher Recruiting Initiative, which is a funded by the State of South Carolina proviso, we are excited to be able to offer low-rent housing to three of our new teachers for the 2020-21 school year. This housing option provides affordable homes for our newest teachers and an opportunity to become active members in our community more quickly and smoothly.

The three apartments are located in the town of Marion and

honor the mascots in all three of the district’s attendance zones: The Fox’s Den, The Auctioneer’s Den and the Warrior’s Den. The newly renovated flats offer a lean modern look with an average square footage of 600-700 feet.

Teacher housing like Marion’s DEN is following a popular trend among school districts—particularly in locations where housing is in short supply or cost of living is expensive. In addition to purchasing shared units on district-owned property for teachers and paraprofessionals, districts are partnering with their cities and counties to provide mortgage assistance and home buying incentives to teachers in districts like Washington, DC, Arizona and California in order to attract and keep them in their schools.

In Marion County, we are relentlessly focused on finding creative solutions in order to make sure our students have what they need to be successful—and at the top of our list that means finding, supporting and investing in the best teachers.

To learn more about Marion County’s teacher recruitment efforts, including The DEN, visit <http://www.marion.k12.sc.us/apply>.



*The Den*



*A look inside the Dedicated Educator’s Nest*

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## FDTC OFFERS FREE MOBILE HOTSPOTS TO ITS ONLINE STUDENTS Articles submitted by FDTC



Library staff member, Angelisa Hickman, holds a brand new MiFi that will be distributed to a FDTC student.

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) has loaned nearly 300 MiFi routers to its students in an effort to make higher education more accessible during the COVID-19 pandemic. These pocket-sized routers, also known as mobile hotspots, allow students with devices, such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets to connect to FDTC's network. MiFi routers allow students the ability to complete their coursework while following COVID-19 social distancing

protocols.

"For many of our students, having access to free MiFi's is a real game changer," vice president of Academic Affairs, Dr. Marc David, said. "Not only does it help increase student success, but it also helps close the digital divide in the Pee Dee region."

FDTC's effort is part of the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff's (ORS) Online Learning Initiative to provide more learning opportunities to students whose higher education experience is being hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The Internet is a gateway to education, knowledge [and] opportunity and has changed the way students learn, seek employment and engage with their communities in the 21st century," said librarian, Linda Coe. "Internet access is critical to our student's educational success, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. The library is vital for student engagement and success and welcomes the opportunity to partner with IT and the FDTC Online Learning Initiative."

FDTC student, Tina McKenzie thought she was going to have to drop out of college until she found out about the free mobile hotspot. "I filled the application forms out, and within a few days was notified that I was approved and to come pick it up," McKenzie said. "This device has helped me so much in just the one week I have had it. I have been able to stay on top of my classes, review my instructor's

lectures and so much more. Being able to login and do assignments from home and after work has drastically improved my thoughts and determination to be successful. The programs that FDTC has been able to offer to me and all other students are truly heaven sent."

FDTC nursing student, Graham McKain says the MiFi is saving her money because she didn't have to invest in additional technology to complete her coursework. "Before the pandemic, I was able to get by with just my phone's data plan, but now that class has gone online, my data usage has increased to the point where it's hard to afford," McKain said. "Thank you so much for doing this for us!"

Student, Monica Harper is overjoyed with her MiFi. Harper said, "I just want to thank you so much for this hotspot. It has literally saved me! I was using someone else's Internet, and now I don't have to!"

FDTC nursing student, Katherine MacDonald said, "I would like to extend a big thank you to those involved in the mobile hotspot availability. They are a big help to furthering my education!"

Student, Fredric Brown says that access to the MiFi router gave him more confidence in completing his higher education. "It allows me to continue my education and while I'm deployed with the National Guard," Brown said. "I now feel more confident about obtaining my degree. Thank you, FDTC!"

FDTC's Wellman Incorporated Library that is located in the 200 Building on the Main Campus has nearly 350 MiFi units overall to loan. All students have to do is complete paperwork, and then if they are approved, they can visit the library and pick up a MiFi router.

For more information about the MiFi program at FDTC, contact Linda Coe by emailing [linda.coe@fdtc.edu](mailto:linda.coe@fdtc.edu) or calling her at 843-661-8034.

FDTC began its fall semester on Aug. 24 and is delivering its courses through four formats: 100 percent online, synchronous online, face-to-face and a hybrid format.

You can learn more about FDTC and its course offerings by contacting the Office of Admissions at 843-661-8289 or visiting [www.fdtc.edu](http://www.fdtc.edu).

## FDTC TO DELIVER FALL INSTRUCTION IN FOUR FORMATS



The 500 Building at FDTC (Photo Credit: Benton Henry Photography)

Due to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) is offering its instruction through four delivery formats during the 2020 fall semester. FDTC is offering 100 percent online, synchronous online, face-to-face and hybrid courses.

Many courses in the fall are 100 percent online. If a course is, students will log into an electronic device twice a week on their own time so they will not miss any assignments. Attendance will be based on completion of assignments, so logging in weekly will be very important. Students will not be required to come to campus for a 100 percent online course.

Some courses are also 100 percent online, but they are synchronous online courses. Synchronous means that students will log into the course weekly on an electronic device at the same day and time for a live video conferencing lecture (virtually). All assignments will be

online, and if a student does not attend the weekly scheduled video conferences, they will be marked absent. Students will not be required to come to campus for a synchronous online course.

Face-to-face courses meet on campus every week at a regular day and time. Students, faculty and staff will practice CDC safety guidelines while on campus. Because of COVID-19, many of these courses will have flexibility with attendance. If a student is unable to physically come to class on the day and time a face-to-face course is offered, he or she will be able to attend the class by logging into a video conference lecture (virtually) from an electronic device, but the student will have to log in at the day and time the class is being offered to be marked present.

FDTC is also offering hybrid courses, which are a combination of face-to-face and online. Some of the course information will be delivered online, and some will be delivered face-to-face. If a student is taking a technical or health science course that is labeled hybrid, he or she will have to come to campus for their clinical or lab sessions. If a hybrid course is not a technical or health science course, students will be able to log into the course to attend the face-to-face part of the class on their electronic device (virtually), but they will have to log in at the day and time the course is offered to be marked present.

It's not too late to register for 2nd 7-week classes that begin on Oct. 19. Students need to set up an appointment with their academic advisor. For more information, please contact the Office of Admissions by emailing [Admissions@fdtc.edu](mailto:Admissions@fdtc.edu) or calling 843-661-8289.

Registration for the 2021 spring semester will begin on Oct. 26.





# Florence-Darlington Technical College



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# FIRST STEPS RECEIVES GRANT TO EXPAND PROGRAM

*Submitted by Spencer Scott, Executive Director*



**MARION** – Marion County First Steps has received \$27,500 in federal funds to expand its parenting program by means of two 900-hour AmeriCorps positions and program support for HIPPY, a 30-week early

learning and pre-kindergarten readiness opportunity designed for two- to five-year-olds. South Carolina First Steps awarded the grant competitively as part of a \$1 million effort to meet the changing needs of young children and families in South Carolina.

“These grant awards come at a critical time for young children and families in our state,” said South Carolina First Steps Executive Director Georgia Mjartan. “We know that access to child care is limited, social networks are strained, and parents are overwhelmed.”

“Our local partnerships have the training and experience to support parents where they are, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to succeed in being their child’s first and best teacher,” said Mjartan. “We are pleased to award these grants, knowing that they will have a direct and positive impact on young children and the families who care for them.”

Funding for the Family Services Expansion Grant comes from Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5), a federal grant awarded to South Carolina by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families.

In addition, Marion County First Steps will expand its services for families through a new AmeriCorps service program, thanks to funding and support from South Carolina First Steps. The state’s early childhood agency awarded the AmeriCorps grant competitively as part of a new effort to increase family support services and community outreach through national service.

“Recruiting a diverse cadre of AmeriCorps members allow us to expand access to services for young children and families, and do so in a way that reflects the diversity of our state and builds on the skills, knowledge, and experiences that exist within the communities we serve,” said South Carolina First Steps Executive Director Georgia Mjartan.

The grant award provides Marion County First Steps with the

funding and support to recruit and deploy two AmeriCorps service member(s). The positions are for a 10-month term of service beginning Oct. 1. An online application is available at [scfirststeps.org/ameriCorps](http://scfirststeps.org/ameriCorps).

The First Steps AmeriCorps program is funded by a three-year grant from the United Way Association of South Carolina.

## **ABOUT SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS**

Marion County First Steps is one of 46 local First Steps partnerships that collectively served 28,427 children across the state last year.

South Carolina First Steps is both a nonprofit and state agency and is the only statewide, dedicated comprehensive early childhood agency in South Carolina focused on getting children ages birth through five ready for school and life success.

Learn more about South Carolina First Steps and its local partnerships at [SCFIRSTSTEPS.ORG](http://SCFIRSTSTEPS.ORG).

## **ABOUT AMERICORPS**

AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency for volunteering, service and civic engagement. CNCS engages millions of Americans in citizen service through its AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs and leads the nation’s volunteer and service efforts. For more information, visit [NATIONALSERVICE.ORG](http://NATIONALSERVICE.ORG)



# MARION FIRST STEPS OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS

*Submitted by Marion County First Steps*

Marion County First Steps is currently offering 28 slots for childcare scholarships. The scholarships can be used in any childcare center that has a “B” or higher according to ABC Quality standards. Marion County First Steps, led by Executive Director Spencer R. Scott, focuses on ensuring that children residing in Marion County are well-equipped to be successful learners as they enter school and to alleviate the costs of childcare for working families in low-income households. Programs in Marion County First Steps include the Literacy Program with Literacy Coordinator Beryl Collington, Child Care Quality Enhancement, Child Care Training and the Child Care Scholarship program.

In just the 2019 fiscal year alone, Marion County First Steps

served 932 children between birth to age five. Seven childcare facilities and 18 families received childcare scholarships. The Child Care Quality Enhancement Program provided technical assistance to 34 childcare providers in three facilities, totaling 56.5 hours.

Parents interested in participating in the Child Care Scholarship program will need to fill out a pre-application to see if they meet scholarship requirements. Those who would like to apply can call 843-629-0202 to schedule an appointment.

Marion County First Steps is also currently looking for board members who are business owners and healthcare providers, as well as those in faith-based communities. People interested in serving as a board member can call 843-629-0202.





# MCDANIEL NAMED INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT Submitted by Lee County School District



*Bernard McDaniel*

**BISHOPVILLE**-Lee County School District recently announced the retirement of Superintendent Dr. Wanda Andrews effective Dec. 1. At the annual board retreat held on Sept. 19, the Lee County School District Board of Trustees named current Executive Director of Instruction Bernard McDaniel, Sr. as the interim superintendent while a search for a new superintendent is being conducted.

McDaniel has been employed in Lee County School District for six and a half years, where he has served in various capacities. In his current role, he provides oversight for the Office of Instruction, Office of Special Services and Federal and State Grants. He has been instrumental in writing several grants, providing oversight and management for three 21st Century Community Learning Centers after school programs. He also organized and provided leadership for Project LEAD Summer Camps for the past five years.

This 40-year experienced educator has served as a teacher, coach, athletic director, elementary school principal, middle school principal, high school principal and district level administrator. Schools where he served as principal were recognized by the state for high levels of student achievement and growth as identified by the Palmetto Gold and other award title designations. One school where McDaniel served was also the recipient of the Red-Carpet Award by the State Department of Education.

Personal accolades include having been named South Carolina's 2002 Secondary Principal of the Year; president and vice president of the South Carolina Association of School Administrators (SCASA) Secondary Principals' Division; 15-year member of the South Carolina

High School League's Executive Committee; member and first South Carolinian to have served on the board of directors of the National Federation of State High Schools Association (NFHS); and 12-year member of SCASA's Summer Leadership Institute Planning Committee. He holds certification from the South Department of Education in the following areas: teaching, elementary/secondary principalship, elementary/secondary supervision and the superintendency.

McDaniel conveyed to the board that he is committed to the students in Lee County School District and will work passionately to ensure that all students have the opportunity for success. "I am passionate about the work of an administrator, and I am excited and truly honored about the opportunity to continue the great work that has been established under the leadership of Dr. Wanda Andrews with the support of the Lee County School Board," said McDaniel.

Andrews stated, "I would like to congratulate my colleague, Bernard McDaniel, as he moves into the new role of interim superintendent for the district. I am confident in his ability to lead, and I know he will do an outstanding job. He is first and foremost a person of good character: honest, loyal, compassionate, caring, kind and humble. During his tenure in Lee County, he has demonstrated excellent leadership skills, focused on this learning community where students come first! I am excited for our district and especially for Mr. McDaniel!"



## Residents of Lee County, S.C.



**Contact:**

Fredrica Brailsford @ 803.484.5327 or [brailsfordf@lee.k12.sc.us](mailto:brailsfordf@lee.k12.sc.us)

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## PERRITT NAMED 2020 COCA-COLA LEADER OF PROMISE SCHOLAR Articles submitted by HGTC



*Kristy Perritt*

CONWAY-Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) student, Kristy Perritt, is one of 207 Phi Theta Kappa members named a 2020 Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholar and will receive a \$1,000 scholarship. She is pursuing an associate in arts degree in education and plans to transfer to Coastal Carolina University to earn a master's degree in special education.

"Our PTK Chapter consistently demonstrates outstanding accomplishments in grooming leaders," said Dr. Marilyn M. Fore, HGTC president. "HGTC is most proud of Kristy Perritt for her community service and leadership role in our program."

The Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholarship Program helps new Phi Theta Kappa members defray educational expenses while enrolled in associate degree programs. Scholars are encouraged to assume leadership roles by participating in Society programs and are selected based on scholastic achievement, community service and leadership potential. Nearly 700 applications were received.

"I want to thank the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation and express my appreciation for allocating funds as scholarships for promising future leaders," said Kristy Perritt, HGTC student and 2020 Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise scholar.

A total of \$207,000 is awarded through the Leaders of Promise Scholarship Program. The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation provides \$200,000 in funding for the scholarships, with \$25,000 set aside for members who are veterans or active members of the United States military. The remaining amount is supported by donations to the Phi Theta Kappa Foundation and provides seven Global Leaders of Promise Scholarships, earmarked for international students.

"The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation has a long history of providing financial assistance to outstanding students at community colleges," said Jane Hale Hopkins, president of the Coca-Cola Scholars

Foundation. "We are proud to partner with Phi Theta Kappa to make it possible for more deserving students to achieve their educational goals and support tomorrow's leaders of the global community."

The funds provided by the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation not only aid college completion, but also give students the opportunity to engage in Society programs and develop leadership skills to become future leaders in their communities.

"Research shows that Phi Theta Kappa members are four times more likely to complete a college degree than their peers," said Dr. Monica Marlowe, executive director of the Phi Theta Kappa Foundation. "The Leaders of Promise Scholarships recognize students for what they have achieved already and assure that financial need isn't an obstacle to achieving their academic goals."

Phi Theta Kappa is the premier honor society recognizing the academic achievement of students at associate degree-granting colleges and helping them to grow as scholars and leaders. The Society is made up of more than 3.5 million members and nearly 1,300 chapters in 11 nations, with approximately 240,000 active members in the nation's colleges. Learn more at [ptk.org](http://ptk.org).

Fall classes at HGTC begin Aug. 24, and financial aid and scholarships are readily available. To apply, call 843-347-3186, or visit [www.hgtc.edu](http://www.hgtc.edu).

### About HGTC

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.

For additional information about HGTC, call 843-347-3186. [www.hgtc.edu](http://www.hgtc.edu) | Twitter: [gohgtc](https://twitter.com/gohgtc) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/gohgtc](https://www.facebook.com/gohgtc)

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS FOR SCWINS SCHOLARSHIPS



*Raven Bunton, Criminal Justice major and SCWINS Scholarship recipient*

CONWAY-Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is proud to announce additional eligible programs for the South Carolina Workforce Industry Needs Scholarship (SCWINS). The State Board recently approved three new areas for eligibility including criminal justice, early care and education and human services. These programs are effective for the fall 2020 semester.

SCWINS is a statewide technical college scholarship program designed to address workforce shortages in South Carolina. The scholarship supplements Lottery Tuition Assistance to help cover any tuition and mandatory fees left after applying all other scholarships or grants.

Raven Bunton, a criminal justice major at HGTC, was one of the recipients of SCWINS and expressed the importance of receiving the scholarship this year. "Without this scholarship, I would be limited on the number of classes I could take each semester. Being awarded this scholarship is a huge benefit, especially for the fall semester. It's helping me take an extra step and an extra class to get closer to my career goal. The scholarship is also helping me purchase books and supplies," Bunton explained.

Recipients will receive \$100 per credit hour after applying all other scholarships or grants. The scholarship may cover the cost of tuition and mandatory fees. Additionally, an up to \$300 book allowance is applied to a SCWINS recipient's account who is majoring in one



of the critical workforce area. The maximum award amount per academic year is \$2,500, which includes a \$300 book allowance. Also, SCWINS is available to high school students who are taking classes as part of the Dual Enrollment/PACE program and meet one of the above criteria.

"My advice to others would be to apply for as many scholarships as you can to achieve a goal," Bunton continued. "When I started researching colleges, Horry-Georgetown Technical College was my choice and the best option for me. If you need help, they are there for you online and in-person. The professors make sure you understand each assignment and assist you when needed."

More information about SCWINS can be found on the HGTC website.

"HGTC wishes Raven Bunton the best in the remaining years as a criminal justice student," said Jeffrey Scott, HGTC assistant chair and professor of the Criminal Justice program. "She is an excellent student, and we are looking forward to seeing her reach her goals and dreams to become a patrol officer and eventually a canine officer in the future."

Fall classes at HGTC began Aug. 24, and financial aid and scholarships are still available. Flex start classes began Sept. 14. To apply, call 843-347-3186, or visit [www.hgtc.edu](http://www.hgtc.edu).



# HGTC RECEIVES CULINARY ARTS SILVER LEED AWARD Submitted by Nicole Hyman, Public Relations Director



(left to right) Kathleen Hassett, HGTC assistant chair/instructor at ICI; Harold Hawley, HGTC vice president for Finance & Administration; Joe Bonaparte, HGTC executive director at ICI; Dianna Cecala, HGTC procurement manager; Dr. Marilyn Murph Fore, HGTC president; Derrick Mazingo, Mazingo+Wallace Architects senior partner; Gerald Wallace, Mazingo+Wallace Architects senior partner; Jessie Daniels, Mazingo+Wallace Architects, project coordinator; and Greg Duckworth, Environmental Concepts founder & landscape architect

**MYRTLE BEACH** – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) proudly received the Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Award for the International Culinary Institute (ICI) of Myrtle Beach. The award was presented on behalf of the US Green Building Council for achieving the silver certification under the LEED 2009 New Construction and Major Renovations rating system.

“We are very pleased to recognize the HGTC International Culinary Institute of Myrtle Beach on this impressive achievement in appreciation of HGTC’s participation in LEED,” said Mahesh Ramanujam, president & CEO, US Green Building Council and Green Business Certification, Inc. “We congratulate ICI on earning the LEED certification and thank HGTC for its commitment to our common goal of building a healthy, sustainable future.”

“I’m proud of this accomplishment and the way HGTC demonstrates

leadership in transforming the building industry,” said Dr. Marilyn Murph Fore, HGTC president. “We are teaching students at ICI social responsibility and how to turn a passion for food into a passion for sustainability.”

The HGTC International Culinary Institute located at 920 Crabtree Lane in Myrtle Beach offers associate degrees in culinary arts technology and baking and pastry arts, as well as certificates in kitchen and food preparation techniques and professional cooking.

“We have been committed to sustainability from the beginning. Having this LEED certification identifies the ICI as a showcase example of sustainability and signifies our success in reaching that goal,” said Joe Bonaparte, executive director for the ICI.

The doors opened to the \$15 million state-of-the-art facility in 2017 on the Grand Strand Campus. The

building is a world-class center for culinary education that allows HGTC to serve hundreds of students annually. ICI features the latest in cooking technology and equipment including two teaching kitchens, two baking labs, a bake shop, a demonstration kitchen, a chef’s dining room, a teaching dining room with conditioned wine storage, a production kitchen with a bar, exposed cooking suite and hearth oven, an outdoor BBQ and dining area, a greenhouse, administrative spaces with eight offices, a conference room, an adjunct area and central storage for dry storage and walk-in coolers/freezer.

To find out more about HGTC programs or the HGTC International Culinary Institute of Myrtle Beach, visit the HGTC website.



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[www.HGTC.edu/HR](http://www.HGTC.edu/HR)



# FMU AGAIN RECOGNIZED AS GREAT COLLEGE TO WORK FOR Articles submitted by FMU



Francis Marion University (FMU) has been recognized as one of the Great Colleges to Work For® Honor Roll School for an eighth straight year. The recognition is based on a survey of FMU employees conducted by Modern Think, a leading

strategic organizational development and management consulting firm that focuses on workplace excellence. The honor signals that FMU continues to maintain one of the finest workplace environments in the nation. Just a comparative handful of schools nationwide were recognized this year.

Complete Great Colleges rankings were published as part of The Chronicle for Higher Education's 10th annual Academic Workplace Special Issue in September. They are available on Modern Think's Great Colleges website at <https://greatcollegesprogram.com/list/>.

FMU is one of just 79 four-year colleges and universities in the nation recognized by Modern Think's survey and one of only 42 recognized as an Honor Roll school. It is only one of two South Carolina institutions recognized as an Honor Roll institution for 2020.

The survey was administered to faculty and staff in universities across the country and was compiled independently by Modern Think. Employees were selected randomly for the survey, which covers 11 different areas of work life.

FMU's Honor Roll designation means it was recognized by Modern Think as one of the highest achievers in the category of four-year institutions with enrollments between 3,000 and 9,999 students. FMU has been recognized as an Honor Roll school every year it's been on the list.

Dr. Fred Carter, FMU's president, says the continued recognition is something affirms the university's efforts to construct a welcoming and

inclusive environment. "The staff and faculty at FMU are unique in their devotion to the university and their pursuit of creating a great atmosphere," Carter says. "Their effort is what makes FMU a 'Great College to Work For' and a truly great college in every regard."

FMU's employees reported high satisfaction in Collaborative Governance; Compensation and Benefits; Confidence in Senior Leadership; Facilities, Workspace and Security; Job Satisfaction; Professional and Career Development Programs; Respect and Appreciation; Supervisor and Department Chair Relationship; Teaching Environment; Tenure Clarity and Process; and Work and Life Balance.

The survey results are based on a two-part assessment process: an institutional questionnaire that captured employment data and workplace policies from each institution and a survey administered to faculty, administrators and professional support staff. The primary factor in deciding whether an institution receives recognition is the employee feedback.

## FMU RECOGNIZES STAFF MEMBERS



Janet McLeod

Carlton Sellers

Francis Marion University (FMU) celebrated some of its longest serving staff members prior to the start of the fall 2020 semester. Two employees, Janet McLeod and Carlton Sellers, were recognized for serving 40 years with FMU.

Four employees were recognized for 30 years of service. They were H. Richard Thomas, Bonnie Barr, H. Teresa McDuffie and Sammie Chandler. Angela Bessenger was recognized for 20 years of service with the university.

Nine employees were recognized for 10 years of service. They were April Johnson, Laura Rhoads, Matthew Sanderson, Anthony Lester, Steven Swedo, Coretta Morris, Gladys Carter, Ashley Owens and Susan Orrico.

# CHANGE LIVES, CHANGE FAMILIES, CHANGE THE WORLD.

Francis Marion University's First Generation Fund helps students who are the first in their family to attend college realize that great American educational dream.

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Make your gift at [www.Give2FMU.com](http://www.Give2FMU.com) and write, "I'd like a book!" in the comments area.







*Virtus Academy of South Carolina held a ribbon cutting to celebrate the opening of its new facility with the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce. Cutting the ribbon is Bill Pickle, chairman of the board, and the Williams family, who raised the most money during a fundraiser to purchase flagpoles for the school. Virtus Academy students and their families raised more than \$10,000.*

On Sept. 22, Virtus Academy of South Carolina held the ribbon cutting for its new facility. Speakers at the event included Bill Pickle (chairman of the Virtus board of directors), Vamshi Rudrapati (director of the Charter Institute at Erskine) and Brittany Hamilton (interim principal at Virtus Academy). The Williams family accompanied Pickle in cutting the ribbon. The Williams family was the winner of a fundraising contest that raised over \$10,000 to install flagpoles at the new facility.

Virtus Academy moved into its new, permanent facility at 2407 Pisgah Road, Florence, S.C. 29501, in August. They were previously housed in a temporary facility for the first two years of the school's journey. The new facility has a dance studio to accommodate the addition of dance to their related arts program. It also has a dedicated Science Lab that all students will be visiting weekly.

The new facility opened in time for students' return for the fall of the 2020/21 school year. On Sept. 13, the Virtus board of directors voted unanimously to allow students to return to the school for traditional learning five days a week starting Sept. 28. They will also

be opening their Vista After Care. The school qualified for free lunch and breakfast for all students through the end of December.

Virtus Academy is still taking applications for our waiting list for the 2020/21 school year. They have immediate openings for our 7th grade.

A grand opening is being planned for later in October for parents, students and other stakeholders to see the new facility.

Virtus Academy of SC is a free, public charter school that opened in 2018. With a focus on PBL integration in science and social studies, Virtus supports parent-choice for more personalized education for their children. The goal of Virtus Academy is to advance student achievement by preparing students for civic and career success through rigorous academics, leadership development and project-based learning. In addition to the new facility, they are also offering 7th grade and plan to add a new grade level each year moving forward.



# GET IN THE Game



Virtus Academy of South Carolina is still taking applications for our waiting list for the 2020/21 school year. We have openings in our 7th grade class. We are currently a K-7th grade school, adding a new grade each year. Our brand new facility is located at 2407 Pisgah Road, Florence, SC 29501.



Visit our website:  
[www.virtusacademysc.org](http://www.virtusacademysc.org)

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**GENERATIONS OF GIVING TO THE COMMUNITY** *Submitted by Ruiz Foods*



2019 Scholarship recipients from Darlington High School with Ruiz Foods Team Member Jim Bowman (far right)

“Giving back to our community is a part of the legacy created by my dad, Fred, and my grandfather, Louis...co-founders of Ruiz Foods,” said Matt Ruiz, director of Corporate & Community Relations and a member of the third generation of the Ruiz family. “Our focus has always been on children and education, and we’re proud to say that many of our Team Members love to be involved.”

Ruiz Foods’ first commitment to the Florence community occurred the day it held the grand opening announcement, sharing how excited the company was to become a part of this vibrant community. “That is the day my sister, Chairman Kim Ruiz Beck, announced a \$10,000 gift to McLeod Children’s Hospital,” adds Matt Ruiz.

A few years later, when Ruiz Foods announced the expansion that would double its original size, Chairman Kim Ruiz Beck would make another gift announcement to McLeod Children’s Hospital. On behalf of Ruiz Foods, the Ruiz family and Ruiz Team Members, the gift was \$100,000.

And Ruiz Foods gives in other ways too. “An example,” shared Pete Mayadag, Ruiz Foods Florence director of operations, “is our annual ‘Pink Out’ day scheduled during the month of October. Team Members are encouraged to wear pink on a designated day. For each Florence Team Member who wears pink, Ruiz Foods donates to the McLeod Center for Cancer Treatment and Research.”

Since 2015, the Ruiz Foods facility in Florence has raised over \$9700 for “Pink Out” with 2020 monies not yet determined as of the date of this publication.

Another example of support for the Florence community is through Ruiz 4 Kids, the non-profit organization that is organized and managed by Ruiz Foods Team Members. Each year, Ruiz 4 Kids sponsors the Annual Louis F. Ruiz Golf Tournament. Honoring co-founder Louis F. Ruiz, the proceeds from the tournament are awarded in the form of



Tommy Pruitt, Maria Rodriguez, Brenda Sanquintin, Renee Robison, Tammy Cantey, Tine Rogers, Stacey Daniel, Dana Marlowe and Pete Mayadag with no-sew blankets for House for Hope

scholarships to graduating high school seniors and junior college transfer students in the communities where Ruiz Team Members live and work.

And even though the 2020 Annual Louis F. Ruiz Golf Tournament was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, sponsors—Ruiz Foods vendors and suppliers—donated anyway, making it possible for Ruiz 4 Kids to award 50 Florence area high school graduates each a \$1000 scholarship.

“This is one of my most favorite annual projects to be involved in,” explains Krista Meekins, Ruiz 4 Kids Florence board of director’s member.

“It’s not only exciting to be a part of a program that has grown over the years, but to read the applications submitted—applications that talk about accomplishments and dreams for the future—it’s incredibly exciting to be a part of the process and to award scholarships that you know will help young people as they work hard to achieve their goals and dreams.”

Since its inception in Florence, the Ruiz 4 Kids Scholarship Program has grown tremendously. The first year—2015—Ruiz 4 Kids awarded one scholarship to a graduating high school senior in Florence.

The scholarship amount was \$1000. Since that first year, the annual increase of distributed scholarships has been quite exciting. In total, through the Ruiz 4 Kids Scholarship Program, Florence area graduating high school seniors and junior college transfer students have been awarded over \$220,000 in scholarships.

“A second Ruiz 4 Kids community program is Mini-Grants for Teachers,” explained Tommy Pruitt, Ruiz 4 Kids Florence volunteer and Ruiz Foods Florence human resources director. “Our Team Members really enjoy this program and look forward to it every year.”

To participate, a team member authorizes deductions directly from their payroll check knowing that all the monies go directly to the educators in the community. Ruiz Team Members enjoy seeing the kids participate in unique programs created by the teachers, knowing the kids are benefitting from out-of-the-ordinary opportunities that are both fun and challenging.

“Since we began this program in 2015, Ruiz 4 Kids Florence has awarded over \$78,000 to Florence area educators,” added Pruitt, “and the grants for the 2020–2021 school year have yet to be announced and distributed.”

“Our third avenue for giving is through our Ruiz Cares Program,” said Matt Ruiz. “And this program is specifically designed to assist Ruiz Foods Team Members in giving back to local community organizations of their choice. As a result, the programs are wide and varied.”

One such program is the annual partnership with the Florence Chapter of the Salvation Army and their “Angel Tree” program. “We’re proud to have partnered with the Salvation Army for the past four years helping children receive Christmas gifts on their ‘wish list.’ Last year we helped 40 children, and we look forward to participating again this year.”

Other Ruiz Cares programs have included an annual Back-To-School Drive providing a back pack full of school supplies, making and donating “no-sew” blankets for the House of Hope of the Pee Dee, joining in with the efforts of Wreaths Across America and placing 100 wreaths at the gravestones of soldiers in the Florence National Cemetery, volunteering time to pack lunches at Help 4 Kids and more.

“Giving back...it’s who we are. Personally, I’m so proud of what we do and how our Team Members give back to our community,” added Ruiz. “This is certainly who we are and who we will continue to be. We’re proud to embrace the legacy of my father and grandfather...a commitment to our community...our home.”



2016 Mini Grants for Teachers recipient from North Vista Royall Elementary



Pink Out 2019 (L to R): Telya Harley, Aneta Eaddy, Betty Wheeler, Filisity Legrant and Stephanie Keith





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## RECOGNIZING WHEN TO SEEK HELP AND SPEAK UP Articles by Susan Carter



*Jennifer Butler, Office of Suicide Prevention, SC Department of Mental Health*

World Mental Health Day has a goal of raising mental health issues around the world and mobilizing efforts in support of mental health. Jennifer Butler, LMSW-CP, director of the SC Department of Mental Health's Office of Suicide Prevention discussed the impact of mental conditions on society. She pointed out that one in five individuals have a mental health condition. This includes 10 million adults with a serious mental illness and 22 million adults with substance abuse disorders. The prevalence of mental health and substance use disorders is greater than the number of individuals with heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, migraines, osteoporosis and asthma combined (Center for Disease Control 2017). However, we are not as proactive in recognizing signs and treating symptoms of mental health problems as we are in addressing physical conditions.

Many people may not realize that their distress has actually become a health problem. Butler said that suicide is a complex health issue that can be prevented when we know the warning signs and risk factors. She encourages concerned observers to "look for changes—changes in behavior, mood, thoughts. If you are worried about someone, trust your instincts, and talk with them. Tell them you care, you've noticed changes that have you concerned and ask them to share how they are doing." These conversations will allow an observer to gain more information

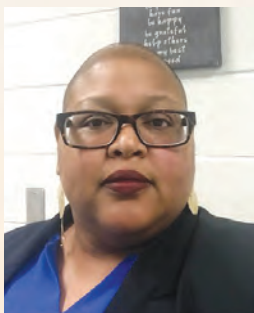
about the person's level of distress. Instead of worrying about being perceived as "nosey," "assume that you are the only person who is going to reach out." Butler notes that research shows that asking someone if he or she is suicidal "actually provides a sense of relief if they are experiencing these thoughts." If suicide turns out not to be a concern, he or she may still be in distress and likely will feel comforted and supported just by knowing that you care enough to listen.

Butler notes that, for some, the pandemic has heightened symptoms that were already present. For others, it has led to new symptoms. "The prolonged stress and loss caused by the virus have taken a toll on communities and challenged us to overcome barriers in connecting with others," she said. Butler notes that connection is a "key protective factor in reducing suffering and suicides." Through this pandemic, we have learned how valuable relationships are to our well-being. Butler hopes that the enhanced appreciation we have for each other will lead to a permanent increase in "voicing gratitude for one another and lifting each other up with hope and care."

If you are anyone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, please contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HOPE4SC to 741741 or calling the Lifeline information number at 1-800-273-8255.

Jennifer Butler previously served as the chief operations manager for Adult Intensive Services at Columbia Area Mental Health Center (CAMHC) in Columbia. She has been in practice for 25 years with the last 22 years specializing in dialectical behavior therapy and suicide prevention.

## MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE NEW NORMAL



*Tamarah J. Williams*

**HARTSVILLE**—Tamarah J. Williams is a licensed professional counselor at the Pee Dee Mental Health Center in Hartsville. She has nine years of experience in the mental health field working with diverse populations, including community mental health (adults and children/families), the adult (male) correctional population and vocational rehabilitation. She has advanced training in trauma focused CBT and dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT).

In recognition of World Mental Health Day, celebrated annually on Oct. 10 with the goal of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilizing efforts in support of mental health, Williams shared her views on how to expand mental health services for all.

Williams emphasized that it is important to begin normalizing mental health as a whole. "We all deal with 'mental health'; happiness, sadness and anxiousness are common experiences," she said. Normalization of discussing mental health and emotions has to occur before people really understand symptoms, conditions, diagnoses and how to assist with suicide prevention. The adult population served through community mental health often has difficulty managing emotions and symptoms of unresolved childhood issues, especially trauma. Unresolved trauma has a major impact on mental health and often alters the perspectives people have about themselves, others and the world. Without effective mental health treatment and therapy, some individuals don't learn how to challenge those perceptions to improve their chances of resiliency and emotional healing. Increased awareness of adverse childhood experiences, learning

challenges for adolescents and what is normal versus abnormal functioning in children will decrease the effect of unresolved issues into adulthood. Professional assistance and consistent, effective treatment at the onset of signs and symptoms for adolescents can go a long way to promoting a growth mindset and producing emotionally intelligent functioning adults.

As a dialectical behavioral therapy trained therapist, Williams' work entails working with individuals to assist them with "finding a life worth living." People dedicated to participating in DBT are often individuals that have suicidal thoughts and engage in self-harming behaviors. Her knowledge and training to practice DBT provides a foundation for suicide prevention.

In Williams' view, COVID-19 has impacted people's mental health and imposed various challenges. Mental health professionals are not only assisting those they serve with pandemic-related challenges, but they also face some of the same challenges themselves. She recounted observing clinicians talk about experiencing anxiety, depression and increased stress while learning how to manage "the new normal."

For Williams, practicing daily self-care is really important right now. She sometimes finds herself "unplugging" from social media and the news and increasing self-compassion to manage her mental health.

"Mental health for all" will become a reality only when we realize that paying attention to our feelings and taking action to ensure self-care is taken as seriously as our physical health. This includes monitoring others in our lives for signs that they need assistance and helping them obtain it.

If you are anyone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, please contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HOPE4SC to 741741 or calling the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.





Sharon L. Black

## TALK ABOUT AND PREVENT SUICIDE

Submitted by Sharon L. Black, MAM, MSW, LISW-CP/S, Behavioral Health Social Work Manager, HopeHealth

Suicide prevention is everyone's job. It's the role of faith-based communities, individuals, groups, organizations and communities. We all must spread awareness, offer hope and know that recovery is possible.

Every 12 minutes a person dies from suicide in the United States--that means someone's brother, sister, mother, dad or loved one. Further, the suicide rate for individuals with

serious mental illness and mood disorders, such as depression or bipolar disorder, is 25 times that of the general public.

Mental disorders and emotional distress are common in the United States, with one in five adults having a diagnosable mental disorder. A national survey of Americans found that 18.5 percent of adults (18 or older) experience a mental illness in any one year. This is equivalent to 43.8 million people.

Anyone can have thoughts of suicide regardless of their background. Often, suicide may be the result of an untreated mental health condition.

In many cases, friends and family affected by suicide loss (often called "suicide loss survivors") are left in the dark. Shame and stigma are contributing factors for individuals not talking openly about their feelings and thoughts. This is unfortunate because talking about feelings and thoughts is the very thing that can save lives by preventing suicide.

### There are things that you can do to help:

- have conversations with your loved ones about suicide prevention
- become an advocate
- know warning signs of suicide

### Warning signs include:

- threatening to hurt or kill oneself
- seeking access to means, such as a gun or pills
- talking, writing or posting on social media about death, dying or suicide
- feeling hopeless, worthless or a lack of purpose
- acting recklessly or engaging in risky behaviors
- feeling trapped
- having a dramatic change in mood
- withdrawing from family, friends or society
- increasing alcohol or drug use

HopeHealth is committed to raising awareness not only throughout the organization but also in the communities we serve by ensuring staff have the resources to recognize such warning signs and help prevent suicide through training programs such as:

**Question Persuade Refer training (QPR)** - QPR is designed to reduce suicidal behaviors and save lives by providing innovative, practical and proven suicide-prevention training. It helps individuals learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis, and how to question, persuade and refer someone to help. QPR helps everyone know what to do in these situations. You do not have to be a mental health professional to effectively assist someone in crisis.

**Zero Suicide training** - Zero Suicide is an initiative that aims to improve organizational screenings and detection of those at potential risk for suicide. These efforts show suicide deaths for those seen in health

care systems could be dramatically reduced by as much as 75 percent through a system-wide approach, according to the Zero Suicide Academy.

**Mental Health First Aid training (MHFA)** - The MHFA program provided mental health first aid training for HopeHealth staff and providers as well as agencies and communities across the state. This training was sponsored by the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association to help individuals recognize when a person is in distress and know how to intervene appropriately. While not targeting suicide solely, the interventions can certainly help to prevent suicide by assisting those in crisis and helping in a responsive, nonthreatening and supportive way.

If you or someone else is in crisis, please take advantage of these resources:

- Dial 911 or go to the nearest emergency room
- South Carolina Community Crisis Response and Intervention (24/7): 1-833-364-2274
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (24/7): 1-800-273-8255 or Espanol: 1-888-628-9454
- Crisis text line: Text HELP to 741741
- Suicide Prevent Lifeline online chat: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat)

Sharon Black is the behavioral health consultant manager at HopeHealth. She has a Master of Social Work degree from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, and a Master of Ministry degree from Luther Rice College, Lithonia, Ga. She is a member of the National Association of Social Work and the Health Minister Association.

Oct. 4-10 is Mental Illness Awareness Week. Mental health conditions are important to discuss year-round, but highlighting them during Mental Illness Awareness Week provides a dedicated time for mental health advocates across the country to come together as one unified voice. Since 1990, when Congress officially established the first full week of October as Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW), advocates have worked together to sponsor activities, large or small, to educate the public about mental illness.

Mental Illness Awareness Week coincides with additional related events:

- Tuesday Oct. 6: National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding
- Thursday Oct. 8: National Depression Screening Day
- Saturday Oct. 10: World Mental Health Day
- Saturday Oct. 10: NAMIWalks National Day of Hope

### You Are Not Alone

NAMI continues our yearlong awareness campaign, "You Are Not Alone," to feature the stories of people affected by mental illness to fight stigma, inspire others and educate the broader public. Now more than ever, the mental health community must come together and show that no one is ever really alone. No one should be without the information, support, connection and help they need. Find out more at [nami.org](https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Illness-Awareness-Week) (https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Illness-Awareness-Week).





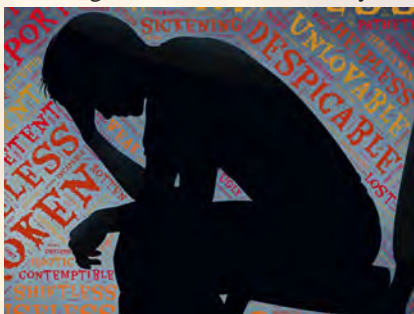
## IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY *by Susan Carter*



Angela Scott, LPC

Angela Scott is a licensed professional counselor (LPC) at Pee Dee Mental Health, a human service coordinator and the center's Zero Suicide champion. She has worked in this field for more than five years and works closely with adults who have Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Schizoaffective Disorder and more of the chronic and persistent mental disorders.

For World Mental Health Day on Oct. 10, Scott urges people to take action when they experience concerning symptoms or observe them in others: "I work with a variety of individuals with different mental health conditions. I believe that with the right help, some work and dedication, individuals can live productive lives with a mental illness. When it comes to mental health, we have so many that deny themselves the services needed to keep their mental stability in check. Mental health has been so stigmatized that many fail to realize the importance of taking care of themselves in order to not suffer from a mental health crisis. We should take our mental health just as seriously as we do our physical health. Going to the doctor does not deem us sick and neither does checking in on ourselves mentally."



As a Zero Suicide champion, Scott supports the World Mental Health's theme this year of "Mental Health for All: Greater Investment – Greater Access for Everyone, everywhere." She said, "It has been proven that if the steps are taken to address

suicide and not make it taboo within today's society, we can definitely work to aim and conquer a goal of zero suicides. We can give individuals power to take back their life, by means of supplying others with the tools and understanding to assist them when things are not going so well. Some of the smallest gestures such as providing a listening ear, lending a helping hand, greeting someone, letting someone know that you care or even doing a wellness check can change the storyline for many whom may be having these thoughts of taking their lives. Some of those things can lead to deeper conversations and more individuals asking for the help they need all because someone took the time to care."

Scott explained that her work involves coordinating with a statewide team to reduce suicide: "I am currently the Zero Suicide champion at my office. Part of this means that I work with a team of individuals from the SC Department of Mental Health's suicide prevention office who have partnered with the Zero Suicide Initiative to make suicide obsolete in the state of South Carolina. Our job is to work to change how other's view of suicide and those affected by it, along with providing counselors, teachers, parents, family and friends with more resources to better address and assist individuals who contemplate suicide. We are working to get in front of the situation

because early intervention and prevention measures are proven ways to lower suicidal actions."

An unexpected mental health challenge this year is the impact of COVID-19. Scott elaborated on the impact of this novel virus and unprecedented pandemic response, saying, "COVID-19 has affected our mental health in so many ways. Most of us probably never knew how important self-care and having contact with others was until we were placed in the middle of a pandemic. We were not ready to face such times mentally. We live in a fast-paced world, and many of us are told we need to slow down, shelter in place and wait for this to pass. This advice is mentally draining. Not to mention the financial burden and strain it causes for many. In less than six months, a lot of our lives have been turned upside down, and we are still trying to figure it all out."

With the shift to increased work and school from home and heightened anxiety experienced by front-line workers, it is more challenging than ever to maintain good mental health. Scott provided some strategies for helping employees manage the stress of working and family responsibilities while not neglecting self-care. She stated, "This is by far one of the hardest things for individuals to do. It is even harder when employees are working from home and trying to manage family life. First, they must make sure that they are addressing self-care for themselves. As one of my favorite quotes explains, 'You cannot pour from an empty cup.' Self-care is doing whatever you can for yourself to address fatigue, anxiety, depression and even burnout. Take a day off. Rest for an extra 10 minutes. Enjoy a walk. Take up a hobby. Set aside some time to meditate or do yoga. Any activity that will assist you with feeling like yourself again is recommended. If you are working from home, be sure to find different ways to separate work from home such as creating a separate workspace that is not used for anything but work. Start and stop work as scheduled. When it's time to clock out, leave your work there. I would also recommend keeping a routine and sticking to it."

In addition to setting boundaries for yourself at work, Scott said that we need to do the same with our families. "Continue old routines as much as you possibly can. Talk with your child(ren) and/or spouse. Have the conversations that discuss what's going on and what you feel you may need in order to make it through this tough time. Address any concerns, and be sure to seek counseling to assist with any mental instability as we continue to adjust to the new norm. Take advantage of mental health or behavioral health services that are offered through your insurance or job. And remember it's okay to not be okay."





## CHANGES IN PERCEPTIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH by Susan Carter



*Kengi Stevenson*

Kengi Stevenson, a mental health professional with 13 years of experience at Pee Dee Mental Health, specializes in working with young people dealing with the initial onset of serious mental health symptoms such as hallucinations. Her program is called PREP, which stands for Prevention and Recovery in Early Psychosis. This program helps those who are experiencing psychotic symptoms for the first time. People with early psychotic disorders may not understand

what is happening to them and can find the unfamiliar symptoms confusing and distressful. The early treatment provided by this evidenced-based program can help improve the long-term outcomes for these individuals. Research shows that this is the critical time to access services. Services offered by the PREP team include individual, group and family therapy, case management, psychosocial rehabilitation, psychosocial education, psychiatric services, peer support services and supportive employment and education services. The goal of PREP is to gradually reduce frequency of symptoms and duration of PREP services as the consumer experiences symptom reduction and is engaged in active recovery.

The theme for this year's World Mental Health Awareness Day, set by the Federation of Mental Health, is "Mental Health for All Greter Investment – Greater Access for Everyone, everywhere." Stevenson provides suggestions for how friends, family and associates can assist in the effort of suicide prevention "by understanding suicide, recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously. If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, there's plenty you can do to help save a life." Stevenson notes that it is hard for those not seriously depressed to understand the motivation of those who attempt self-harm, "but a suicidal person is in so much pain that he or she can see no other option." To a suicidal individual, life has become unbearable, and the act of self-harm represents a desperate attempt to escape intense suffering. Blinded by feelings of self-loathing, hopelessness and isolation, a suicidal person can't see any way of finding relief except through death. But despite their desire for the pain to stop, most suicidal people are deeply conflicted about ending their own lives. They wish there was an alternative to suicide, but they just can't see one.

As a FEP counselor, Stevenson works closely with young people ages 17-30 whose lives have been upended by the appearance of confusing and frightening mental health symptoms. She provides counseling and psycho-education to assist these young people in getting their lives back on track by helping them find reasons to live and to re-start their path toward adulthood.

The advent of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many people's lives. Stevenson notes that everyone is experiencing a higher level of anxiety: "It has altered daily routines, has led to financial fear and forced social isolation." Since the start of quarantining, people have been hit with a new reality. Platforms such

as news outlets and social media have focused heavily on information concerning the virus. But an issue that has been overlooked is the mental health decline that has accompanied the pandemic. The feeling of worry and stress are normal human responses when people are in a state of danger or threat, and this whole pandemic has caused widespread despair and feelings of vulnerability.

Anxiety has spread because of a wide array of concerns, including uncertainty of when normalcy is going to return, worries about contracting the virus or of ones loved ones getting sick, of how long isolation will continue, and the loneliness caused by this isolation can all lead to negative overthinking.

"In addition to these stressors, we are continuously being bombarded with daily COVID-19 news, some of which is misinformation and mere rumors, can make a person feel even more out of control and disoriented. This can lead to anxiety, fear, stress, depression and emotional exhaustion."

However, Stevenson perceives a positive shift in attitudes toward seeking mental health treatment corresponding with changes in where the services are delivered. "Mental health has been transformed over the last 20 years. There have been so many changes: the closure of the old asylums and psychiatric facilities; moving care into the community; the increasing the use of talking therapies. They have all had a hugely positive impact on patients and mental health care." As mental health issues are more visible in the community, a greater understanding of common challenges is apparent. "People are becoming more accepting of mental health problems and more supportive of people with issues. People are also more confident in talking about it, and society is more aware of its potential causes with parents, school teachers and safeguarding leads looking out for signs of abuse. People also have become more aware and educated about common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, and they are more willing to talk to health professionals and seek treatment."







Shauna Hemingway, M.D.

## DR. HEMINGWAY ON PREVENTION, SCREENING & TESTING

Submitted by Shauna Hemingway, M.D. MUSC Health Women's Health OB/GYN

As an OB/GYN my colleagues and I have the privilege to care for girls and women throughout their lives, addressing reproductive and menstrual issues, cancer screening, sexual functioning and menopausal symptoms, just to name a few. We are also on the front lines of screening and detection for breast cancer. Not only do we help coordinate screening mammograms and perform physical breast exams, but we also help to assess breast cancer risk in younger patients who may benefit from earlier screening or even genetic testing. Our role begins with detection and continues throughout the treatment course. We work in collaboration with other health care specialties to help manage gynecologic and psychosocial issues that may and often do occur because of the treatment of these breast cancers.

Women should be aware that most breast cancers are hormone sensitive. The more hormone exposure you have, the more increased risk for breast cancer. For example, young women with early first periods, before age 12 and those who experience later menopause after age 55, have a higher risk.

Women who have had children and who have breastfed have lower risks of breast cancer. During breastfeeding there is an increased shedding of breast tissue, and the levels of estrogen are lower. This can help to decrease the risk of breast cancer. Moderate alcohol use, more than two to five drinks per day and obesity are shown to increase the risk of breast cancer.

While none of us has control of whether or not we are diagnosed with breast cancer, there are things we can do to make ourselves healthier overall and decrease risks. Three hours of moderate exercise, or one to two hours of intense exercise, per week has shown to help aid in weight loss. Weight loss can decrease hormonally active adipose tissue that is known to increase breast cancer risk.

Breastfeeding has countless benefits for both mom and baby. A decreased breast cancer risk for mom is a very important one. Women who breastfeed at all have some decreased risk. Those women who breastfeed for six months to one year or more have an even higher, significant decreased risk. Women should be aware of any changes in their breasts such as pain, changes in breast appearance such as rash or dimpling of the skin.

It's important to know being diagnosed with breast cancer is certainly life changing, but with regular screening many breast cancers are found in the early stage. Because of this there are more favorable and effective treatment options. Also, with a variety of treatment options, breast cancer survival and quality of life for those diagnosed is very promising.

Prevention, screening and detection for breast cancer is crucial to an OB/GYN's role in caring for women. There are many things patients can do to decrease their risks, and there are effective treatment options. These options are not only for the breast cancer but also for gynecologic issues that may occur because of these treatments.

We, as primary care providers for women, are privileged to care for women during both the challenging and joyous times of a woman's

life. All these experiences help to weave the unique fabric of the woman and her caregiver alike, which help bring resilience to us all.

Dr. Shauna Hemingway is an OB/GYN physician at the MUSC Health Florence Women's Pavilion on the main campus of MUSC Health Florence. She is accepting new patients. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 843-665-9581, or visit [MUSChealth.org/florence](http://MUSChealth.org/florence).

## BY THE GRACE OF GOD, IT IS DONE

Submitted By Jennifer Robinson



Jo Ann Pugh

**HARTSVILLE-** Wow. When I think back to Thanksgiving 1996, I remember everyone getting ready to go over to my mom's house to have dinner. I, too, began to get dressed. While I was looking in the mirror brushing my teeth and before I took my shower, I noticed a lump sitting in the middle of my chest. I just stopped and began to pray because I believed I already knew what it was. I pulled myself together, got dressed and went through Thanksgiving as if nothing was wrong. I didn't know what I was to do with what I saw in the mirror earlier that morning, but in my heart I knew God would make a way.

In October of that year, I went to have a mammography. On the following Monday, I called my doctor's office and made an appointment. I was then sent to have an ultrasound in December. I didn't receive any results from those tests, so I celebrated the holidays with no answers. In January, I received a call. The news was good because they didn't find anything. They wanted me to come back so fluid could be drawn from my breast for further examination. I went in the next day. Another two weeks went by. I received yet another call, and they had not found anything. At this point, I alerted them I wanted to schedule an appointment with a surgeon to have a biopsy. Within one week I saw the surgeon. It had been three months since I first noticed the lump, and at that point, it had begun to hurt. I asked the oncologist if, instead of doing a biopsy, would he just remove the lump so he wouldn't have to come back and do it later. So, he did. I had to be at the hospital by 5 a.m. Feb. 3, 1997, for the procedure and had to wait all day for the results. I received them around 9:30 p.m. The results indicated the cancer was growing in the tissues underneath and pushing against the lump, causing the pain. If he had not removed the lump, he would have not found the cancer. Because of the rate it was growing, they needed to remove my breast. I knew it was God. I asked the doctor when I could have the mastectomy. He said tomorrow, or if I needed some time, I could wait at least up to six months. I said tomorrow would be fine. The next morning, Feb. 4, 1997, it was done.

Back then, everything was different. Post-operative testing was completed five days later, and I then was able to go home. Unfortunately, five days after I was released my wound burst open, and everything drained out. I had a big hole in my chest. I went to the emergency room, and they cleaned it up. The surgeon came in and said he couldn't stitch it up because it may have infection in it, and they needed to watch it heal before I could be administered chemotherapy. The next day I went to the



## BY THE GRACE OF GOD CONT'D

doctor, and he said as long as my tissue was pink in color it was healing. Now I really got the opportunity to watch God work. I watched as my flesh healed from the inside out from February until May.

I thank God for speaking through me to tell the surgeon to remove the whole lump so he could see the cancer, take it out and heal my body. Twenty-three years later, I am still here to tell my story by the grace of God! Thank You Jesus!

## ON CONSIDERING HEALING & REMISSION

by Anna Bowman



Linda Ellis

It was the usual busy morning for Linda Ellis on Oct. 31, 2002, as she juggled with getting her three elementary aged children ready for school. She recalled the night before staying up late to make fall treat bags and pumpkins for them to take to school for their classmates. Due to her hectic morning schedule, she didn't know if she would make it on time for her 8 o'clock mammogram appointment. However, she made her appointment on time and cautiously waited for her

results.

"A week after my mammogram, on Nov. 7, 2002, I was called back for further evaluation, but I wasn't worried because this happens quite often," said Ellis. "Accompanied by my husband, Rick, we were informed by the radiologist that cancerous cells were detected on the X-rays, and a biopsy was recommended on my left breast. Without time to ponder the results, I was informed that there was an opening for a biopsy the very same day," she said. Within a matter of a few short hours, her life would change. "My husband Rick, a family medicine physician, was given the results of my biopsy, privately, as a professional courtesy. On the ride home, he informed me of the results of the biopsy and that it was certain that I had breast cancer."

Ellis' first thought was that her father had passed away from lung cancer at the age of 48 years old, and all that mattered after learning her diagnosis was to survive for her husband and their children (ages 12, 10 and six years old at the time of her first diagnosis).

Upon meeting the surgeon in early December, he thought it would be best to "get through the holidays," and schedule the surgery in January. Recalling the decision to postpone her surgery until January, Ellis said, "For me it felt like an eternity knowing I had cancerous cells inside my body." When she did receive the surgery, the general surgeon informed her and her husband that based on the type of cancer they found, Ductal Carcinoma In Situ, a mastectomy, was required. "The cells were spread throughout my breast, and because of the aggressiveness of the cancer, he decided that I should have a bilateral mastectomy." Ellis was bewildered at this point, recalling that just 16 months earlier her mammogram was clear. And now, she had gone from being diagnosed with cancer to requiring a bilateral mastectomy to speaking with a plastic surgeon about reconstruction surgery. Ellis admits that "at that time, reconstructive surgery was not on my radar. "I just wanted to get rid of the cancer!"

Ellis, who is a registered nurse by profession and worked PRN at McLeod Regional Medical Center, remembers being in the pre-op room

prior to her surgery, thinking about how normal she felt and what was about to happen. The recovery was a process due to the reconstructive surgery, she said. Her oncologist informed her that she didn't need chemo or radiation, and she was prescribed Tamoxifen, which is a daily medication that blocks estrogen from reaching the receptors. "My cancer was also estrogen receptor positive, which meant estrogen could cause a recurrence."

Three years had passed when, in February 2005, Ellis discovered a small knot underneath her left armpit. After a biopsy, it was diagnosed as cancerous. This time she would have to have radiation and chemotherapy, and her lymph nodes were removed. "The surgery was a little more intense," she said. She knew that she wouldn't be able to return to work after starting her treatments. "My first treatment of chemotherapy wasn't bad; I went home and felt okay," she said. "The next morning, I felt like I had been run over by a truck. I was weak, extremely nauseous and achy."

"Having a member of my medical team that was not only concerned about my physical health, but my mental health, as well, was an amazing experience. My oncologist, Dr. Pavy, arranged a lunch date for me to speak with two ladies who had been through the same scenario. They were truly a blessing," she said. "I was able to get questions answered



Linda and Richard K. Ellis, MD; their children, Richie, Lauren and Ryan; and Ryan's fiancée, Leah.

from someone who had the same experience. They were extremely helpful in preparing me for what was ahead, especially when I eventually lost my hair and gained weight due to the

steroids prescribed to prevent the risk factors associated with my second round of chemotherapy." During her bout with hair loss and weight gain, she described times when, "People who saw me and commented on my weight as I stood in front of them with a bald head, wearing a pink ribbon baseball cap with a cancer insignia emblazoned on the cap, but I just let it roll off!" she explained. "None of the side effects bothered me because I had a goal to survive and was willing to do whatever it took!"

Ellis continues to praise her astonishing support system during her bouts with cancer: her amazing family--her husband and children; along with her mother and sisters, who traveled from Syracuse to South Carolina on numerous occasions; and her husband's family, who were always there to ensure that her family was cared for during the times when chemo treatments would get the best of her health/strength. Her extended family and friends, including her sorority sisters (Alpha Kappa Alpha), Jack and Jill sisters and her church family, also played important roles in her healing.

She has always had a strong faith in God and said, "During my chemo and radiation treatments I never felt like I wasn't going to survive; I always trusted that God was with me every step, and although it would be rough, I knew I would come out on the other side! I am a survivor," she proudly announced. "I see Dr. Pavy once a year. I take Aromasin, which is an estrogen blocker. Estrogen Receptor Positive Breast Cancer can always return and therefore, you cannot be considered healed. You are always considered in remission." But Ellis proudly professed, "In the eyes of God, I am healed!"

Linda and Richard K. Ellis, MD, are celebrating 31 years of wedded bliss, and have three beautiful adult children: Richie, Lauren and Ryan, who is engaged to a woman named Leah.



## HANGING ON TO HOPE, A SECOND TIME AROUND by Tu'Meeka Epps



Rachelle Barrineau

LAKE CITY- "I've heard the words 'you have breast cancer,' twice now," said Rachelle Barrineau. "My first diagnosis came after a routine screening mammogram in November of 2014 when I was 41 years old. It was very early, ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS), stage 0 and required a lumpectomy and radiation. My second diagnosis of breast cancer was in April 2019 at the age of 46. This time it was a different type of cancer in the same breast. It was ER/PR and

HER2 positive, inflammatory breast cancer, Stage 3b."

Her second, most recent, diagnosis came in between recommended screenings. "I was still a few months away from needing my usual mammogram. I noticed my breast was swollen each morning and late in the afternoon. In the beginning I reasoned the swelling and warm feeling were delayed radiation changes from my breast cancer treatment four years earlier. At the time I was a mother of an eighth grader and a fifth grader who had school trips to attend, so I delayed following up and 'gave it time to go away.' The swelling did not get better, and my breast began to feel heavier all day. I was 46, did not have a baby and was not pregnant. It didn't add up and was becoming increasingly uncomfortable. One morning, two months later, a light bulb went off. I thought, 'What if you have inflammatory breast cancer.' Inflammatory breast cancer is a rare, quickly spreading type of breast cancer very few women have ever heard of. The cancer invades the skin of the breast as well as the deep tissues and is known as 'No lump, Still Cancer.'

I was blessed and honored to have known someone from my small community with inflammatory breast cancer. I grew up with her children. Mrs. Janie McKenzie and I went to the same church and lived about a mile apart. When she was diagnosed, I remember Google-ing 'inflammatory breast cancer' because even as an experienced nurse, I had never heard of it. She was always helping others--always smiling, always taking care of everyone. She played an important part in saving my life. I think of her regularly and wish I could tell her I made it, in part, because of her. I think she would like knowing her struggle contributed to something good."

When asked to describe how it felt hearing the word "cancer" again, Barrineau said, "My immediate thought was, 'This is not happening,' followed very quickly by 'I can't die and leave my children.' I had a flash of anger and began to list all of the good things I had done in my life and why this should not be happening to me. I am a nurse and have dedicated my life to caring for people in the same position where I now stood."

That's when she said the tears started and reality began to sink in. Nurses are not immune to life's diseases. "Most of us feel invincible to disease. We are the caregivers, not the care receivers," Barrineau said. Dr. Ziad Skaff has been Barrineau's oncologist since 2014. "He is one of the smartest, most kind, compassionate people I have ever met. In the midst of my breakdown, he remained calm. He assured me 'we' would fight. I knew from the very beginning I would not be in this alone."

After her second diagnosis things moved quickly. "I had the biopsy on Monday, saw my doctor for the results on Tuesday and had my first intravenous chemo on Friday... all in the same week." Her treatment was followed by six months of intravenous chemotherapy drugs followed by three surgeries to remove the remaining cancer and replace the muscle, fat and skin lost. "It was a long road. By this time, I had no hair, lost a lot of weight and was exhausted from the whole process." Four weeks later, she started radiation therapy for the second time in her life. Losing her hair during treatment wasn't as big of a deal as she expected. "Honestly, I was just focused on living and not giving up. I actually kind of enjoyed the cool feeling on my scalp. I put my bald head on Facebook as a sign of strength and acceptance. I told myself if I have to do this, I can at least be proud that I am doing the best I can."

Barrineau admits it wasn't always easy. "I caught a glimpse of myself in the bathroom mirror once thinking, 'That can't be right. I look like a cancer patient.' I was inundated with help from every corner. My friends and family jumped in and started helping out in any fashion they could. My church family at Barrineau Pentecostal Holiness reached out and I never had to ask. I was covered in prayer not only from my own church but so many others too. People have said I am the strongest person they know, but I just did what it took. There was no other option for me."

She recalled a time that elementary students from Walker Gamble Elementary made a touching video just for her. Barrineau smiled and said it couldn't have come at a better time. "I was so down that week. As their school nurse, I loved them for four years. I knew they may not understand the significance of the words they were singing in the video, but they loved doing something for me because they knew I was sick. I felt their love and watched that video over and over."

Barrineau is a member of a Facebook support group for inflammatory breast cancer and she said it has been a great source of information. She loves the group because long-term survivors offer hope to others.

"Inflammatory breast cancer takes a different medical approach, and those who are diagnosed need to know the differences in care so they can advocate for themselves. I was lucky enough to have an oncologist and breast surgeon that were aware of the different standards of care; many are not so lucky and are not treated effectively," she said.

Based on her cancer experience she offers this advice. "Take a deep breath. Cancer is no longer a death sentence. It can certainly feel like one, but that is simply no longer true. There are many treatment options. It's important to make sure you have a doctor you trust, who listens to you, your fears, your hopes, and goals. Cancer treatment needs to be a collaborative effort among many people, and you have to be part of it. Make sure you educate yourself so you can talk with your doctor about how to proceed. It's not easy and it can be hard, but it's worth it, and you can do it!"

Speaking about what gives her hope for her future Barrineau said, "I remember two things very clearly. On the day I was told I had cancer, I questioned my oncologist as to whether or not this was treatable. He said, 'I promise you, we will get this.' My heart felt that, and I hung on to it with all I had. The second thing I hold onto is something my breast surgeon said. She said, 'At your age, you have at least 40 more years to live.' She may not have meant to inspire me, but I heard her



## HANGING ON TO HOPE CONT'D

clearly, she expected me to live.”

When she was asked what she learned from the experience she said, “It taught me to slow down. I have always been a checkoff the list kind of person. I find myself just winging a lot of things now. It’s okay if things don’t go exactly as planned. It’s humbling so many people are willing to go out of their way to help you. My family took on the roles of full-time nurses and my husband never took a day off.”

Barrineau said the simplicity of life is what makes her most happy now. “I have a wonderful husband, large extended family and countless friends. I enjoy doing life with them. My three boys keep me grounded. When I feel overly confident, they bring me back to reality. When I’m sad, they make me smile. They keep everything in perspective for me. I gather strength from all parts of my life. My people, all of them,

make life worth fighting for and living just by being here with me,” she said.

Barrineau has been married to her husband, Mark, for 24 years. They have three boys, Jacob, 18, Jude, 15, and Ian, 12. They live in a farming community surrounded by many friends and church family. “I am grateful to have both of my parents, Ray and Rhonda Beard, living next door to me. My brother, Rhett, and his family live across the road,” she said.

Barrineau is currently receiving her last chemotherapy drug every three weeks and gets scans every three months. “I should finish sometime in 2021. I’ve rung the radiation bell twice now and I’m looking forward to ringing the bell again and hearing the official words ‘Congratulations, you’ve made it.’”

## SINGLETARY CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF SURVIVORSHIP Submitted by McLeod Health



*Conni Singletary and her son, Chris*

Constance “Conni” Singletary’s journey to cancer survivorship began with her diagnosis on Sept. 30, 2010. Prior to this day, she explained she had actually felt lumps in her breast in December 2009, but an ultrasound in January 2010 did not indicate any cause for concern.

During her annual GYN appointment that September, Singletary was scheduled for her first mammogram because she had recently turned 40. However, she said, “I almost didn’t go.” Fortunately, she did go for the mammogram and within a few days received a call that she needed to have an additional test. After a spot compression of the area, she was informed that she needed to have biopsies. “I melted,” she said.

The day after the biopsies, Singletary’s physician called and asked her to come to her office right away. “In the pit of my stomach, I knew what she was going to say,” said Singletary. “Yet, when the words came out of her mouth, I was devastated.”

The physician had already scheduled Singletary for an appointment the next day with McLeod General Surgeon Dr. Amy Murrell. “I was upset with the news, but by the end of the appointment, I went into survivor mode,” Singletary said. “I had to do what I needed to do to get well so I could raise my son.”

After meeting with Dr. Murrell, Singletary had an appointment that afternoon with Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon Dr. Joe Griffin to discuss tissue expanders. “My cancer was only on the right side, but I opted to have both breasts removed. Call me crazy, but I didn’t want to repeat this process again down the road or put my son through it a second time.”

Singletary’s surgery took place on Oct. 13, 2010. She said her diagnosis was late stage I/early stage II breast cancer. “Dr. Murrell felt she got it all. After healing a bit, she scheduled me to see McLeod Oncologist Dr. Rajesh Bajaj. He informed me that I was HER2 Positive. Dr. Bajaj explained the treatment process plan to me, and I met with the chemotherapy nurses to go over what to expect.”

Her first chemo appointment occurred on the Tuesday after

Thanksgiving, and she completed her chemo treatments in April of 2011. She also received Herceptin treatments for one year.

When asked what was one of the hardest parts of this journey, Singletary said, “I had a harder time losing my hair than I did losing my breasts, but I got past it. Today, I feel good, and most of all, I’M ALIVE!”

A single mom, Singletary’s sole focus during this entire experience was her son, Chris, who at the time of her diagnosis was 12. “I was going to beat this for him,” she added.

Her work family also meant a great deal to her during this journey. As the department secretary and enrollment coordinator for the McLeod Child Development Center (CDC), Singletary is special not only to the staff of the CDC but also to the parents and children. She said the love and support of her co-workers, friends and family helped her get through each day.

Today, Singletary is trying her best to decrease any stress in her life, but she adds, “We all know that doesn’t always happen.” She is also working hard to eat a little better than she previously did by consuming more raw veggies, broccoli and beans.

She advises all women concerned about breast cancer to schedule their annual mammogram, and see their physician once a year for a routine check-up. “If you are diagnosed, please find support, whether it is a support group, friends or family, and give it all over to God. And, once you get over the initial shock of being told it’s cancer go into survival mode and never look back! It worked for me,” she added.

One of Singletary’s favorite quotes is by Reverend Al Sharpton who stated, “Don’t focus on the scars. Focus on the journey.” In Singletary’s case, she heeded these words.





## THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL by Anna Bowman



Mara Ray Caldwell

It has been said that a woman's hair is her crowning glory, but what happens when her crown begins to fade away?

Mara Ray Caldwell is an extraordinary woman with an equally outstanding resume of accomplishments throughout her career. The Columbus, Ohio, native was an executive for 21 years, working for Fortune 100 and 50 companies. She worked as the plant manager for Johnson Controls in Florence, Ky., before being transferred to Florence, S.C., where she now resides. Caldwell attended undergraduate school

at Wright State University, receiving a Bachelor of Science in business administration

with a minor in electrical engineering. She also has a double MBA from Kettering University, master's in manufacturing management and operations management, receiving both of her MBA degrees in just 18 months. Fate doesn't always arrive in our lives in a pretty package with a beautiful bow and a note saying this is for you, but when it arrives, it's right on time, and you know without a doubt it has been sent from God, especially for you.

With all of Caldwell's outstanding career and academic achievements, there was one thing that cast a shadow over her life and caused her great pain and humiliation. This unexpected twist in her life led her to achieve one of her ultimate goals in life...

At the tender age of 12, Caldwell had noticed her first episode with hair loss: a small spot just above her right ear. Being diagnosed with Alopecia Areata meant nothing to a pre-teen girl. But as life became more stressful, the once small spot began to multiply. "At the age of 24 years old, after the birth of my second child, I began the sequence of shots called Depro-Provera (birth control). After my second round of shots, it started with a small patch, and the next day, several patches; within a matter of eight weeks, I lost every last bit of hair on my body," she sadly recalled. "I actually fainted from the sight of my hair covering the bathtub in a few merely minutes of washing her hair!"

It would take 15 months before Caldwell was diagnosed with Alopecia Universalis (\* a medical condition involving the loss of all body hair, including eyebrows, eyelashes, chest hair, armpit hair and pubic hair. It is the most severe form of alopecia areata).

She said, "I was placed on high doses of vitamin D; nothing worked. I shortly went into deep depression and hated the way that I looked and felt. I made the family uncomfortable because they were hurting with me and for me but couldn't help me." The most devastating outcome of her diagnosis was the way she was mistreated by her husband at the time. "He was cold about the hair loss and would make very insensitive remarks that made my depression even worse," she acknowledged. Divorce was inevitable.

At the time of her diagnosis, Caldwell worked on an assembly line in a plant that employed over 4,400 people. "I was completely on display," she said as she recalled a few of her many embarrassing incidents. "I didn't lose my hair completely, so I experienced gluing

more hair to my head or gluing extensions and then wearing a hat. It was awful, to say the least." But according to Caldwell, wearing a wig on an assembly line was even worse. "It moved because I wore the wrong size. I would hit my head or snag against something, and my wig would come off; keeping my wig on was challenging and embarrassing and made me so self-conscious. All I could focus on every hour of every day was keeping my wig on and what if people saw me if it fell off."

After numerous years of depression, Caldwell's life was changed when she met and married Gordon Caldwell, she said, adding, "He found me 'sexy' and 'beautiful' just the way I was." His love gave her the opportunity to breathe again and embrace her life with anew.

In 2013, Caldwell started a foundation called the Harmony of Hope, Inc., a 501c(3) that offers children wigs for free up to the age of 21 and full-time students up to the age of 24 years of age. "I wanted to provide children a quick solution for hair because wigs are so expensive," she said. "In May 2013, I began selling wig shampoos and conditioners first on eBay and built my own website. In November 2013, I launched my Amazon account and began to list my first wigs. We have grown 30-40 percent each year since that moment. The foundation was a huge part of healing for me," she stated.

Even though Caldwell was a successful executive with a salary over \$200K a year, she said that she knew something was missing in her life. "I did not feel fulfilled and felt that I was missing something that God wanted me to do. It sounded silly, but now as I look back on what has happened to me, I know now why he gave me this blessing – to help women and children. Remember that you must love yourself no matter what you look like on the outside. It doesn't make you, nor does it define you."

When it came time to name her new store, her husband had the great idea to use her first and middle name for the store, and Mara Ray Wig Boutique was born. Caldwell proudly added, "My husband helped design the store, and within six weeks on June 15, 2019, (in memory of my beloved Grandma Neva), the business was officially opened to the public."

Mara Ray Wig Boutique is a unique experience catering to hands-on care for everyone who visits the store. The boutique includes wigs, extensions, hair care and various services, like shampoos and trimming, cutting and full styling. The boutique features private fitting rooms where clients can try on wigs in a privacy setting and not in the middle of the store. That was a trauma experience that Caldwell experienced while trying to select a new wig. "I felt naked taking off my wig to try on a new one right in the middle of the store." Her line of wigs also caters to women of all ethnicities and for women of mixed heritage like herself.

Because wigs can often be expensive, Caldwell offers lay-a-way and currently working towards accepting Care Credit. She emphasized that she never steers anyone towards purchasing an expensive wig



Mara Ray  
Wig Boutique



## THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL CONT'D



week of their birthday. And there are a few days during the week that we offer specials. Like Wednesday is called, 'Wiggin Out Wednesday' where they can purchase one wig and get another for 50 percent off the regular price."

Caldwell shares her story with every client just about, she said,

unless they ask to see them. "I also help clients file insurance claims that will either help pay for most or all of the cost of their wig. All new clients receive 15 percent off their first visit. We have a Birthday Club for active clients that offers 50 percent off their choice of any wig in the store the

adding, "I share my story with every client because I want them to know they are not alone in their journey [especially] once they hear that I have been bald for 21 years and have experienced and overcome trauma due to my Alopecia Universalis."

Mara Ray Boutique's success story is continuing to grow, and Caldwell anticipates moving into the Style Encore business later this year, offering full salon services for women, men and children and building her wig inventory by 30 percent. The company's strategy is to open four more stores all within two hours of Florence. And their second location of Mara Ray Boutique will be opened in Charlotte, N.C., in 2021.

Contact information for Mara Ray Wig Boutique is: 843-731-9186, Belle of Hope is: 843-702-2241. Email address is: contactus@belleofhope.com or mararaywigs@yahoo.com. Facebook: belleofhope or MaraRayWigs, and Twitter: belleofhope.

Mara, and her husband, Gordon are the proud parents of their daughters, Madyson and Rion, and a son, Tyler.

## BREAST CANCER AWARENESS: DID YOU KNOW? by Jennifer Robinson



LaTonya Wilson

**SUMTER-** Every year in October, there are streams of pink that illuminate our sports arenas, stores, schools, hospitals and doctors' offices. There is an unmistakable acknowledgement of the impact of breast cancer in our society. People participate in awareness activities, but do they really know how many people are affected by breast cancer?

In South Carolina in 2017, there were 4,291 new cases of female breast cancer. For every 100,000 women, 130 cases were reported. The same year, there were 695 women who died of it. For every 100,000 women in South Carolina, 21 died of breast cancer (cdc.gov).

Other information that doesn't often get shared when people hear about breast cancer are the different types, which are:

- HR+ (hormone receptor-positive) means that the cancer cells in your body contain hormone receptors
- HER2+ (human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 positive) means your body is making too much of a certain receptor called HER2. HER2 receptors are created by the HER2 gene.
- TNBC (triple-negative breast cancer) means the cancer does not have estrogen receptors, does not have progesterone receptors and does not have extra HER2 receptors. Thus, it is triple negative.

Being informed of the different types of breast cancer helps with detection and possibly prevention of deaths.

LaTonya Wilson has survived tours in Afghanistan and is physically healthy. She was committed to eating right and exercising and had no family history of breast cancer. But in 2007 at the age of 32, she was diagnosed. Wilson had a lump removed and received 36 radiation treatments and eight chemotherapy rounds. And through all of this, she continued her contract work with the military. She also wanted to help others who were struggling with breast cancer and the financial issues that arise with getting adequate treatment. Wilson founded Cherished Hearts Breast Cancer Foundation. The organization

provides wigs, makeup and other things need to help with breast cancer survivor self-esteem as they journey through the treatment process.

Wilson said she was diagnosed again in 2013 but decided to have a double mastectomy. She said she made this decision for several reasons. First, she said she felt she didn't need reconstructive surgery. She felt beautiful without breasts and did not need any enhancements. Second, she felt it was not fair to have reconstructive surgery when there were so many mastectomy survivors who could not afford to have enhancements, and she wanted to be an advocate for them. And then, Wilson said that having this stage in her life be a testimony was so important in impacting the lives of others. What she would later learn is that there was more she would learn to share with others that could also test her strength.

In 2016, Wilson learned her breast cancer had spread to her lungs and liver. She was out of the military but still working as a contractor and taking care of her family. Unfortunately, by this time, depression began to set in, yet she still trusted God.

Today, Wilson is still fighting for her health. She continues to learn more and more about breast cancer and share her experiences on various platforms. She attends conferences and serves on panel discussions about breast cancer. She spoke very candidly about the information she has received about treatment for cancer and how insurance affects the care patients receive. Wilson receives treatment at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) in Atlanta and says she is blessed to have that option. But unfortunately, many people who have breast cancer either do not know they have the option to be treated at CTCA or cannot afford to receive treatment there. Wilson also talked about the need for breast cancer patients to participate in clinical trials. They could be the answer to the cure for this horrible disease.

Breast cancer has many facets that many patients and survivors do not get the opportunity to experience. Self-advocacy is key.

The Cherished Hearts Breast Cancer Foundation can be found on Facebook and Instagram.



## MOTHER AND DAUGHTER CELEBRATING SURVIVAL *by Anna Bowman*



*Daisy Allen alongside her daughter, Daphne Davis*

**HARTSVILLE-** Mothers and daughters have an indelible bond: a woman giving birth to a daughter, who could someday give birth herself, is magic personified. Little girls like to emulate their mother's every move and even dream of growing up and being just like their beloved mother. They want to have their mother's eyes, their mother's

hair and even their mother's beautiful smile, but being diagnosed with cancer, like their mother, is not a part of the "happily ever after" life that they once envisioned.

For Daisy Allen, she watched as her beloved mother succumbed to breast cancer, only to learn decades later, that her only child, Daphne Davis, would also be diagnosed with breast cancer.

Davis, a young, vibrant woman, with her whole life ahead of her, saw her entire life abruptly changed when a slight touch revealed a lump in her right breast. "I was sitting in bed and just touched my breast and felt a small lump," she recalled. Knowing her maternal grandmother had succumbed to the disease, she feared the worst. Davis said, "I CALLED MY MAMA!" the one person in the world who knew her better than anyone and the one person who would understand her fears.

Mothers are the guardians of our lives--the magicians of hope, who can take our worst fears and seemly make them disappear right before our very eyes, just long enough to instill faith in us that everything is going to be all right as they gather all of their strength to remain calm while silently praying their hearts out to God to save their child.

Allen is just that type of mother. After finding out that her daughter had breast cancer, she recalled her anguish: "As a mother knowing that my daughter was diagnosed with breast cancer, at first kind of lost it and starting thinking negative things, such as I'm going to lose my only child," she admits. "I had these thoughts because my biological mother died from breast cancer. I also thought, 'Oh my, it skipped a generation.'" But knowing that her daughter needed her more now than ever, she said, "I had to be strong for her. We prayed, prayed, and then prayed some more, God was our main resource."

Diagnosed in 2010 with Stage 0 breast cancer, Ductal Carcinoma in Situ (DCIS), Davis acknowledges that fear overwhelmed her every thought. "I had never been so scared in all my life!" she said. Her road to recovery would be a long and arduous journey. "I had a lumpectomy and two unsuccessful clear margins, which is a procedure, LEEP or cold knife cone, where a pathologist studies the tissue removed during surgery to determine whether or not the margins contain cancer cells. I had to have a total mastectomy of my right breast, followed by reconstructive surgery. And through it all my mother never missed any of my surgeries. She cared for my family

during my darkest days and prayed for me until the clouds of doubt and fear started to dissipate."

In 2020, Just as the world was preparing to fight the coronavirus, the worst pandemic in over a century, Allen, was about to face her own personal crisis – breast cancer. Unlike her daughter, her breast cancer was detected through a routine mammogram. "I was diagnosed with having the BRCA2 gene, Allen said, adding, "Even though I had supported my daughter through her breast cancer diagnoses, I was totally caught off-guard. I couldn't stop crying," she said.

Even though her daughter's breast cancer was more aggressive, Allen was the only one who had to go through chemotherapy. "After my chemotherapy treatments, I had a double mastectomy with reconstructive surgery, and after my lumpectomy I was cancer free." But cancer is always lingering in the mind even when it appears to have been undetected in the body. "I lost a lot of restless nights, and my daughter was now my strength! Friends, family and my church family were also there to provide prayer and support throughout my diagnosis and treatment. I've always trusted God and believed he would bring me through, just like he did for my beloved daughter." Daisy Allen, who resides in Hartsville, is still in the reconstructive phase of this long process, and is still grateful for her journey to recovery. "To God be all the glory. I am a survivor. I am blessed!"

Daphne Davis, is a 10-year breast cancer survivor and still has both a mammogram and MRI screening every six months, alternating between the two screenings because she has the BRCA2 gene. With every screening, she says her heart sinks, but she quickly added, "I'm blessed beyond all measures that God spared my life as well as my mother's life." Breast cancer came to interrupt her life, but it strengthened her belief in God and family. "I Kicked Cancer's Butt," she proudly acknowledged. "I got married Aug. 29, 2010, graduated with my LPN in 2017 and my RN degree in 2019. Despite cancer, I am living a prosperous life."

Daphne Davis and her husband, Johnny, reside in Columbia, and they are the proud parents of three children: Santonia, Jewell and Yasmine.







Kim Jones Gordon

## I WANT TO LIVE!

by Anna Bowman

Just for the record, one thing is profoundly true: Kim Jones Gordon is a fighter. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise because they will only be wasting your time. Upon hearing the four words that no woman ever wants to hear, "You have Breast Cancer," Gordon became engaged in full survival fight mode. "I Want to Live" became her mantra.

In April 2018, Gordon felt a lump in her breast, and like so many women, she just brushed it off as nothing. But once she shared her discovery with her daughter, Ciera, Gordon was given a stern ultimatum: "Tell Dad, or I will?" So, two months after finding the lump in her breast, Gordon made an appointment to see her doctor. "My OB/GYN for the past 25 year did my exam and confirmed that I, indeed, had a lump and scheduled an ultrasound and then a biopsy," she said. "A few days later, he delivered the results to me like he was delivering the results to a family member. He did not want to give me the diagnosis, and I did not want to receive it," she said.

Recalling the day she received the diagnosis, Gordon once again found solace in her daughter. "My first words to Ciera, as I cried in her arms, were that I wanted to be here to see all my children get married and to be here for my grand babies." And Gordon knew her husband, Bob, needed her since he would not be able to marry anyone else, she'd joked with her daughter in an effort to ease the pain that they both were feeling at that moment. But she soon confided to her daughter, "I want to live!"

After the shock settled, Bob Gordon had made it crystal clear, "If those doctors want that breast, you're gonna give it to them,

right?" he'd asked his wife, quickly adding, "I'd rather have you alive, and I don't care about that breast. We're a team, and we're going to do everything the doctors want you to do to survive!" This was a true testament of the love that he vowed to the young woman that became his bride over 30 years ago. He also ensured her that everyone would be praying for her--family, sister and friends--but he wanted her to know that she had to have faith in herself during this unforeseen odyssey.

Kim Jones Gordon said she was fortunate to have had an awesome team of doctors and nurses who assisted her with her treatments. "Prior to my first chemo treatment, the nurse sat down with my husband and me and went over all the side effects: weight loss, mouth sores, fever, nausea, rashes, pain, hair loss and the list went on and on," she recalled. "But my faith wouldn't allow me to accept that happening to me; a boldness came over me I forgot I had!"

As she prepped to receive her first treatment, a very aggressive cocktail nicknamed the "red devil," Gordon politely told the nurse that she would not put anything in her body called "red devil" and quickly renamed the cocktail to reflect her faith, promptly referring to it as the "Blood of Jesus." With the "Blood of Jesus" flowing through her body, both literally and spiritually, Gordon was able to complete her chemotherapy in September 2018. She said that she didn't suffer any major side effects. In fact, she only lost four pounds and only became temporarily "fat, bald and tired." In December 2018, she also had a mastectomy.

After meeting with her surgeon and receiving the news that he couldn't feel any of the three lumps, and neither could her oncologist, Gordon received the best news of her journey: "I was announced to be cancer-free in January 2019!" She proclaimed,

announcing her healing in the name of God Almighty. She said, after going through this process, "I asked God to show me how to encourage others, and he gave me seven nuggets that helped me through my journey." Gordon wants to share her gift with the world.

Kim Gordon's Seven Nuggets:

- 1.) *Learned--Don't be misled by your thoughts. Think right!*
- 2.) *Be Brave and Courageous. Speak life!*
- 3.) *Correction encourages. Condemnation kills.*
- 4.) *It's all right to cry, for a little while. Dry your eyes, and get back up, and keep it moving. And this may happen several times during the process.*
- 5.) *Listen to your body; stop and rest when needed, eat and stay active as much as possible.*
- 6.) *Don't let others' experiences become your experience. Get wise counsel and guidance. Stay positive. There were a few people I knew, a small network of friends who had gone through this process, that gave great advice, tips and spiritual guidance.*
- 7.) *Support from family and friends is vital for recovery, which I think was a big contributor.*

In retrospect, Gordon had a measure of guilt for not seeking medical attention earlier after finding the lump, and she cautions people to please seek medical attention. "Your family deserves and needs you to live a long, productive, good life, and taking care of oneself might be the best cure for any disease or illness, so make sure that happens!" She insisted, "Preventive care is key! And above all, trust God!"

The Gordons, who live in Florence, have been married for 34 years, and they are the parents of Robbie Sellers, Cliff Gordon, Ciera Gordon and Christina Gordon. Kim Jones Gordon, a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and Robert ("Bob") Gordon, a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., are both realtors with United Real Estate. They are members of Trinity Baptist Church.

*The Best Protection Is Early Detection*

**PINK IS STRONGER THAN YOU THINK**

*Love Faith Strength HOPE*

**hope is stronger than fear**

*Life Hope FIGHT FAITH PINK CURE Believe & Life COURAGE Love STRENGTH COURAGE*



# FIGHT CANCER

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## EARLY DETECTION SAVED HER LIFE by Yvette Crawley



Michelle Gandy

At the age of 52, Michelle Gandy was living on a lifetime high. Having raised two beautiful daughters who live up north, Gandy and then fiancée Michael were planning trips and taking vacations. They were working and living life to the fullest and certainly were not ready for the upcoming journey.

In February 2017, Gandy went to the doctor for a regular checkup. Her doctor ordered a routine mammography. Because of the dense breast tissue, she was advised a more thorough mammography was in order. The results of the second mammogram showed spots. Thus, a biopsy had to be done.

In early May, a few weeks after their return from Hawaii, the biopsies were in. Gandy received the life changing call from her doctor, and cancer was confirmed. She immediately felt terrified and petrified. Having lost her maternal grandmother to breast cancer at age 34 and her mother to lung cancer at 58, she was afraid that she was going to die and wondered how her life would be lived now that she was faced with her worst fears.

Gandy's surgeon ordered an MRI with contrast to determine the exact location of the cancer. The MRI results showed two spots on her right breast and a spot on the left.

She was given the option to either have a lumpectomy (surgery that removes cancerous lumps from the breasts) or a bilateral mastectomy (removal of both breasts). After conversations with her fiancé, daughters and family, the decision was made for Gandy to have the bilateral mastectomy in June 2017.

Her first post-op checkup brought good news. The doctor informed her that choosing the bilateral mastectomy was a good decision as they found cancer that was not previously detected in the MRI. In September, Gandy had her first visit with her oncologist and was given the good news that they caught the cancer early, and it had not spread to the lymph nodes. Therefore, Gandy would not need radiation or chemotherapy. She was put on Tamoxifen, a hormone blocker, which would bring on menopause with a side effect of uterine cancer.

Unfortunately, as Gandy moved to the stage of breast reconstruction, she started having other complications and developed an infection and had to have several surgeries.

When it came to support, Gandy was made aware of the various programs available, but felt she had no need to seek this support externally. Her family, friends, co-workers and job rallied around her in such a way that she was able to feel encouraged and strengthened even on the worst of days. Her job raised funds to send meals and a cleaning crew to assist in the home. Her brother would surround her with post-it notes of affirmation like, "I am cancer-free," "I am loved" and "I am beautiful." And she and Michael got married in 2018. Having been a nurse previously, he was happy to use those skills to pamper and take care of her.

In 2019, Gandy had an irregular pap smear. Her oncologist immediately took her off Tamoxifen and said if a hysterectomy was an option to have it done. Her gynecologist ordered a DNC, and

once again, Gandy received good news that she was cancer free, and a hysterectomy is not needed. However, estrogen was needed. She went back to the oncologist with her DNC results, and the oncologist had to come up with another therapy. Because Gandy's breast cancer was estrogen driven, she had to be thrown into post menopause. Her new treatment plan consisted of very costly shots of Depo Lupon and Letrozole with side effects of rapid weight gain, hair loss, mood swings and hot flashes.



Michelle and husband, Michael, along with their girls looking on behind them

Three years and four surgeries later, Gandy is still dealing with the remnants of having cancer. Her reconstructive surgery was unsuccessful, and one of her implants twisted with the right shaped like a football and the left shaped like a baseball. She sometimes experiences bouts of depression and days when she's not feeling very feminine. At Gandy's last visit with her oncologist, he recommended a new plastic surgeon. This new doctor is very confident he can reshape her lady lumps and have her breasts looking and feeling like real breasts. He did advise he would not perform the surgery unless she quit smoking, now adding another medication to her regime, Chantix, which has a whole new list of side effects. Given all these medications and side effects, Gandy is very grateful to her husband who is a saint. He goes out of his way to keep her comfortable and reassure her of her beauty and strength. He's so proud of the fight in her. Now Gandy has quit smoking and is looking forward to her next surgery in October.

She's happy to report that even though she has a family history of cancer, she doesn't have the gene, so it won't be passed onto her two daughters. Gandy remembers sending her two daughters and five nieces a text message telling them how important it was to get a mammography regardless of age.

"It's been a very crazy journey, but I am grateful that I don't have cancer. My husband, family and friends have been with me every step of the way, and I praise them for helping me through this and remaining supportive," she stated.

Gandy says that this journey has changed her life. What's important is that she's still here to provide love and advice to her two daughters and husband.

Her message to women is not to wait until the age of 40 or 50 to have your first mammography. Early detection saves lives.





## READ THESE WARNING SIGNS AND SAFETY TIPS Submitted by The Naomi Project



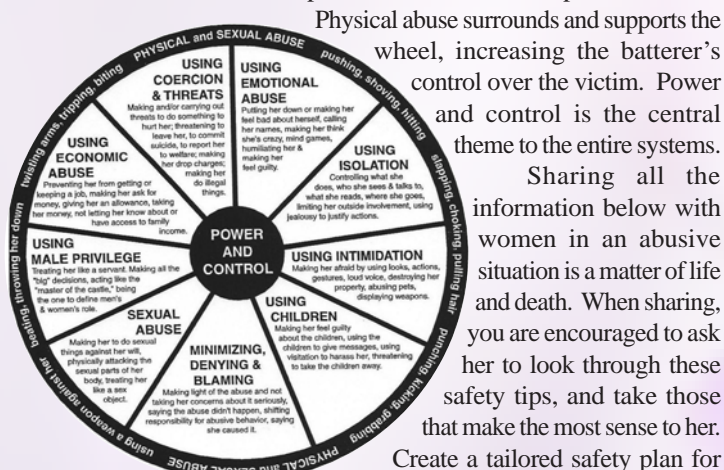
Joyce Ford, executive director of The Naomi Project

October is domestic abuse month, and we celebrate it by having events to capture the essence of what abuse does to the family and the community. What is domestic abuse to most people? It's something that happens to someone else. It's something we don't talk about. It's something that we get used to. It's something that no one understands but me.

Let's look at the Power and Control Wheel developed in 1984 by a Domestic Abuse Intervention Program in Duluth, Minn. It is a tool that helps explain the different ways an abusive partner can use power and control to manipulate a relationship and help recognize the warning signs.

- ✓ **Isolation** – Control what she does: who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes—limiting her outside involvement—using jealousy to justify actions
- ✓ **Emotional Abuse** – Putting her down: making her feel bad about herself, calling her names, making her think she's crazy, playing mind games, humiliating her, making her feel guilty
- ✓ **Financial Abuse** – Preventing her from getting or keeping a job, making her ask for money, giving her an allowance, taking her money, not letting her know about or have access to family income
- ✓ **Sexual Abuse** – Treating you like a sex object, taking lewd photos, putting your health at risk by having other intimate partners, physically attacking the sexual parts of your body, making you perform sexual acts against your will
- ✓ **Use Children** – Making her feel guilty about the children, using the children to relay messages, using visitation to harass her, threatening to take the children away
- ✓ **Intimidation** – Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures; smashing things; destroying her property; abusing pets; displaying weapons
- ✓ **Coercion and Threats** – Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her; threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare; making her drop charges; making her do illegal things
- ✓ **Male Privilege** – Treating her like a servant; making all the big decisions, acting like the “master of the castle”; being the one to define men's and women's role

The wheel symbolizes the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse. Each tactic represents how control and power are used.



herself in her specific situation.

### SAFETY TIPS

- Have extra keys hidden in a convenient place for the family car in case you need to leave quickly
- Keep extra changes of clothes at a friend's house or in something that is not obvious, such as a trash bag
- GET OUT, and go to a safe place with family, friends, or neighbors
- Get copies of marriage and birth certificates (for self and children). Social services or other agencies will need them in order to help
- Get check stubs for income verification (if applicable). Minor children will need social security numbers
- Keep extra change (quarter, dimes and nickels) for telephone calls if necessary. Have some hidden
- Keep a telephone list of friends, neighbors, police, etc.
- Establish credit in your name, if possible
- Discuss situations with a close friend or family member
- Don't keep violence a secret, and don't lose contact with people
- Talking helps you cope!! Go to a reputable lawyer or family doctor, and be honest with him/her asking for advice and help. Most will not charge for a telephone call or conference
- Have an escape plan for self and children, and teach your children how to use it
- Be aware of mood changes that turn into violent behavior
- Keep potential items hidden that can become weapons – guns, knives, bats
- Be willing to go outside, and keep out of the way until the batterer passes out. Don't put yourself in unnecessary danger
- Know your options—you can get a protective order without an attorney
- Keep prescription medication in a purse or in a convenient location and a record of prescription numbers so the medicine can be refilled

### Warning Signs of a Violent Relationship

#### Does your partner...

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try to control and isolate you                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Expect you to agree with him  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibit constant jealousy                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Blame you for any problems in the relationship                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identify with the macho male image              | <input type="checkbox"/> Does the relationship seem to be happening too fast                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use aggressive language                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Does he check up on you   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use drugs or alcohol                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Not support your activities at home or at school                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lose his temper easily                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Does he criticize the way you dress, talk or dance                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Come from an abusive home                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Does he brag about mistreating other people or animals                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blame others for his actions                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you find yourself having to account to him whereabouts when you are not with him |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Show disrespect for his mother and others       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do your friends and family think your partner is dangerous                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restrict you/tell you what to do                |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tell you that you are worthless                 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Embarrass you in front of others                |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Always wants his way                            |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not support your relationships with your family |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Has he verbally or physically lashed out at you |  |

#### Do you feel ...

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sorry for him  | <input type="checkbox"/> You are the only person who loves and understands him enough to help                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flattered by all of this attention                         | <input type="checkbox"/> If you end the relationship he will hurt himself or someone else                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All you have ever wanted is someone to love you back       | <input type="checkbox"/> When you are married, he won't have a reason to feel insecure about losing your love |
| <input type="checkbox"/> His possessiveness is proof of his love                    | <input type="checkbox"/> No one understands that you really love him  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Things will work out and get better on their own           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If you could do everything he asks, the violence will stop |   |



## THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD Submitted by E.R., the child of a survivor



My name is E. I have a family, and my family is called The Rs. We lived in M. I have a big brother and a big sister. The beginning of my story is we lived inside a big house. My mom had been married before and decided to get married to my dad. My dad has a drinking problem. We moved out our big house because of mold and found another house. I had a pink room and a bed like a princess. My mom and dad stayed downstairs inside the basement. There were some problems at the house that needed to be fixed, and my dad got it fixed. One day my dad got drunk and came upstairs, and I was sitting on the floor while my mom did my hair. He reached over me and started choking my mom. I crawled between his legs and ran to tell my brother. That was the worst thing ever. My dad asked my mom, "Who do you love? Me or her?" She replied back saying

she loves us both equally. My brother came and took my dad off my mom. My dad went with my uncle to his place at Aunt V's. But then he came back to the house and knocked on the door, and my mom went to the door and opened it not knowing who it was. My dad stabbed her in the ear with a screwdriver. My dad did other things to her that we didn't know anything about. I heard her scream, but my brother wouldn't let me out. When I got downstairs I saw blood on the floor, and mom told me what happen. The window was broken because my dad and my brother were fighting. The police were called, and they arrested my dad. He had to go to court, and it lasted a long time, and the jury found him guilty. He stayed in jail for 31 days. I missed him so much. I had nightmares, and I was scared. He was admitted to the Harbell program and completed it. Things were good for a while, but then it changed, and he broke his promise and broke my heart. He got drunk like always, started arguing with my mom and pushed her down the stairs, and then he pushed me into the wall. She broke her toes and her shoulder. On another night, he punched my mom in her face while she was sleeping, and she stabbed him in the stomach with a knife. My mom woke me up in the middle of the night, and we got in the car, and my mom told my brother we were leaving, and he asked why, and my mom said she had to go because the abuse had to stop. Me and my mom rode in the car for so many hours, and when we did have to stop we wore disguises. We ended up in South Carolina at a shelter for 61 days where I met Ms. T and Ms. D, and they made me feel so special. Then we came to a safe haven where we met Mrs. J. She helped us so much, and we are so thankful. We are so happy now, just me and my mom.

## SOUTH CAROLINIANS, LISTEN UP! Submitted by Cleyardis McDonald Amaker



*Cleyardis McDonald Amaker*

**SUMTER**-Domestic violence is a crime that happens most often behind closed doors, and it's hard to see it if you don't know what to look for. Cleyardis McDonald-Amaker is the deputy director of the YWCA of the Upper Lowlands, Inc., of Sumter. She shares this sobering information that shows the prevalence of domestic violence related deaths in South Carolina: "I encourage everyone reading this article to come a little closer and really let the words that I speak

resonate! Locally, South Carolina continues to rank within the top 10 percentile of Intimate Partner/Domestic Violence (IP/DV) related deaths! Sadly, we are known for being over twice the national average, as indicated by the Violence Policy Center. Furthermore, on the national spectrum, it's calculated that one to every three women and one to every four men have reported being physically abused! We're not talking sports or educational rankings; we're speaking of acts of domestic violence!"

When wanting to discern whether or not someone is a violent predator, Amaker pinpoints a few red flags: "Domestic violence is about power and control. It's physical, verbal, mental/emotional/psychological, sexual and financial. An individual being manipulative or controlling in the realm of playing mind-games; determining where a person can go; how much money they can spend with no reasoning; and even being allowed to work, are some factors to consider. What is also noted, if a person is working, the perpetrator forces the other person to give them all of their money. Sometimes a person has calculated outbursts/mood swings but does not demonstrate that type of behavior towards others. Verbal insults are nonchalantly spoken. In addition, the perpetrator is also known for finding fault/constantly placing the blame on the victimized individual. Alienation of family and friends is another tactic used to force the power

and control perspective. A victim's advocate is beneficial in assisting with identifying noted elements and providing other IP/DV education to be discussed during their sessions."

In the past, it was near impossible for an individual experiencing domestic violence victim to report the crime to the police and get the help she (or he) needed. This has changed somewhat over the years. "Through public awareness activities and training, law-enforcement and the court system gains insight and increased perspective regarding how to better support individuals who are victimized pertaining to IP/DV," said Amaker. A hard, and somewhat controversial, question to consider is whether abusers can change or not. Can someone who takes his or her anger out on others be able to redirect or let go of the anger? Amaker thinks that it is possible for individuals to change through therapeutic assistance, but it is not done over night. Although she has personally seen someone stop physically abusing others, the person then turned to emotional/psychological abuse, which is oftentimes even worse. She said, "It is a long process. Our YWCA provides a batterer's intervention program to help individuals learn/understand what a healthy relationship is, health communication skills and other aspects pertaining to establishing positive interactions."

If you or someone you know is experiencing violence, please read below:

First and foremost, be an ear and not judgmental. Many individuals don't realize that the most dangerous time of an individual's transition is when one makes the decision to leave the abusive relationship. The best advice when assisting individuals experiencing intimate partner/domestic violence is seek the assistance of trained advocates who specialize in safety planning through the National Domestic Violence Hotline <https://www.thehotline.org/1-800-799-0SAFE> (7233) Deaf/hard of hearing 1-855-812-1011 (VP), 18007873224 (TTY). From this resource, individuals will direct that person to agencies such as the YWCA of the Upper Lowlands, Inc., for safe shelter, resources and empowerment.



## ROUSE ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES Articles by Ta'Meeka Epps



Tawanda Rouse

Durant Children's Center (DCC) is an advocacy program within the Pee Dee Coalition against Domestic and Sexual Assault (PDC), a domestic violence/sexual assault organization, which focuses on the Domestic Violence Awareness Month themes: "Mourning those who have died because of domestic violence; Celebrating those who have survived and Connecting those who work to end violence."

DCC has had children whose parent or both parents have died due to domestic violence. An unfortunate statistic shows an abusive person often plans to take the life of his or her partner, their child/children as well as his or her own life as a final act of violence.

Ellen Hamilton, founder of PDC, is also considered a founding mother of Children Advocacy Centers (CACs) in South Carolina. DCC became the second child advocacy center established in South Carolina in 1994. In the past 26 years, DCC has grown to serve children and families in eight counties within three judicial circuits (3rd, 4th, & 12th), at three sites in Florence, Hartsville and Sumter.

Tawanda Rouse has been in her role with DCC for nearly four years. "As lead family advocate, my responsibilities focus on managing the child and family's services from their initial contact with DCC until law enforcement and/or DSS-CPS case dispositions. I advocate with a child- and family-centered perspective when providing services that include: DCC staff and MDT case review meetings; linking families to community resources; accompanying them to court procedures; family follow-up and case tracking data collection; as well as training and coaching the other advocates."

The CAC provides forensic services for children suspected of being a victim of crime including child physical abuse, sexual abuse/assault and victim witness of crime. A child may be a witness to a variety of crimes, but in the Pee Dee, a child is most likely to be a victim witness of domestic violence.

The Durant Children's Center promotes:

- Breaking Free-Creating the possibility of ensuring that no one, adult or child, has to be oppressed by, or feel trapped in, a domestic violence relationship.
- Combatting Domestic Violence- DCC has family advocates who work with the family and educate the community through printed material; in-service training about program services, Adverse Childhood Experiences, signs of child abuse & mandated reporting.

Domestic violence impacts those served by Durant Children's Center directly and indirectly. It has been shown through data collection that children tend to repeat in their adult life what they see or are exposed to in their youth. If raised in a domestic violence setting, there is the propensity for them to either become a victim as an adult or become the aggressor in a relationship.

Rouse's purpose and driving force behind why she serves with the Pee Dee Coalition and Durant Children's Center is to be a vehicle of change for others by advocating with them and creating opportunities for children and families to become healthy, self-sufficient participants in their own lives by activating actions for improvement of services and systems.

Tawanda Rouse is a divorced mother of four adult children, who have blessed her with beautiful families of their own. Born and raised in Florence, she earned all three of her degrees from South Carolina colleges and universities: public service-paralegal/legal assistant, Florence-Darlington

Technical College; Bachelor of Social Work, Limestone College; and Master of Social Work, University of South Carolina, Columbia. She enjoys baking, traveling and community outreach.

For more information on the work performed by the Pee Dee Coalition and Durant Children's Center, visit <https://peedeecoalition.org>.

## NEW BEGINNINGS TO BREAK THE CYCLE



Shonaca Kollock

When domestic abuse victims find the strength to leave and never return, those waiting to receive them and help them navigate are invaluable to their new experience. New Beginnings Transition Shelter (NBTS) is such an organization that helps connect the victims to the services and programs needed for healing. "I get to be the voice for the victims because domestic violence should never thrive in silence."

Those words were spoken by Shonaca Kollock, senior case manager at the shelter.

NBTS is a place where women and children are provided with shelter and living necessities for up to two years, which are essential to their restoration. Opportunity for education, work experience and access to needed services and agencies are provided. This time affords the women an opportunity to start over and rebuild their lives in an environment conducive to growth. NBTS started as an emergency shelter called New Beginning in 2004. Because of the need for a longer stay for victims, the doors were opened June of 2017. The shelter was created out of necessity by Marlboro County Chapter Board, executive director, and concerned citizens.

As the senior case manager at NBTS, Kollock provides ongoing direct services for the center as well as the residents and residential support. Her day-to-day work includes disseminating information/referrals, acting as liaison between victims and agencies, victim advocacy, aiding the residents in navigating the criminal justice system and crisis intervention.

Kollock arranges transportation, ensures childcare assistance and necessities such as food, personal supplies and clothing for interviews, and financial support are available for residents. Under her direction, the center organizes and facilitates empowerment educational groups, resume and mock interview workshops and connects the residents with several agencies within the region that host career and job fairs.

The transformation of lives is evident in the work done at NBTS. Upon entry into the program, domestic violence looks like many things to some: depression, inability to trust, anxiety and low self-esteem. Others question their existence, struggle with bouts of hopelessness and have little motivation to be an active participant in their own lives. As women progress through the program at NBTS, they transform from victims of domestic violence to survivors. They regain their power and control by overcoming the trauma of domestic violence and rebuilding their lives.

Kollock has served as senior case manager for three years. However, she has served domestic violence victims for 12 years. When asked why she serves, she offered this thought, "I serve with the hopes to save lives, break the cycle of domestic violence and create new opportunities for women and children living their lives in fear and danger."

New Beginnings Transitional Shelter and its dedicated staff are committed to empowering, inspiring and encouraging women and their families to break the cycle of domestic violence through awareness and prevention education programs.



## EMERGENCY SAFE SHELTER ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS Articles by Ta'Meeka Epps



*Lula Holmes-Covington*

The themes of Domestic Violence Awareness Month for October 2020 are of utmost importance. The victims who do not survive, is a great loss to their families, friends and to their community. We must remember the survivors because they need protection and assistance to regain control of their emotional well-being. It takes connecting and networking as a team to continue the fight for the prevention of domestic violence (i.e. law enforcement, medical services, counseling services and organizations such as Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault).

The Pee Dee Coalition against domestic and sexual assault theme for 2020 is "Breaking Free from Domestic Violence." The organization sponsors an annual Breaking Free Challenge, which will be held virtually this year due to COVID-19. The organization provides an emergency safe shelter program that was established in 1989 as temporary housing for victims of domestic violence who are in an emergency or crisis situation and have nowhere to go.

To receive assistance through the Emergency Safe Shelter (ESS), eligibility must first be established. Its established through an assessment via the crisis phone line, or the victim will be received as a walk-in at one of the county satellite centers. Once eligibility is determined, and if a bed is available, the victim is accepted in the shelter.

The victim is provided with toiletries, bed linen, towels, washcloths and/or clothing as needed. She is then given a tour of the house and shown to an assigned room. Staff documents data into the client tracking system. Sometimes emergency situations arise where the staff has to use discretion on how best to handle the situation. Shelter staff are non-judgmental, compassionate, empathetic and possess an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence. Victims have been subjected to trauma and feel unsafe, worthless, have lost confidence in themselves and experience low self-esteem. While in the ESS they are surrounded by love and receive access to the needed services and programs to begin the journey to healing.

Lula Holmes-Covington is employed by the ESS as a member of the night and weekend relief staff. She has been in the employ of the shelter since February 2000. She serves in this capacity because she can relate to being vulnerable and needing assistance. "I believe if you are able to help those who are in need, it's the right thing to do and the only thing to do, so you serve," she explained.

The primary purpose of the ESS is to provide a safe place for victims. It is geared toward empowering victims and does so by providing the following services: individual counseling, support groups for women and children, court accompaniment, personal advocacy, housing, legal matters, referrals to community resources and discussion groups on living skills, money management and parenting skills, to name a few. Activities for children are also provided.

Serving others is a selfless act, which brings about positive benefits for the mental and emotional well-being. Lula Holmes-Covington is a retired vocational specialist with Florence County Disabilities and Special Needs Board where she served for 17 years.

She also served as a cosmetologist. She continues to serve with the Florence Emergency Safe Shelter because it is a big house with an even bigger heart that exists to protect and serve the survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse.

## SHIFTING THE PARADIGM ON VIOLENCE



*Freda Cox, hard at work doing what she does best.*

**KINGSTREE-** The three centralized themes that remain a key focus of Domestic Violence Awareness month and the theme for the Pee Dee Coalition applies to those who use violence and abuse as a means of

control and power as well as those who are on the receiving end of the behavior.

In order to shift the paradigm of this deadly pandemic both parties must receive treatment to rehabilitate and heal. The abuser must be shown alternative ways to process emotions and must be taught self-control strategies and acceptable socialization techniques. The abused needs to be made to feel safe, secure and loved.

Providing advocacy to families of victims murdered due to domestic violence can be both devastating and rewarding. However, it is vital to the healing process. Victim advocates must have strong interpersonal communication skills and be able to communicate effectively with people of all levels of education and various backgrounds. They must be sympathetic, understanding and patient.

Freda Cox serves as the Williamsburg County Services coordinator. She has served diligently in this position for 27 years and has had the privilege of serving five families who suffered the loss of a loved one due to domestic violence. Although the work of a victim advocate can be challenging, there is reason to celebrate all the survivors who successfully navigate the obstacles along the way to a violence-free life. "The resiliency required for victims to survive what I call 'domestic terrorism' is oftentimes incredible to witness," Cox explained.

As the coordinator, her responsibilities cover a multitude of layers. She is tasked with raising awareness by developing and conducting community education through public speaking on issues of interpersonal violence; media interviews; in-service trainings to professionals; and attendance in community events.

Cox coordinates and completes implementation of county awareness activities for special awareness months. She collaborates with service providers throughout the region to provide services to victims and serves as community liaison to local businesses, churches, service providers and leaders to ensure the fulfillment of the organization's mission. She also provides supervision to a trauma counselor and volunteer coordinator on staff.

On the client level, she assesses client needs and coordinates services for families experiencing interpersonal violence, including but not limited to, medical and legal counseling, criminal justice advocacy, crisis intervention, court testimonies, accompaniment and resource procurement.

Williamsburg County Services provides victim services to domestic



## SHIFTING THE PARADIGM CONT'D

violence, sexual assault and child abuse victims, but the majority of the victims served here are those of domestic violence (DV). “In my role as community services coordinator, when working with DV victims with children, the need for safety may not be the only issue. The victim’s children may need educational advocacy or trauma counseling. The victims may need job skills assistance or employer intervention due to excessive absences.

The organization and staff embrace the theme “breaking free.” Breaking free is about the freedom to live your life without the fear of violence. When someone leaves an abusive relationship, he or she is becoming free from the shackles of fear. It’s a celebration of the strength

and courage it takes to move forward with life. It also invokes a feeling of “yes, I’m worthy and deserving of my freedom.”

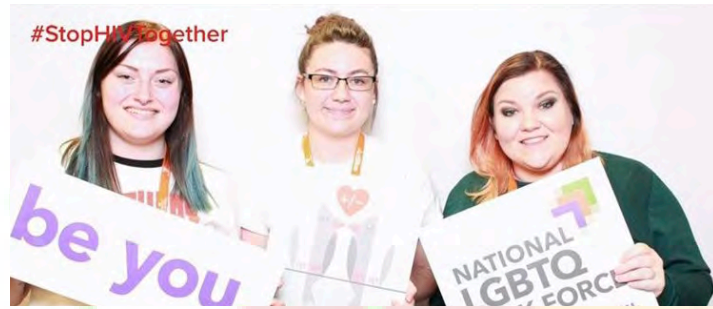
For Freda Cox, serving is an honor. “It’s an honor to serve victims who have allowed you inside of their lives at one of the most vulnerable and challenging times they may ever experience. It’s a heart-felt realization when you know you have contributed to helping to make an impactful and positive change in the life of a survivor of domestic violence.”

For more information about the services provided and the work being done by the dedicated staff, visit the website at <https://www.williamsburgcounty.sc.gov/>.

## Recognizing Coming Out Day

### FMU GSA SERVES AS SAFE SPACE FOR STUDENTS

*Submitted by Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) at FMU*



*Our GSA officers for the 2019 school year traveled to Detroit, Mich. to attend the Creating Change Conference. There, they attended workshops and gathered new resources to bring back to the students of Francis Marion.*

The Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) at Francis Marion University (FMU) has long been a safe and resourceful space for students. The main goals of our organization are focused on providing for students. The GSA acts as a source of information for those who may not know where else to go for answers. Through meetings and general communication between members and other interested students, information and resources can be widespread.

For some students the idea of getting tested for HIV/AIDS can be daunting and scary, but the GSA has provided resources and education while encouraging anyone to get tested, even if it is only for peace of mind. During Pride Week, HIV testing is made available for free, courtesy of HopeHealth, to students on the campus, and information is given out to show students where they can get tested at other times of the year.

The GSA also works with various departments within the university to help spread information and education to groups of students who may have questions or misunderstandings about those who identify as a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. In the past, the GSA has been a guest speaker in a Gender Studies course and has been a source for students in an academic setting. Events such as inclusive sex-ed talks and panels have also been held to make mostly undiscussed topics more accessible to all students on campus.

The GSA works to promote diversity on campus while also providing a safe space for students. Our goal is to make our organization known all over campus and show students that we are here for them and can provide a place for them to feel like themselves. By promoting our

organization through public events and the distribution of information, we are able to show the surrounding community that there is a safe place for everyone at Francis Marion University and that students should not have to fear being themselves. During GSA meetings, members and officers work together to plan events and collect resources to destigmatize the LGBTQIA+ community and make for a more diverse and enjoyable college experience for all.

Events the GSA has hosted have been educational as well as full of entertainment. We have worked with the Film Department on campus to have movie showings (recently, “Moonlight” and “The Danish Girl”) and topical discussions on their relation to the LGBTQIA+ community. Having in-depth discussion of film representation of LGBTQIA+ people can breed profound conversations as well as raise important and complex questions.

Another event that the GSA has held in the past is a drag show. While the show provides immense entertainment for all of FMU and its community, it also holds its own educational value. Students who may not be invested in the GSA when they begin their college career at Francis Marion leave the show with an excited and enlightened air about them. For many students, the GSA Drag Show is the first LGBTQIA+ event they have ever attended, so we try to destigmatize the community through authentic experiences mixed with genuine information and education.

As an organization, the officers and members of the Gender-Sexuality Alliance at Francis Marion University are committed to providing education, resources and a safe space for all students. In the future, we are looking to continue promoting diversity while working toward further destigmatization. We are also working toward becoming more active within the community of Florence and putting on more events for students and community members to attend. By working with students and the staff of the university, the GSA acts as a go-between for the two. Ideas and requests of the students can be brought to the GSA to be formalized and presented to the administration. The staff and administration can also use the GSA to gauge the opinions of students to gain a perspective of the campus they might have not otherwise had. We look forward to continuing to be the go-between for students and staff to bridge the communication and perspective gap.



# Recognizing Coming Out Day

## LOVE OR HATE? YOU DECIDE.

Submitted by Mary Reaves



I never really had a “coming out” moment. When I was young, I always knew I liked women. It just felt natural. Then, when I was in the fifth grade, one of my friends asked if I was a lesbian, but I didn’t know what it meant. They told me it was when you like girls like you like boys. And I said, “Oh, then I guess I am. I didn’t know there was a word for it.”

At the beginning of my high school years, my sexuality became very warped around the stereotype of a “not-so-feminine” lesbian, which drew my father’s attention. One day, after a short falling out, he sat me down and asked me very calmly if I was gay, to which I replied, “I think so.” While his outlook on my sexuality has since improved tenfold, but I’ll never forget the words he told me that day. He looked me directly in the eye and said, “You know I love you no matter what, but if that’s they life you choose, it’s going to be a hard life.” His words shook me to my core. From then on until the end of high school, I always felt the pressures of the designated “norm” weighing down on me living in the South and the negativity and stereotype applied to any gay or lesbian person, and it did cast a large shadow on me. I still dated men out of fear of the ramifications of fully accepting myself as a gay woman. I didn’t truly “come out” fully until I met my fiancée.

She gave me the ability to love myself enough to be true to who I was. Until I met her, I felt the fear of society’s judgement, as if my life would have been much harder if I fully came out and that I would always have the short end of the stick or run into unpredictability’s because of my sexuality. But my fiancée gave me the confidence to live my life to the fullest and find the love in myself I never knew existed. I owe everything I have to her.

I am lucky to say that I have not experienced any violent forms of adversity that have threatened my safety, but that doesn’t stop me from being extra careful in places that I feel I shouldn’t have to be. On that note, I do still feel the effects of being a gay woman in the South. Much of them I attribute to the same effect of sexism, but being a woman will never stop me from doing a job any man can do or having a voice for myself.

If I had one message for the younger generation that struggles to accept themselves, it’s please do not ever question yourself. Don’t ever be something you’re not for an unforgiving world. Love yourself to your full ability and beyond. It can open up a new world you never knew existed. I have a dream of one day, starting an LGBT mentoring program to help encourage young minds to embrace their sexuality, to never fear or run from it, to give a warm and safe place for any kid who feels like they can’t be who they are in their home, or just need someone to talk to about it. Everyone deserves love and to love who they love. No exceptions. This world is full of so much love, and so much hate. It’s up to you to decide which one you want to embrace.

## A DIFFERENT COMING OUT STORY

Submitted by Mary Cline McKnight



The first girl I had a full-blown crush on was named Wendy, and she almost always wore these bright red rain boots. I was ten years old, and we were on a field trip to Monticello. She was making my newly purchased Thomas Jefferson souvenir doll dance while singing a made up song. My dumb gay heart fell hard

in love for the very first time. However, that is whenever I realized that I might be a little bit gay.

Most people have a very serious coming out story. However, that is not my case. There are a few things that I need to share before continuing. One, my parents are divorced, and my mom had left my biological father the year I realized I was gay. Two, my uncle on my mom’s side is gay. Three, my biological father is an abusive man, and that fact that he is homophobic and transphobic just adds to my hate for him. Four, once my mom leaned out a car window to yell that she loves gay people when we were driving by some anti-gay protesters.

So for some stupid reason, when I was twelve, some of my siblings and I had to go stay with my biological father for a small part of the summer. Now that summer was horrible for many reasons, but we’re not here to get into all of that. I’m here to talk about how I came out to my family that summer. As previously stated, my biological father is homophobic, and I hate him so my older sister and I, for some reason, decided I could “pretend” to be a lesbian to piss him off. So I did just that. I even made up a fake girlfriend named Jane after a character from a webcomic called Homestuck. Not only was I getting on his nerves, I was very much enjoying being openly gay.

So flash forward a little bit to after my time staying with him to when some of my family and I were at a hotel in Myrtle Beach for fun beach time. My older sister was teasing me about something, and somehow the whole pretending to be gay thing came up. I don’t remember how, but that first person I came out to for real was my older sister while we were in a hotel pool. Then, I had her tell our mom for me because I was an anxious little kid.

Later when I come out as a gender I’ll have her tell my mom again because I got anxiety. Now that coming out story involves a dumb Facebook post and a break down at a Fall Out Boy concert, but that’s a completely different story.





# Recognizing Coming Out Day

## ON BEING PROUD OF WHOM I AM Submitted by Joey, FMU Student



I decided to come out when I was about to move onto campus for college the summer before my freshman year. I was young, terrified and extremely brainwashed by the Pentecostal Holiness church I was attending at the time. I had been there for seven years. I felt safe telling my mother since she had been trotting

around the question for so long. Telling my secular friends was nothing since most of them knew already, and they all swore to secrecy. Telling the world, or even the thought of it, felt like I was prepping for my own public stoning in a way.

I decided to tell a friend in the church--someone I thought would understand. That person did, a little too well. This person and I had secretive sexual relations for about a year or so before she confessed to the pastor about our relationship. I was in high standing at my church: youth worship leader, co-children's church program director, etc. These positions were taken from me as soon as the pastor made an altar call for me in front of entire church to pray the "homosexual demon" that lived inside of me away. I was no longer allowed near children in our church. I received phone calls and text messages with threats to stay away from their families. I was told to sit at the back so I wouldn't cause disturbances in services. I wasn't ex-communicated

because that would be failure to witness, but I was erased from their family photo.

In the end, this was the best thing that ever happened to me. Do I pay a fortune in therapy to attempt to rid myself of the religious trauma it caused? Absolutely. And let's be honest. The people that matter the most to me either have supported me through that time, or I have met because I went through those events and have been able to be myself in my adult life. I went on the very next year to be president of a Gender-Sexuality Alliance and have led and participated in gay Christian support groups.

In reflection, I see where it hurt some of these individuals that loved me immensely. I see that in their eyes, someone who they "loved" so deeply is going to their believed hell. But the difference between these people and the people who really love you, is they adapt, understand and grow as humans when confronted with difference and love you anyway.

Instead of spending my nights begging God to take this away from me, I shout it in front of political buildings and at protests.

There are moments where I have fleeting moments of panic and go right back to where I was five years ago--moments when I see someone from my old church while I'm on a date, thinking for brief moments that I am living in sin and that I must repent. But they are fleeting, indeed, and now I know that I am a gay woman, and I couldn't be prouder of who I am.



## National Disability Employment

### EMPOWERING AND DEVELOPING DESPITE DISABILITIES by De'Angela Haynes

The month of October is set aside to celebrate **NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH 2020**, and the purpose is to educate about disability employment issues and also to celebrate the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities.

Although Marion, which is a part of the Pee Dee Region, is known as the "Fly-Over Zone" and within the "Corridor of Shame," this same town, county and city are producing some of the most talented people. Regardless of some limitations of those who have disabilities, that doesn't stop others such as Jennifer Arambulo from believing in these individuals by empowering them and providing life skills necessary to help them reach their goals.

Arambulo serves as the job coach for the Marion-Dillon Board of Disabilities & Special Needs (MDCBDSN). She, along with many others, takes healthy pride in providing opportunities for employment to those whom they serve. Arambulo has a passion, and when you see passion demonstrated, it provides hope to all of these individuals: Melissa Jordan, Brittney Davis, Rasha Graves, Jonathon Floyd, Jeffery Richardson and Darrell Baccus. These are the ones who are making great strides in Marion, and here are a few highlights concerning their lives, accomplishments and great achievements.

**MELISSA JORDAN** – Employed at McDonald's (Marion) since 09/03/2019

- High school graduate (diploma) from Mauldin High School
- Enrolled with our agency (Marion-Dillon Board of Disabilities & Special Needs)
- Worked at Twice As Nice Thrift Store of Marion from 2/12/2018 – 06/28/2019
- Currently working at McDonald's as a part of the kitchen crew, working on the grill doing burgers; on the frying area, doing French fries and nuggets; and on the table, preparing sandwiches and burritos for customers
- Works for 25-30 hours/week at McDonald's
- Has been with MDCBDSN



*Brittney Davis*

**BRITTNEY DAVIS** – Employed at Helping Hands-Free Medical Clinic since 03/29/2018

- High school graduate with occupational certificate from Marion High School
- Finished Nurse Aide Training program in 2010 from Palmetto Healthcare Training Center
- Currently working as an office/clinic cleaner at Helping Hands Clinic for both Marion and Mullins
- Has been with MDCBDSN



## EMPOWERING & DEVELOPING CONT'D



Rasha Graves

**RASHA GRAVES – Employed at Maxwood Furniture, Inc (Mullins) since 07/06/2020**

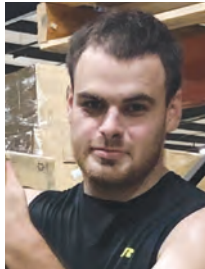
- Earned high school certificate from Creek Bridge High School
- Worked as office/clinic cleaner at Helping Hands-Free Medical clinic from 5/24/2018 -01/18/2019
- Part of the group that does the re-painting of dumpsters for American Waste Systems, since 2017
- Part of the group that does lawn/yard maintenance for American Waste Systems

- Currently working at Maxwood Furniture. Originally hired to do janitorial work, but after a month of working there, he is now doing warehouse helper duties, like unloading of cargo, labeling boxes and wrapping and strapping of pallets

- Works between 25-28 hours/week at Maxwood Furniture
- Has been with MDCBDSN

**JONATHON FLOYD – Employed at Maxwood Furniture, Inc (Mullins) since 07/16/2020**

- Earned high school certificate from Lower Richland High School
- Part of the group that does the re-painting of dumpsters for American Waste Systems, since 2017
- Currently working at Maxwood Furniture as a warehouse helper unloading and loading cargo, labeling boxes and wrapping and strapping of pallets
- Works between 25-28 hours/week at Maxwood Furniture
- Has been with MDCBDSN



Jeffery Richardson

**JEFFERY RICHARDSON – Employed at Maxwood Furniture, Inc (Mullins) since 07/28/2020**

- Earned High School Certificate from Marion High School
- Part of the Group that do the re-painting of dumpsters for American Waste Systems, since 2017
- Part of the Group that does lawn/yard maintenance for American Waste Systems and Helping Hands-Free Medical Clinic

- Part of MDCBDSN lawn crew, doing the yard maintenance for Marion Center and the residential houses of MDCBDSN

- Currently working at Maxwood Furniture as a warehouse helper doing unloading and loading of cargo, labeling of boxes, wrapping and strapping of pallets

- Works between 25-28 hours/week at Maxwood Furniture
- Has been with MDCBDSN

**DARRELL BACCUS – Employed at Helping Hands-Free Medical Clinic since 01/30/2019**

- Earned high school certificate from Marion High School
- Currently working as an office/clinic cleaner at Helping Hands Clinic for both Marion and Mullins
- Has been with MDCBDSN

As a people, we should never limit the abilities of others, regardless of their circumstances or situations. This is why we celebrate and want to bring awareness to the organizations in order to recognize workplaces that are welcoming the talents of all people, including workers with a disability, as a critical part of their efforts to build an inclusive community and strong economy. Despite having disabilities, these individuals are being empowered and developed to be movers and shakers in this world, and they're not looking for an excuse or pity.

## FROM AWARENESS TO DISCOVERY

by De'Angela Haynes



Byron Dion Johnson

**DARLINGTON**—Awareness is the state of being conscious of something. More specifically, it is the ability to directly know and perceive, to feel or to be cognizant of events. However, discovery is an act of finding out or learning for the first time. Here's a young man in the Darlington community is certainly worth discovering. Byron Dion Johnson, a 2020 Darlington High School graduate, is a 1980s music lover and a person who never meets a stranger.

Johnson loves spending time with family and friends and enjoys going to local sporting events, especially if the event relates to his high school, the Darlington Falcons. In the last eight years, Johnson has participated with some of his high school classmates in planning their homecoming events.

The sports aficionado admires athletes such as LeBron James, Kobe Bryant and Michael Jordan, and he has pictures of them hanging in his bedroom. Johnson's favorite pro-basketball teams are the Los Angeles Lakers and Chicago Bulls, and his college team is the North Carolina Tar Heels. In his spare time, he likes to play with his Xbox, listen to old school R&B and watch the different basketball games, especially now since it's the NBA playoffs. He collects Air Jordan sneakers and loves to wear sports apparel everywhere he goes.

Outside of watching sports, Johnson enjoys working out at the YMCA, where he lifts weights and walks on the treadmill, and he has people there that he enjoys talking with. He is also committed to his exercise regimen. He loves going to the mall and shopping for the latest video game that just came out and visiting stores like Footlocker and GameStop, where he can look at the latest sneakers.

A lover of family, Johnson and his mother, Teresa Bruce, and his brothers, Alston and Maurice are very close. He's always talking with his mother, telling her how his day has gone, talking to her about some of the things that are on his mind, and sharing with her special things that he wants to achieve in his life. And he is the biggest cheerleader of his grandmother, Ida Johnson. He loves being with and visiting his family as well as spending time catching up with his friends. He is very personable.

Johnson is employed with the Darlington County DSN Board where he's worked on the yard maintenance crew in the City of Darlington since August 2011. He mows the perfect lawn, operates the weed eater and uses the blower to remove debris from parking lots and driveways. He works with two other young men, and the three of them are assigned different areas around the City to perform lawn maintenance jobs. Johnson is a great employee. He's focused and a hard worker. When he sets a goal, he tries his best to stick to it and accomplish it. Johnson believes in God and that God answers prayers.

As the month of October is the month to bring awareness to great employees, it's awesome to discover the great things happening in the life of this young man and others. They are doing phenomenal things and are not allowing their disabilities to be excuses for not experiencing the quality of life.





## INCLUSIVE NOT EXCLUSIVE by De'Angela Haynes



Opening the new location of South Park and cutting the ribbon: Michelle (right), a consumer who works at that location, and Anne Carpenter, executive director of the Florence County Disabilities Foundation.

As we reflect upon our world and everything that's happening in it, there are people who are doing some amazing things. Some are born without any complications in the birthing process, while others are born with disabilities: physical, psychological, etc. However, despite the limitations or labels that they may face and encounter, they still don't allow their disabilities to limit their minds, their imaginations, hopes, dreams and accomplishments. What is even more powerful is that there are those who have the heart and passion to educate, assist and even employ those with disabilities, helping to ensure that there is nothing missing, lacking or broken in their lives. This is why the Florence County Disabilities Foundation is being highlighted for this in the Pee Dee Region because of those with whom it serve and also the quality and excellent service it provides and has provided over the past four decades.

The Florence County Disabilities Foundation was founded in 1990 to provide funding and resources to people living with life-long disabilities. One of the first businesses that the Foundation started was the "Hole-in-One" Doughnut Shop in Lake City. It was staffed by many consumers (terminology for those we serve), and they served breakfast and lunch. It also had gift shops in which they worked and made items that were sold in the gift shops. They made things such as wreaths and pomander balls that were also sold to other shops in the region.

It was decided that thrift shops may be the way to go as the times changed, so the Golden Opportunities Thrift Shop was formed in Lake City. The consumers began working in those stores and helped take in donations, sort through donations and keep the stores neat and clean. The main purpose was to give them a place to work. With them becoming profitable, they began to expand to help support the consumers with paying jobs and as a way to support them in other ways. The next thrift store opened in Scranton and then in Florence. At that time, the name was

changed to Pee Dee Thrift. At one time, there were five thrift stores. The locations were Florence, Scranton, Lake City and Johnsonville. Currently, four remain in Florence, Scranton and Lake City.

Anne Carpenter, the executive director for the Florence County Disabilities Foundation, had several great things to say about the thrift stores' consumers. "Many of our consumers are highlighted on posters in our stores and the donation vehicles owned by the Foundation. There have been 35 or more consumers working throughout the five stores who have goals to reach, new duties to learn and a paycheck to earn. They are an integral part of the thrift shops. With the threat of the COVID-19 virus, the stores have had to do without the consumers and have only been run by two part-time staff members in each store. They were missed! Not only do they help with some of the work involved, but they also kept you smiling and reminded you why you were here. They have begun to come back to the stores on a limited basis, and the smiles are returning."

In the past, a supervisor with the Florence County Disabilities and Special Needs Board (FCDSNB) brought them to the stores. They picked them up and got them to each store and then worked with them on overseeing the job they do. When the consumers were not able to work, the supervisors have gone to the homes and worked with them. The consumers have goals they work on, and they are assessed by an individual who comes to observe them and how they are performing. Most of the consumers are "high level" and are able to do what the rest of the staff can do.

"We have consumers who live in their own apartments or homes, live in the FCDSNB residences live at home with family members. Several of them can drive themselves to wherever they need to go. The goal is to make them as independent as possible. Working in businesses that assist in supporting them is a win-win situation. Their work helps to raise funds that go to provide them with dental care, start-up costs, specialized equipment, recreation, sports and so much more," said Carpenter.

"Many of them have grown up with the Foundation. They started in the doughnut shop and continued on in the thrift shops. Their fellow workers are happy when they are happy and sad to see them sad. We are a family! This is certainly worth knowing and learning about how such great impact is being made. The Florence County Disabilities Foundation certainly demonstrates being inclusive and not exclusive as it relates to caring for, empowering and employing those with disabilities!"



From left to right (top row): Daniel at East Palmetto St. Store; Morgan at East Palmetto St. Store; Will at East Palmetto; Faye at Lake City store

From left to right (bottom): Christina at Lake City; Stephen- Assistant to the Donation Truck driver; Leesa at Lake City; Keith at Lake City- When Keith isn't working, he is training for the Special Olympics. He was a gold and silver medalist at the International Special Olympics in 2017. He won a gold medal for Alpine skiing. We had three medalists at the Special Olympic Winter games that year. Lattice won a medal for snowboarding, and Jackie won a medal for Alpine skiing.





*Chaqueta Stuckey*

## OUR VOICES COUNT, TOO *by De'Angela Haynes*

What is a voice? A voice is when you give verbal expression to great thoughts and ideas. It's a way to reveal the true sentiments of the heart. In the history of people with intellectual disabilities (IDD), fighting for rights, equality, dignity and respect has always been a struggle. Today, we still face some of the same struggles. Chaqueta Stuckey and Latrice Pringle both provide this description on the history

of people with intellectual disabilities because it is necessary for individuals in communities to know that every voice matters. It is important for those who speak up to also speak out on behalf of others who do not speak for themselves. They really just want people to listen and hear what people with intellectual disabilities have to say. They advocate for their voices to be heard. What is a voice if it is not a part of a conversation or heard?

Stuckey is so full of life and passion, and she believes that everyone should have the chance to live, work and experience life. She does not take any of it for granted because she fights for this freedom. She has a very grateful heart and stated that back on Jan. 21, this was her chance to really work and be involved in the community. She currently works in the cafeteria at Briggs Elementary School. Stuckey said that she is a recipient of services from the Florence County Disabilities and Special Needs Board. Her services began in 2007, which was a turning point for her to gain some independence and learn more about opportunities. She stated that she lived with her parents but finally got an opportunity to live independently in 2016. Her voice was finally heard. She was able to meet this accomplishment with pride. While it was a challenge to get others to believe in her abilities to be responsible enough to live independently, Stuckey shares she is constantly trying to earn respect daily. The next goal for Stuckey is to have her own home.

She has been a part of a self-advocate movement since 2010. The self-advocacy movement is a civil rights movement for people with IDD. "It is people speaking up for what they think is important and empowering ourselves to fight for those significant issues. In this movement we are making our case and negotiating what we want. I love being a part of this movement because my voice will stand for change for the better, regardless. When you are in a movement, it makes you not feel like you are on the island alone. I am honored to be able to have a contact in every state of our nation by being a part of this movement."

It makes a difference when a voice needs to be heard. Stuckey is currently president of a local self-advocacy group called "Our Voices Count, Too!!!"

She went on to say that she is a member of "Impact of South Carolina State Group" and Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), a national group. These self-advocate groups run their own meetings and lead others through business. Stuckey has been involved in the election process for officers as well as been a part of the vote projects--emphasis on accessible voter machines. Due to COVID-19, Stuckey shared she has stepped up with virtual options to stay connected and involved with the self-advocate movement. Being a

part of this group has given her tremendous opportunity to grow and learn from others. She is on the national circuit to provide workshops and keynotes for many states requesting her services. Stuckey has participated in webinars and video blogging, and she's excited because she's learning every day. She mentioned that she gets to present with her allies who are professional and work in the field of IDD upon request. Stuckey said that she also has a sister that she got to do a presentation with.

For these great opportunities of experience and opportunities for people served in Florence, Stuckey credits FCDSNB for believing in people. It makes her feel good and helps with her confidence. She says it's just good to have support, which everybody needs, and she believes everyone should be given a chance.

Stuckey participates in the Special Olympics and loves doing tennis. She started off doing track & field and the softball throw. She mentioned that other members from different areas and different states get to participate in the Special Olympics, and this is very exciting for her because she loves sports, particularly football and basketball. Her favorite two tennis players are Serena and Venus Williams.

This is an exceptional young lady who has a passion for life and is a VOICE for the people!



*Latrice Pringle*

## Special Olympics Athlete Highlights Global Inclusion through Diversity

The Special Olympics is a movement from athletes with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics provides an opportunity for people to compete in a variety of sports to show their athletic skills and talents and most of all, prove that people with intellectual disabilities belong on any playing field.

It is the most exciting time for Pringle to show her athleticism. Pringle is driven by sports in general. She has

competed courageously in several sports such as swimming, tennis and track activities, and she was the first African-American female athlete to win gold in the world for snowboarding in the Austria international games in 2018. What a heart-filled moment! In January, Pringle was selected for the Colorado X-Games for Special Olympics. She has participated in several competitions throughout South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia and has been selected to participate in the 2022 Russian Special Olympics Winter Games, competing in snowboarding. Pringle has even been interviewed by national correspondent Robin Roberts of ABC news and local correspondents in the Pee Dee.

Pringle also has another playing field: employment. Her job with Palmetto Security Document Destruction with Florence County Disabilities and Special Needs Board (FCDSNB) is very important to her. She also works as a kitchen aide preparing meals.

While Pringle has been dominant in sports throughout her life and is an all-around athlete, her goal is to meet Serena Williams. Pringle believes she can tackle any playing field and finish line: "My oath from Special Olympics is, 'Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.'"



## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: DISABLED WORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE Articles by Anna Bowman



Joette Dukés

In observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Diversity Works Magazine© spoke with Joette Dukés, director of the Pee Dee Workforce Development Board about the importance of inclusion of disabled workers in the workplace. Founded in 1988 by the United States Congress for the month of October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month raises awareness of the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. The 2020 theme,

“Increasing Access and Opportunity,” is what the agency endeavors to achieve for all jobseekers, regardless of their disabilities.

**DW:** Ms. Dukés, how long have you been with the Pee Dee Workforce Development Board, and how long have you been in your current position with the agency?

**JD:** I’ve been with the agency for the past 28 years, and my current position is Workforce Development director, a position I’ve held since August 2011.

**DW:** What are your day-to-day duties as the director?

**JD:** Providing oversight to programs and services funded by Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) under the provisions of WIOA, state policies and guidance and the Pee Dee Workforce Development Board’s strategic direction.

**DW:** How does the Pee Dee Workforce Development Board help to place individuals with disabilities on various Jobs?

**JD:** The Board’s most visible initiative is SC Works Pee Dee. SC Works Pee Dee helps all individuals, without regard to their disability status, identify the most appropriate career paths and the steps required to reach their employment goals. In doing so, the board:

1. Through a formal referral process, ensures connectivity with partners who offer services to individuals with disabilities to help them complete their education and go to work.

2. Ensures that, in accessing the services of the SC Works system, there are no architectural or programmatic barriers that would prevent someone with a disability from accessing our services. We offer reasonable accommodations to those who request them and require the same of all of the partners in our network.

3. Ensures that appropriate assistive technology is available in the SC Works Centers.

4. Provides the appropriate training and supportive services to customers, including reasonable accommodations necessary for the completion of an educational program. Career coaches are available to support customers throughout their program participation and for a minimum of one year after completion to ensure their success in their placement.

**DW:** Who are some of the companies/agencies that your agency partners with to place disabled workers?

**JD:** We partner with the SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department, the SC Commission for the Blind and even school counselors to place and support workers with disabilities.

**DW:** Are there any tax incentives for businesses to employ disabled workers?

**JD:** Yes. Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is available to employers who hire individuals with disabilities or who have other barriers to employment. WOTC is administered by one of our SC Works Partners – SC Department of Employment and Workforce. Additional information

is available at <https://dew.sc.gov/employers/employer-services/work-opportunity-tax-credit>.

**DW:** Can individuals with disabilities contact your agency to assist with locating a job?

**JD:** Yes. They may contact our agency for assistance via our website: [www.scworks.org](http://www.scworks.org). Click on “Find A Center.” We can provide accommodations to individuals who need assistance with accessing our services. Auxiliary services and aids are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

**DW:** How do you assist individuals who are blind with additional challenges: learning their job and learning how to maneuver in their new work environment?

**JD:** We partner with the SC Commission for the Blind, the state agency that deals specifically with blindness as a disability.

**DW:** Once a disabled worker is placed with a company/agency, does your agency continue to offer assistance to the disabled worker or track his or her success rate to better assist your programs for placement of disabled workers in the immediate future?

**JD:** Yes. We continue to follow up for at least one-year post-placement, and if additional assistance is needed, it is provided.

The mission of the Pee Dee Workforce Development Board (WDB) is to facilitate successful partnerships among businesses, educators, organizations and individuals to achieve a highly educated and skilled workforce resulting in a thriving community with full employment. Whether you are an employer seeking your next employee or an individual seeking your next career opportunity, make SC Works “Your Next Step.” Visit our website at [www.scworks.org](http://www.scworks.org) for additional information.

Joette Dukés and her husband, Pastor Stevie Dukés, reside in Florence. Pastor Dukés is founder of Lighthouse Way of the Cross Church. The couple has three sons: Terrence, Christian and Stevie Jr. Joette Dukés is a graduate of Christian Outreach Bible College with a Doctor of Theology degree and the University of South Carolina-Columbia with a Bachelor of Science in business administration.

Dukés is a founding member of iMPact Marion County, a grass-roots organization designed to address community issues to facilitate social and economic transformation, and founder of Kingdom Family Life Partnership, a newly-established, non-profit service organization based in Florence. She is a board member for Empowered to Heal, secretary of the Rainwater Hill Concerned Citizens, is on the leadership team for Helping Florence Flourish’s Jobs for Life Program and is a 2019 graduate of Leadership Florence.

## INCLUDING DISABLED WORKERS



Tanya M. Hodge

**MARION**—Tanya M. Hodge is the executive director for the Helping Hands Free Clinic(s) in Marion County, a position she has held since August 2016. The mission of this organization is to provide basic primary medical care to the uninsured and underserved residents of Marion County and its surrounding communities. The organization, which was founded in 2002 by Dr. Parmanand Dawani, is a non-profit 501(c)3 that provides free healthcare services to promote health and wellness. In doing so, this organization improves the overall quality of life for Marion County.



## INCLUDING DISABLED WORKERS CONT'D



*Tanya M. Hodge*

In her role as executive director, Hodge's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, creating a positive atmosphere for the health of the organization's vision and mission to be accomplished daily within the organization and the community. She has developed resources to ensure the financial health and welfare of the organization, managed around a yearly budget through grant opportunities and local funders. Other obligations she's responsible for in accomplishing her position include

conducting research, future planning, organization, evaluating all clinic operations in conjunction with hiring and supporting retention plans for competent and qualified staff, engaging in community development for enhancing the organization's image by being active and visible in the community and building strong relationships with existing and new partners of civic and private organizations, to name a few. Hodge also assists the chairperson with building a governed and strong board of directors.

In observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), she shares her experiences in working with and placing workers with disabilities.

Hodge, who relocated from Philadelphia, Pa., enjoys working with a diversity staff and especially people with disabilities. In her previous job with the Marion-Dillon County Board of Disability and Special Needs (MDCBDSN), as an employment specialist, she obtained employment for the disabled in Marion and Dillon Counties. "I love working with the disabled. They are just like you and me, requiring love, guidance and support from time to time. I love making them independent because this is what they deserve, to always be treated fairly," she said. "I have employed several disabled workers that are with the Marion-Dillon County Board of Disability and Special Needs; currently, we have a housekeeper and janitor," she said, adding, "I will say this. They do a better job than some of the contractors that were formerly employed." That is a true testament to how an organization can successfully operate with a diverse and inclusive workplace where disabled workers are welcomed as a viable part of the workforce. "If we find the right jobs for the right people, it can and will increase the bottom line of companies. This includes workers with disabilities," she said.

In her current position, Hodge is proud that its board of directors highly recommends being a diversified organization. "The clinic is an equal opportunity employer and believes strongly that every employee and every applicant for employment has the right to be treated with dignity and respect." People with disabilities bring unique characteristics and talents to the workplace that benefits employers and organizations. Currently, the clinic employs three individuals with disabilities on its staff.

Hodge, who transferred to South Carolina to be with her family, is a divorced mother of two sons: DaJuan Hodge of Raleigh, N.C. and DaJon Hodge of Charleston. She has four beautiful grandchildren: Mariah, Hayden, Santana and AvaRue. She also has two siblings, Vanessa R. Russell and Van T. Hodge, II of Pennsylvania. Her father, Van T. Hodge, Sr. resides in Mullins, and her beloved mother is deceased.

Her hobbies are traveling internationally and tennis when time allows, and she loves water sports. Her favorite pastime is spending quality time with family. Hodge has been blessed to currently serve as the chairperson of the Lydia's Bowels of Mercy Home, Inc. in Johnsonville. Lydia's Nest was created to help women and children shift their lives From Desolation

to Destiny/From Lack to Abundance/From Poverty to Purpose. She is also a board member of the First Steps of Marion County, serving children with resources that provide them and their families with a solid foundation to promote enduring success at home and in the classroom. Also, Hodge is a former vice chair of the Marion County Coordinating Council (MCCC) and still acts as an active member. MCCC is a non-profit made up of many organizations, businesses and individuals working together to strengthen the systems that provide services to the citizens of Marion County through improved communication, adequate linkage and collaboration.

Hodge loves the work that God has instilled in her to continue to be able to work in the community to build relationships and save lives.

## FURNITURE COMPANY BUILDS INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE *by Les Echols*



*The Maxwood Furniture team hard at work preparing shipments for its customers!!*

**MULLINS**-Maxwood Furniture Inc. is a furniture distributor based in the small rural city of Mullins in Marion County. Building an inclusive community is a critical part of what Maxwood Furniture is exhibiting with the addition of several new members of

its workforce. The company has opened their doors for employees with disabilities and in doing so is becoming a superlative for inclusive leadership and skills development. To celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Maxwood Furniture shared its inclusive practices.

George Pirinski is a warehouse manager who has been with Maxwood Furniture for a year. Pirinski said, "As a growing company, we were looking to expand our team, and the arrival of COVID did not make that any easier. It was around that time we were approached by a case manager at Disabilities and Special Needs about the placement of some individuals with disabilities. Their case manager initially spoke with my assistant about the potential. There was a follow-up conversation, and we were able to bring in three individuals." The partnership has worked out, the individuals have gainful employment, and Maxwood has three reliable employees that they can consistently depend on.

According to Pirinski, the employees have worked out well. "The past four months, they have been here, and all come in on time and ready to work every day. They are part of what we call our 'container crew.' To put that into perspective, we receive containers from overseas and offload them. Our container crew helps put them onto pallets, wrap and sticker them and move them around and through the warehouse," he continued. They also are willing to clean and do other duties when there are no immediate container shipments to prepare. Their flexible schedules have proven to be a big asset for the company. This is because sometimes containers are late due to delays in the shipment vessel. If a vessel is delayed, these employees have the flexibility to take a particular day off and come in the next day or whenever the shipment is due to arrive.

Although COVID-19 has presented challenges, Pirinski also explained that in the past few months, their business has become a lot more noticeable, especially since they are on different sales platforms. Beds and bunk beds in different styles and colors are one of their main items.



## PROGRESSING WITH SOS Articles by Les Echols



Justin Borrero

**MYRTLE BEACH**-Justin Borrero is a highly intelligent young man with a captivating story. He works for SOS Care, a South Carolina nonprofit serving children and adults with autism and intellectual disabilities. He is currently working in their Murrells Inlet office and helping out with IT. Borrero sets up and help maintain a variety of technology for various projects and programs at SOS.

When Borrero, now 30, was in his twenties, he was formally diagnosed with autism. "I moved with my family from New York state to Myrtle Beach before I was diagnosed with autism although my mom had suspected Asperger syndrome. She had reached out to Sarah, executive director at SOS, for some resources to help me. Eventually, I became a participant in some of their programs, which then led to me volunteering with SOS a few days a week. Soon thereafter, I went back to finish my degree in computer technology and was brought on as paid staff with SOS. It has been an absolutely awesome experience that has brought so much growth and improvement from where I was when my family and I

initially moved down here," Borrero explained.

One exciting project Borrero discussed is Oak Tree Farm, which will be an affordable housing community for adults with autism and intellectual disabilities to live independently. He explained that new residents transitioning to live on their own will first reside in Oak Tree Farm's Transition House, which is nearing completion, and the first residents will be moving in shortly thereafter. Borrero will be among the first residents, and he is currently working towards an Enabling Technology certification to be able to integrate technology for any residents that may benefit from the greater independence that so many new technologies can provide.

One of Borrero's primary struggles is social interaction, which can still be a struggle for him, but it is something he is always working on to become more comfortable it. "It's getting a little easier to socialize as time goes on, but it certainly helps to have such a supportive environment that facilitates that progress," he said.

"Helping SOS has also greatly benefited me in my development as someone on the autism spectrum, and it's fulfilling to be able to support such a great cause. I'm thankful to be doing what I love to do and am especially grateful for the personal progress that has been made possible," concluded Borrero.

## MEET THE FIRST RESIDENT OF OAK TREE FARM



Mark Flannery

**CONWAY**-Mark Flannery works at a grocery chain in South Carolina and will be the first resident at Oak Tree Farm, SOS Healthcare's affordable housing community for adults with autism in Conway. Despite his disability, Flannery, now a graduate of the SOS Life Skills program, started working at age 21. His story is one of strength, resilience and a great work ethic.

After graduating with a vocational degree in grocery management, Flannery worked for ACME Markets in New Jersey for 22 years. "There were very few services in New Jersey," said his mom, Darlene. "Mark did not know anyone but went into SOS Healthcare offices to have meals and meet with other people and improve his social skills. He later did trainings at Oak Tree Farm to learn how to live independently. He was working at a different grocery chain but looked for another opportunity," she continued. Darlene also explained that Flannery was very adamant about finding employment once they moved to South Carolina and that he went to speak with the manager at the store regularly to follow up on his application. He has now been employed in South Carolina for 16 months. Because he has some limitations, Flannery has always worked part time.

When asked what the biggest challenges are that they face, Darlene said, "Probably the biggest frustration is Mark not being hired full time. He had healthcare benefits at ACME but has not been able to secure health benefits in South Carolina. We found a nurse practitioner and dentist that both work on sliding scales, and that helps out a lot," Darlene explained.

When asked about Flannery's personality, Darlene was beaming with positivity. "He is the easiest person to be around. He is an encouraging person and has added so much to our family. He very much looked forward to moving to South Carolina. Mark is also very musically talented and sings in the church choir. He is a blessing because of the way he views life in a spiritual and positive way," Darlene said.

Flannery's positivity about work was evident. "The people at my job are great. It's the best company I have worked for," he said. "The hiring manager was a wonderful person, and overall, it is the most positive work experience I've had."

Darlene and Flannery both stressed the importance of getting help for children at a young age. "I thank my mom for so much. She got me help when I was young," said Flannery.

"Mark has three siblings who do not have disabilities, but we have always stressed that he is different, but not less than," added Darlene.





# HUNGER & HOMELESS AWARENESS MONTH

## FRIESON SHARES HELP FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

by Dawn "D.A." Goodwin

**LAKE CITY-** While for National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, it calls for a federal level of assistance to meet local needs, some local individuals like Gillean Frieson have been raising awareness of how these issues affect certain groups of people, including U.S. veterans.

Frieson joined the U.S. Army in 1996. After completing basic training in 1996 and returning to the University of South Carolina that fall, his National Guard unit was deployed before his second term. After eight years of service, he had an honorable discharge, with him finishing duty as a sergeant, E-5 rank.

The Lake City native was recently nominated by Roosevelt Bryant, the owner of Life Changes Fitness Center in Lake City, to do a push-up challenge that focused on suicide awareness. That's when Frieson decided to add his own twist and began doing his challenge outside to bring awareness to not only veteran suicide but also veteran homelessness.

In order to determine what might lead to a veteran becoming homeless, Frieson said one must first look at homelessness altogether. "Theoretically, it is an economic issue because it deals with supply and demand. In America there are not enough affordable housing options for any Americans, especially when discussing individuals living below the poverty line. For every 100 low-income renters, there are only 36 available affordable homes. South Carolina is a little better than the nation with 47 available affordable homes for every 100 low-income renters. Then the reality of the situation is that you have a myriad of other circumstances and consequences. You have the wage and wealth gap where minority groups have significantly less wealth and income than the majority. If you don't have enough money to afford rent, then it puts you at risk of becoming homeless. Another factor to consider is when people are dealing with substance abuse, and sometimes that abuse takes away money for necessities. This reveals yet another issue in America, and that issue is the number of people who don't have insurance. Drug and alcohol abuse causes health and mental issues that become exacerbated

when individuals don't have health insurance and cannot afford medical and other treatment."

Frieson said he's no expert, but through research and speaking to local VA directors, he knows that most of the homeless population consists of males, but there are also women with domestic violence situations who become homeless after having to pack up their children and leave in the middle of the night to escape their abuser.

He added that for veterans or service members coming back out of the military and back into the civilian environment, it's often

challenging finding jobs that match their experience, but the military is doing a better job of matching service and military skills. However, sometimes making the adjustment and trying to find affordable housing again when they don't have family can put veterans at risk of homelessness. "Imagine a couple having problems before deployment," said Frieson. "If they don't have a solid foundation beforehand, it magnifies the issues when they return home. So you have those who had a home, and now this crisis has occurred, so now they are sleeping on someone's couch or sleeping in a car."

Frieson, the former chief judge of the Lake City Municipal Court and current executive director of the Williamsburg County Economic Development Board, added that after reaching out to local offices to inquire about the current state of homelessness in our area, he found that cases of homelessness in Florence and Williamsburg counties do exist, but it's not a major problem in our area, compared to others. "The Department of Veterans Affairs since 2011 has really attacked homelessness. Yet, it's up to the individual who is homeless to walk into any VA office and say, 'I'm homeless,' and it ends right there because of the programs in place to help them to no longer be in that situation." Frieson mentioned

one helpful program is the VA mortgage loan, which he says has truly been a blessing for him and his family to purchase a home.

In order to change or end the current state of homelessness with our area's veterans and those in our country, Frieson said that outside of the programs, again, it's up to the individual. "I hate to use the word 'choice,' but some don't feel they have choices, but they do. It's the circumstances they are in. There are some people who don't want to be in the system or who don't want the VA or a homeless shelter to help them. They've just found some solace in the fact that they don't have the same worries as you and I have. They don't have to worry about mortgages or insurance or what to wear to work tomorrow. Sometimes we want people to think like we think...like, 'Why don't you have a house?' But for me, and to me, I feel like no one should be homeless, especially not a veteran."

If you or anyone you know needs additional information on veteran homelessness, please contact the local VA offices. The Williamsburg director, Robert McClary, can be reached at 843-355-9321, extension 6301, and the Florence VA director, Randy Godbold, can be reached at 843-665-3045.

Gillean Frieson has an associate degree in paralegal studies from FDTC; a BS degree in business from Coker College; an MBA from Capella University; and he completed most requirements towards a doctor of business degree from Walden University. He spent 10 years in academia (Virginia College, Northeastern Technical College, Coker College and Lake City High School) and 13 years in retail management (Target, Best Buy and Belk). Not only is he the executive director, but he is also an insurance and financial service representative (Primerica Financial Services) and an accredited small business consultant (GJ Frieson Enterprises, LLC).

Gillean and his wife Catrice have been married for 13 years and are the proud parents of two children: Jayla and Carson. The family owns a 12-year-old Jack Russel terrier named Glory.



*Gillean Frieson*



*Gillean Frieson early years with his daughter, Jayla*



# HUNGER & HOMELESS AWARENESS MONTH

## SOLUTIONS TO END HOMELESSNESS & HUNGER Submitted by Ameenah McLeod



*Ameenah McLeod*

As I do this work, I often find myself engaging with persons who, with pure intentions, want to find a simple solution to two of our world's biggest complexities. The reasons for hunger and homelessness are as unique and complex as the individuals affected by these daily.

Economic hardship is often cited as the major contributing factor for hunger and homelessness. As a result, people think if we increase minimum wage, we will see a decline in these social ills. I have done

community-based work, just long enough to notice that the issue of hunger and/or homelessness is neither solely rooted in a need for more money, nor is it rooted in a lack of food or a lack of houses. Systemically, the core reason hunger and homelessness exist is because of inaccessibility.

It is no secret that there is an abundance of food that goes uneaten every day. While people hunger, food goes into the trash as opposed to the mouths of the needy. Likewise, there is also an abundance of houses that are not being lived in. Many of the unutilized houses are actually habitable, but instead of being used, they are left empty as our streets fill with individuals and/or families who find themselves in need.

Proper understanding and identification of risk factors that contribute to the inability to access adequate food and/or housing is a major component in the process of prevention. The next step is employing effective measures to increase accessibility to these essentials.

In relation to hunger, this translates to food missions like those ran by The Manna House, New Ebenezer Church and Whosoever Church. These are just a few local places where individuals can get hot meals served to them. There may also be more organized efforts, like those of Harvest Hope Food Bank or grocery giveaways by Fellowship of Christian Movement, where individuals and families can pick up groceries so that they can utilize the food that is distributed to feed themselves.

There are national efforts to decrease food insecurities by our government through welfare programs, like EBT and special feeding programs. We have also seen initiatives from large corporations like Food Lion with the Feeding America. However, in my opinion, this is only the tip of the iceberg in reference to the prevention of hunger. A lot of the work is and must continue to be done on a grass-root (individual) level. There are countless individuals who personally feed people or help to increase other's accessibility to food by giving their neighbors a ride to the grocery store. Efforts of individuals within our community who give directly to those in need must be celebrated. We must also appreciate and note the presence of the PDRTA in our area, as transportation is a critical piece of the equation of enabling those in need to get to food or other essentials.

Prevention of homelessness requires a little more work, but the strategy of increasing accessibility is the same. I do believe that there is more work to be done by our government, nationally and locally, to really impact and reduce homelessness, but each individual has a role to play as well. Yes, there is a need for an increase of minimum wage, but giving people more money does nothing to ensure that they are able to obtain or maintain housing. Therefore, we have a more serious need for collaborative efforts that includes federally-funded agencies and other community partners effectively working together provide programs and services that increase the quantity and quality of affordable homes and increase self

sufficiency skills of the homeless and high-risk individuals. This concept is known as "supportive housing," and it is my preferred solution to ending homelessness.

In addition to the limited amount of affordable quality homes, persons who have barriers, such as blemishes on their criminal records and/or credit history, are often marginalized in the housing market. Policies are needed to increase accessibility to adequate housing.

If I could introduce a new policy to local government addressing homelessness it would be related to rental income caps. I firmly believe that the price of rentals in any given area should be based on the average income earned. I would also like to see policies to prevent rental practices that can be discriminatory. Income requirements in addition to exorbitantly priced rent is a main culprit of homelessness.

As a previous rental manager, I understand why a landlord or property owner would want to ensure that a tenant prospect makes a certain wage. In theory, it indicates that they potential renter can financially support himself or herself. However, a person with misplaced priorities or inevitable life circumstances may still fall victim to homelessness via eviction. Rental requirements of 2x or 3x monthly rent does very little to ensure that landlords are getting responsible renters, but it undoubtedly creates an additional hurdle for low-income individuals to overcome.

As agencies work to help homeless individuals work towards stable housing, we acknowledge that there is a need for change. There must be an overwhelming desire, first by the individuals in need, to obtain and sustain housing by many means necessary. Self-determination is not enough to overcome homelessness when there are systemic factors contributing to your plight. Supportive housing addresses the issues and needs in a client central approach, but work must be done by our government to create better circumstances that are beyond the individual's control.

According to The Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), 11,338 persons were counted in the AHAR dataset (FY2017) for South Carolina. The 2019 Point In Time (PIT) Report, which captures a snapshot of homelessness in our area on one given night, shows Florence County as having 215 persons documented as homeless. Nearly half (103) of those persons are documented as sheltered. Shelters in Florence County work together through the No One Unsheltered initiative to ensure that, as the name says, no one goes unsheltered. Each entity works to provide shelter or refers the person in need to another shelter when our shelter is unable to accommodate the person in need. In situation where all beds are full at all shelters, we will provide or work with other agencies (non-shelters), like Family Promise of Florence and Whosoever Church, for hotel accommodations.

Self-determination is without a doubt one of the biggest influences in preventing homelessness. However, it is largely up to the individual.



*Pictured (LtoR) Rajitha Kondragunta (Women's Residence manager), Ameenah McLeod (Shelter Program manager), Baby Na'Imah (Mommy's assistant) and Kenneth McFarland (Men's Residence manager)*

This can be confirmed by asking any service provider, case manager, concerned family member or friend that has ever worked with a homeless individual. No matter how badly we want it for them, stable housing must be a desire that the person wants for himself or herself by many means





## HUNGER & HOMELESS AWARENESS MONTH

### SOLUTIONS TO END HOMELESSNESS & HUNGER CONT'D

necessary. Both providers and recipients of homeless services must shift mindsets to making sustainability the goal. Effective engagement on both parts results in clients receiving essential skills that increase self-sufficiency. Financial literacy (money management) is also a huge need. Therefore, I work with the persons at our shelter to develop a budget and prioritize their spending in a way that makes maintaining their home top on their list. I whole-heartedly believe in setting people up for success, giving them needed skills and the opportunity to utilize skills they have retained. Awareness/Education is the “Great Equalizer.” We must also realize everyone may not learn everything during the first lesson. Additional resources for education and support should be provided in a continuous manner.

I recommend reaching out and volunteering with any of the shelters and/or organizations that serve persons in need within our community. I have named a few during the interview, or a person could contact me directly via phone 843-678-3410 or via Facebook @Pee Dee CAP Emergency Shelter, and I'd be happy to send over our needs list or organize a volunteer opportunity.

Blessing Bags is a common service project that many groups provide to our shelter, and we distribute them to those in need. I highly encourage each person to personally support a neighbor, family and/or friends who may be experiencing food insecurities by sharing a meal, giving them a ride to the grocery store or perhaps even bringing them groceries.

Opening your home to help a homeless person even if it is a friend or family member may not be practical, but you may be able to support them by connecting them with a shelter or sponsoring a night at a hotel. Umbrellas, luggage, socks, underwear and personal hygiene items are a HUGE need at our shelter and for those on the street.

We often come in contact with persons in need, and we don't have anything tangible to give immediately. For those situations, I would like to remind you all that a smile is also charity.

Self-care is so essential to me being able to take on this awesome responsibility daily. It isn't easy being in the thick of the reality that there are so many people who don't have food and a safe and stable place to stay. Sometimes, I am the target of the very people I serve because they are frustrated, so “I gotta stay prayed up.” Prayer is my primary choice of self-care. I strive to pray five times a day and make special prayers for strength, patience and compassion because I know that without God granting me these qualities, my efforts will be fruitless.

I also practice presence and make it a habit of being fully present when I'm at the shelter or at outreach events. Otherwise, I make my time, “my time” (I have learned to distinguish the two or else I will get burnt out. Then I am no good to anybody.). I really enjoy bubble baths, traveling, nature and the arts, but I have also learned to implement the not so fun self-care routines like exercise and healthy eating because both are essential to my holistic health.

### CALLING FOR A COMMUNITY OF VOLUNTEERS by Adalia Ellis



*Modestine Brody*

When life throws us unexpected challenges such as job loss, addictions, mental illness or health complications that result in large health related bills, any of these setbacks can put a person into a life of homelessness. Modestine Brody, director of the Resurrection Restoration Center for the Homeless, who has 20 plus years of service on behalf of the homeless, stated, “I believe it is vitally important to surround oneself with a village that is capable of collaboratively providing housing, mental

health care and medical care. Even if the individuals don't have the desire or the mental aptitude to seek assistance for themselves, each one of us in the community must take an interest in the needs of each other, which indirectly gives everyone access to a village.”

In addition to an interconnected community, local government can do its part, especially with regard to funding. Brody recalled “multiple occurrences of grant funding being allotted to agencies with a limited scope of those that they will serve.” She suggested, “There needs to be policies and regulations set in place that ensure the equal distribution of funding to those that serve a vast array of demographics.”

Widespread homelessness has recently become a more acute problem with COVID-19 as people lose jobs and receive lower wages, and shelters, in an effort to be COVID-19 compliant, have reduced the numbers of people they can house. In addition to COVID-19, making an existing problem worse, causes have increased as people are released from prison with no support. There are also rising numbers of those addicted to opioids and young people aging out the foster care system without plans for housing or work.

For someone to successfully transition from homelessness to a stable home, Brody said, “The key component to a successful transition is a shift in the mind. Someone once said if you can change your mind, you can change your life. Sometimes that change comes through exposure to resources that create an elevated way of thinking...mentors, being exposed to the beauty of nature, being a part of a team, being needed, being given responsibility, as well as spiritual guidance for those who so desire. There are multiple aspects that lead to success, but each individual will vary based on their specific needs.”

There are many ways to help, but a community of volunteers is a vital asset to those who are served by the Resurrection Restoration Center for the Homeless. When people are not able to volunteer but still want to help, financial contributions have helped to keep the organization engaged in service and able to reach more people.

After 20 plus years of experience serving the homeless, Brody said, “I've learned that I can't handle any situation by myself. I'm sure to always partner with God, with him being the one carrying the bulk of the weight. I've also learned that I can't save the entire world, but day by day I can do my best to save my part of it. I always laugh and keep things light hearted, and I enjoy the beauty of nature. Lastly, as a musician, I always keep a song in my heart and a smile on my face.”

For those readers who desire to partner with the Resurrection Restoration Center for the Homeless can do so through monetary donations, food, toiletries and supplies. They are currently in the process of creating a family room and would appreciate all supplies that would benefit a family. All donations can be mailed or dropped off in person to 1807 North Douglas Street, Florence S.C. Monetary donations can also be sent through PayPal @Elelyonfavorsme@gmail.com. For more information, visit the website <https://rrcfh.org>, or call 843-472-9346.



# HUNGER & HOMELESS AWARENESS MONTH

## CHALLENGES TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Articles by Les Echols



Julie Maxham

House of Hope is a homeless shelter and renowned organization that has helped residents of the Pee Dee since 1991. Started as New Life Rescue Ministry, the organization was rebranded as House of Hope in 2006. Today, under the leadership of Executive Director Bryan Braddock, individuals facing homelessness can rely on House of Hope as they work to build self-sufficiency, job skills and self-esteem.

Prior to coming to House of Hope, Julie Maxham, the organization's director of development, worked with several non-profits running their fundraising events. As director, she oversees fundraising, events, grants and community outreach.

As with many nonprofits, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a unique set of challenges. "The challenge of keeping our guests and staff healthy and cared for under these unusual times has stretched our resources," Maxham said.

Another challenge Maxham cites is the transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency. "The most important part of being successful through transition is wanting it...the understanding that with hard work, drive and determination being independent and self-sustaining is possible. A single woman with two young children, for example, must earn a significant amount of money to compare to what she may receive from Section 8 housing and other public assistance programs. Soon, we will offer women a chance to train and look for better, self-sustaining, jobs, set up a savings account, arrange for childcare and get used to managing their finances before we work to transition them into independent living. We anticipate this being a 12- to 24-month process," she said.

For the last five years, the House of Hope board, staff and partners have prayed about how to best expand their services to assist those struggling with homelessness. Maxham explained how the tiny house project is the next phase of evolution for the organization: the Hope Village "tiny house" program. "As God closed doors, he made it abundantly clear that the tiny house project was in his plan. As we looked around at available services in the Pee Dee, the glaring hole in services was in the dignified transitional housing for women and children. Our history with caring for women and children has taught us that women need to have their separate homes/spaces to raise their children but within the confines of a transitional program. We feel confident that this is in God's plan and timing because the city and the community have rallied behind it. HOPE Village has moved forward easily with zoning changes and fundraising. The project should be ready for its first residents in the second quarter of 2021."

Maxham attended the University of Maryland. She met her husband in 1988, and they married in 1989. She says she feels blessed to be married to her best friend, who encourages her to share her struggles and takes walks and bike rides with her. They raised their three kids just outside of Baltimore.

Maxham stresses that being a part of a church in a small group and other opportunities to study God's word helps her to be a more compassionate person. It helps her to put the world in perspective and keeps her centered.



Julie speaks at the the Hope Village "tiny house" program open house

## HELPING THOSE IN HOUSING CRISIS



Dr. Ann Gowdy

**MYRTLE BEACH**-The Eastern Carolina Housing Organization (ECHO-[www.echousing.org](http://www.echousing.org)) is a non-profit agency committed to creating opportunities for people experiencing a housing crisis to find a place they can call home. ECHO services 13 northeastern counties of South Carolina: Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Kershaw, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, Sumter and

Williamsburg. Diversity Works Magazine© had an opportunity to catch up with Dr. Ann Gowdy, Chief Programs and Innovation officer for ECHO to find out more about the organization and how it serves many residents of South Carolina.

**Tell us more about ECHO and whom you assist.**

Each day, our team members serve our community through sharing their strengths, experiences, passion and purpose. ECHO is committed to providing a positive impact for our community, treating all the folks, and each other, with respect and dignity that we each deserve. We advocate by promoting awareness, education and understanding of the issues surrounding homelessness. Service, or a heart of service, is a value that we believe is imperative for providing innovative person-centered approaches. Our commitment to investing in the strengthening of our team through personal and professional development helps us stay focused on serving through quality.

All ECHO housing programs follow the Housing First approach. Housing First means offering permanent housing as quickly as possible without preconditions such as sobriety, treatment, employment or service participation requirements and then providing the supportive services people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness.

**What are some of the biggest challenges you face?**

The biggest challenge for folks experiencing homelessness are barriers to accessible and affordable housing. Boundaries include no or low credit, background checks, eviction history and lack of money for deposits. Unfortunately, the need for housing for our community members who are literally homeless is greater than the funding available.

Another big challenge is the community's understanding of the need and issue of housing instability. There are a number of myths, misconceptions and stigma surrounding folks experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

**Tell us about your role.**

My official title is Chief Programs and Innovation officer. My role is to ensure programming where people are heard and seen, where otherness dissipates, inclusivity is the norm and people have a place to call home.

My role is to transform intentions and ideas into actions with measurable results to equip our team members on inclusivity and problem solving from a person-centered, strengths-based perspective. I work to break through rhetoric and bias by getting to the heart of problems. As a cross-sector collaborator, lifelong student and educator, I am a trailblazer for system-wide efforts to break down barriers.



# HUNGER & HOMELESS AWARENESS MONTH

## HELPING THOSE CONT'D



**It takes special people to do this kind of work. Tell us about the ECHO approach to service.**

One of the things important to us is that we

have people on our team with lived experience, who understand and embody our mission. We believe one of the best aspects of our agency is that we have people who understand and genuinely care about the people we serve. We are genuine about wanting to serve them, and we make sure everyone has equitable housing regardless of circumstance. Put simply, we all bring our genuine selves to the table so that we can all deliver our mission effectively.

If I could immediately change something, it would be to help humanity to expand our perspective so that we can see one another as human beings instead of judging our circumstances, situations and needs.

### **How does an individual receive help from the program?**

Our dedicated Coordinated Entry Access Point team offers compassionate and comprehensive housing assessments to help determine what kind of assistance you may be eligible for that best meets your individual needs. You can call 843-213-1798 or complete an assessment online: [www.echousing.org/get-help](http://www.echousing.org/get-help).

## KING'S COURT DOES WORK OF THE SCRIPTURE

by Ta'meeka Epps



Venolia Jordan

needy and poor in your land.”

Spencer and Venolia Jordan, founders of King's Court, believe that some people are called and commissioned to serve others. King's Court, its owners and dedicated staff are doing the work of the scripture through service. They have strived over the past six years to build a foundation of resources available to those among us who have need.

The work to end homelessness, to clothe and feed the vulnerable requires action now. The work begins with small meaningful acts then grows and increases to the capacity to help rebuild lives. The first step in rebuilding lives begins with the availability of immediate housing for the most vulnerable of those in need.

King's Court is a 501(C)3 non-profit organization opened in January 2014. Shortly after Spencer and Venolia Jordan acquired Martin's Motel, the Pee Dee area was affected by a winter storm and freeze, which left the area without power and water for several weeks. Martin's Motel consisted of 52 rooms within three separate buildings, one of which had been closed by the previous owners. Due to overwhelming need, the

MULLINS-National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is sponsored by the National Coalition for the Homeless, and 2020 is a national call to end homelessness.

As hunger and homelessness remain rampant within our communities, the work of organizations such as King's Court in Mullins becomes an invaluable resource and needed entity. Deuteronomy 15:11 reads, "For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore, I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your



Spencer serving food

safe space, two hot meals and a snack. The program began with nearly 70 children and blossomed into an afterschool program serving an average of 30 children during the school year. The summer reading and afterschool programs now receive funding from the South Carolina Department of Social Services and The Department of Education to provide services for more than 350 at-risk youth.

King's Court acts daily to help end hunger and homelessness by offering hot meals, groceries, emergency/long-term shelter and social services with no delays while asking and answering during the process. The work of ending hunger and homelessness will never cease. It's continuous work and takes a strong foundation, which supports humanity as well as those who serve the vulnerable.

The Jaycees Civic Organization's motto, "Service to humanity is the best work of life," is a guiding mantra at King's Court. "The work done daily is not always easy, or fun, yet we will continue to serve. It's sometimes emotionally taxing and physically exhausting! Just like a good workout, you push through pain. You work when you don't feel like it, and then you reach a place of happiness and joy. The feeling of peace and fulfillment that comes with knowing you helped someone in some way keeps you coming back for more!" Venolia exclaimed.

On Nov. 20 King's Court will host its 2nd annual Sleep Out for National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. Anyone willing to sleep in his or her car for a great cause is welcomed to participate. The event will begin on Friday night with speakers, music and a free supper. It concludes Saturday morning with breakfast and prayer for those in need. The Sleep Out will bring awareness and allow others to make a real connection to the issue of homelessness they will never forget.



Bishop serving food

previously closed building was reopened, providing shelter to those who needed a warm place to stay. The building has remained open since that day.

Summer of 2015, King's Court began serving at-risk youth through a summer reading camp that provided school-aged children with a



Zina teaching

reading camp that provided school-aged children with a

safe space, two hot meals and a snack. The program began with nearly 70 children and blossomed into an afterschool program serving an average of 30 children during the school year. The summer reading and afterschool programs now receive funding from the South Carolina Department of Social Services and The Department of Education to provide services for more than 350 at-risk youth.

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# Caregiver Appreciation

## FREE, QUALITY CARE AT FMCDC

Articles by Jennifer Robinson



Stephen O. Edwards

Even when it seems like things are hopeless, and the world around us is overwhelmed with turmoil and despair, there are still people who care. One group in the Pee Dee area that is counteracting the turmoil and despair with caregiving is the Free Medical Clinic of Darlington County (FMCDC).

The Free Medical Clinic of Darlington County provides free quality medical services for uninsured county residents at its clinics in Darlington and Hartsville. It is in its 20th year of service to the community. The clinic is volunteer driven with nurses, doctors, pharmacists, medical assistants and other medical workers who donated 691 hours of service in 2019. Those hours were needed to overcome disparities within the community.



The Free Medical Clinic

Unfortunately, many who reside in low-income areas are not aware they are more at risk for cancers, diabetes, heart disease and other health issues. Early screenings are important to catch these diseases before they become serious, but some people do not or cannot seek treatment. Stephen Edwards, current executive director of the Free Medical Clinic of Darlington County said that Darlington ranks 38th out of the 46 counties in South Carolina for health outcomes. This simply means we have a long way to go in making sure people are aware of the availability of programs that assist people with health care. Edwards mentioned the Best Chance Network program, available to women with no insurance, that provides free annual mammograms. Though these services are free and available to those who are uninsured, they must meet the eligibility requirements. What is unfortunate is that many people do not seek out these services, even in the current economy.

The misunderstandings about free medical services are:

- They are a government entity- This is only partially correct. There is a lack of trust for services that are associated with the government. Medical clinics are only regulated by government policies.
- The perception that free isn't good- Affordable health care is still quality health care, and it's important to inform people that free can be good and is good at the Free Medical Clinic of Darlington County.
- Rural community access is challenging- Federally qualified health centers are now building centers in rural areas to address this particular issue.
- The lack of personal responsibility for health- Some people are either afraid to confront their health, or some people are miseducated about health in general. We are all our own best advocates for our health.

Though COVID is not a disparity, it is a barrier today, and there are challenges to outreach. But even though outreach is difficult, FMCDC has not stopped serving patients since the beginning of the pandemic. In the beginning, it temporarily restricted seeing new patients and did not

allow nonmedical volunteers into the centers for safety reasons. Patients are spaced out in the center, and many services are completed via phone. Anyone who states or displays COVID like symptoms are immediately referred to the hospital.

With the help of those people who volunteer from the Darlington and Hartville areas, the Free Medical Clinic of Darlington County continues to thrive and assist uninsured in the community. Access to quality health care is available regardless of income. It is vitally important to tap into all resources. Affordable health care is quality health care.

## A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR COUNSELING AND CARE



Jessica Hayes, MS, LPC, LMFT, communications director

There was a mental health need in the Pee Dee area that had been growing for many years. In 2017, a group of pastors and counselors in the area met not only to address the need, but to also mobilize efforts to provide affordable mental health services.

The vision of iHope Christian Care and Counseling, Inc. is to be a distinctly Christian counseling center serving individuals, families, couples and ministry leaders with affordable counseling and care. We are committed to offering hope and healing through Jesus Christ.

As Christian counselors, we are called to bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom for the captive and comfort those who mourn. iHope desires to be an extender of the local church, offering counsel to those going through a season of difficulty. We are a support and resource for local pastors and for our community. Many people desire counseling and healing offered through Jesus Christ, but they do not know where to turn, cannot afford counseling or are unaware of available resources. iHope is intended to be a resource within reach of anyone who wants help.

We at iHope seek to intentionally partner with churches and ministries to meet three areas of need in our community: our pastors' need for trusted resources, availability of Christian counseling and keeping costs affordable.

- A pastoral resource: Pastors often recognize that some people need care and counseling beyond what they or their church can offer. A nonprofit committed to care and counsel rooted in biblical principles is a helpful resource for many local churches.
- Christian counseling: Many people desire specifically Christian counseling that will help make the connection between their faith and the issues of life. Strengthening individual faith and life lived in community is a unique offering of Christian counseling.
- Affordable costs: Locally, counseling sessions cost an average of \$120 per session. Many people cannot afford this but do not have access to health insurance that will help to cover the cost, or they quickly reach the limit of what insurance can offer. Counseling at iHope ranges from only \$40-\$60 per session. That's half the cost.

iHope offers classic counseling grounded in biblical truth, which is the foundation of the organization. It also provides life coaching and pastoral counseling. The goal is for patients to have spiritual, Godly experiences. A Christian worldview is presented when they call into the center and when they make their appointments. Jessica Hayes, LPC and LMFT, who is also the communications director, shared about the





## A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION CONT'D

importance of mental health awareness. She shared that mental illness is more common than people know. Unfortunately, mental health as a topic is hidden, and those who suffer from mental illness often do not share their experiences. Mental illness is hidden in plain sight because people can be very functional who live with mental illness. This illness does not look stereotypical or extreme as portrayed in movies or on television. In fact, there are barriers to mental health care that do not allow people to obtain the care they need. Some barriers are self-imposed. Some who are living with mental illness do not want to acknowledge their struggles or receive care because they believe it to be a sign of weakness. They do not want to be singled out and mostly because of the stigma of shame that comes from society. The most common barrier is the accessibility of health insurance, hence, the need for organizations such as iHope who provide financial assistance for those who have needs. Challenges also arise for those who are the working poor, the homeless and those who lack time in their schedules to receive mental health care. Cultural influences often play a major role in why people do not get counseling. In most instances,

some cultures believe that receiving counseling is a betrayal of family trust. A common saying in some families is, "What happens in the home, stays in the home." Therefore, sharing information with outsiders may provoke unnecessary attention. Acknowledging these and other issues for patients is important in building patient/ client relationships.

For iHope to continue sharing the good work in the community it is doing, it is important to know and share its commitment to care, its awareness that we all struggle and the importance of building relationships.



*iHope Christian Care & Counseling*

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Florence, SC 29501  
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## REMEMBERING MY MOTHER'S LAST DAYS by Chinel Boateng



*Pete Mazzaroni*

When Agatha Mazzaroni heard the words "You have cancer" she was shocked. But the person affected even more by those words was her husband, Pete.

In 1992 "Fifi," as she was affectionately called by family and friends, was diagnosed with lung cancer. It's believed that Pete literally worried himself to death about this diagnosis because later the same year, at the age of 57, Pete died in his sleep from a cardiac arrest.

According to the American Cancer Society, "Lung cancer is by far the leading cause of cancer death among both men and women, making up almost 25 percent of all cancer deaths. Each year, more people die of lung cancer than of colon, breast and prostate cancers combined."

Fifi had been a lifelong smoker, and the cancer was in its late stages when she was diagnosed. "Tobacco hurts and kills people. In fact, smoking causes about one in five deaths in the United States. There are many forms of tobacco on the market, and people often think some forms are safe and don't cause health problems. This isn't true." There is no safe form of tobacco.

It's important to know that even though e-cigarettes do not contain tobacco, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) classifies them as "tobacco products."

After Pete's untimely death, one of their sons, Pete Jr., and his family returned home to help care for Fifi. "In spite of the cancer, Mom had a good attitude and was actually pragmatic about things," Pete Jr. shared. "She did as much as she could never to let it (cancer) become her life." Fifi was a Bingo fanatic and loved her New Jersey Casinos. "Mom was also a member of the Mother's Club who planned and organized fundraisers in the community. She knitted, crocheted, played cards and basically would do what she could to keep normalcy in her life," said Pete Jr.

He shared that his mother stayed independent until she could no

longer drive herself to doctor appointments and treatment. He began to take her where she needed to go. "As the cancer progressed, I remember her having these coughing spells where she would sit and cough, sit and cough, and I could smell the sickness in her. She'd apologize for her coughing, and I told her, "There's no need to apologize. It's not your fault," Pete Jr. said.

As the cancer progressed, Fifi became lucid and confused, signaling the end was near. She passed away in 1993, 13 months after diagnosis, at the age of 59. In addition to Pete Jr., left behind are daughter Michelle and two sons, Mike and Frank.

"Today lung cancer can be detected early. In recent years, a test known as a low-dose CAT (LDCT) scan or CT scan has been studied in people at a higher risk of getting lung cancer. LDCT scans can help find abnormal areas in the lungs that may be cancer. Research has shown that using LDCT scans to screen people at higher risk of lung cancer saved more lives compared to chest x-rays. For higher risk people, getting yearly LDCT scans before symptoms start helps lower the risk of dying from lung cancer." November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month. If you have a history of tobacco use, talk to your doctor, and see if you're a candidate for this test.

Pete Mazzaroni, Jr. is the executive director at Marion County Healthcare Foundation. He has partnered with the American Cancer Society in the month of October for its Real Men Wear Pink (RMWP) campaign. RMWP is a distinguished group of community leaders who are determined to raise awareness and money in support of the American Cancer Society's mission and save more lives than ever before from breast cancer. Now in its 4th year, this is a great way to support the cause and have some fun and friendly competition with local leaders! Support Pete and other leaders by donating at [www.realmenwearpinkacs.org/CharlestonSC](http://www.realmenwearpinkacs.org/CharlestonSC), and search by candidate's name.







# Caregiver Appreciation

## VITAL AGING OFFERS PEACE OF MIND

Articles by Adalia Ellis



Vital Aging Home Makers Program

**KINGSTREE**-Caring for others who are sick or elderly is an act of service that, when done with integrity, evokes characteristics of compassion, patience and calm. Caregivers who are well organized and listen actively with love and understanding are a balm to the sick and the aged. The caregivers in Vital Aging demonstrate such characteristics. The organization

has a homemaker program whose primary services are to provide light housekeeping and run essential errands for seniors who are homebound. These services are being provided for the sick and aging throughout Williamsburg County.

Robert Welch, executive director, said, “We are a 501(c)3 organization organized in 1997 and governed by a 15-member all volunteer board. We are very biased in that we think that our homemaker workers are the best in the business, exhibiting loads of compassion and love for their clients and a vast knowledge of seniors and including their needs and conditions.”

Not only does Vital Aging help with light housekeeping needs, but the organization also provides meals to those who are homebound and operates three wellness centers, located in Greeleyville, Hemingway and Kingtree. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, it had to close the wellness centers temporarily, but even so, enrolled seniors are still able to pick up meals. Welch stated, “Congregate Dining seniors receive activity kits and participate in virtual activities. It is important to keep our seniors engaged and provide that one nutritious meal each day that they are accustomed to.”

With these vital services offered by Vital Aging, families receive peace of mind that someone is helping their family members when life’s circumstances make it hard to care for their loved one themselves. Family, either by blood or friendship, is the central core of this organization. Families can show their gratitude and support to those who provide care for their loved ones by offering words of encouragement, sitting with the loved one giving the caregiver a break, checking in on them and even treating them to a dinner out by giving them a gift card.

If you are a family member or friend who is providing care, the agency’s social services director offered the following insights, “Caregiving can be overwhelming. It will not be easy at times. Manage your time wisely, and take time for yourself. Don’t be embarrassed to ask for help from other family members or friends.”

Also, for caregivers, there are Family Caregiver Support Programs. These programs can be found through your local government’s Area Agency on Aging office. This agency provides support for individuals caring for someone over the ages of 60 and also grandparents caring for grandchildren 18 or under.

In honor of all the people who fill this vital service in our communities and in the interest of your self-care, Vital Aging shared these final remarks, “You can’t care for others if you are not well yourself. Take a walk every now and then. Manage your health carefully, and remember to take time for yourself. Times are even more critical with COVID. If you test positive, you will be quarantined away from your loved one for 14 days or longer, so please follow all precautions recommended by the CDC.”

## HEALTHCARE HEROES YOU HAVEN’T HEARD ABOUT



As the country continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans are eager to celebrate healthcare workers on the front lines who cope with the disease every single day. You’ve probably heard countless stories of the amazing acts of kindness and courage exhibited by the doctors, nurses and other healthcare staff who are facing the

virus head on. But among the brave and selfless healthcare providers who put their energy, compassion and even their health on the line to give care to the suffering are many unsung heroes--the healthcare workers in long-term care facilities and nursing homes. Their untold stories involve not only their capacity to acknowledge and mourn great loss, but also their dedication to providing the compassion and care required to help their residents persevere and recover. In a time like this, they deserve recognition for their sacrifices.

### Mother and daughter team

In Indianapolis, mother and daughter team Lenore Williams and Aubrey Baker both work at long-term care facilities. Williams says that colleagues at CommuniCare, a national, family-owned company that operates long-term care, assisted living and rehabilitation facilities across the country, has helped hundreds of residents recover from the virus. “Our division alone has recovered over 150 patients, and I think it has largely been due to the love and care our staff provides,” said Williams, a regional director of clinical care for CommuniCare.

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, long-term care facility employees have learned and implemented strict new protocols for bolstering resident and staff health and safety, including lockdowns that, unfortunately, keep residents apart from their loved ones. “There are people who care about your family members that are in here. We are trying the best we can,” said Baker, a qualified medication aide at Wildwood HealthCare Center on Indianapolis’ east side. “They are very scared, and I try to tell them that it is going to be okay,” said Baker.

Baker tested positive for COVID-19 back in March but has, fortunately, since recovered. As soon as she was cleared to return to work, despite her mother’s wishes, she went back to the COVID-19 unit.

### Care at long-term facilities goes way beyond COVID-19

Healthcare workers at care facilities provide vital daily care and assistance for those unable to care for themselves. They are dedicated to continuing to provide that quality care to the best of their ability despite the dangers and challenges of the current pandemic.

“For our patients’ physical and mental well-being, we wake up every morning, put on our scrubs and protect our patients,” says Ashley Johnson, nurse at Landmark Nursing Home in Texas. “We reduce injury. We improve health. We work with recovery, post-operative care and sometimes assist with palliative care. We maintain skills in supporting someone with degenerative diseases. We help people develop, recover and improve skills needed for daily living and working. We help people communicate ‘I love you’ to their loved ones after a stroke. We improve quality of life and will continue to do so for our residents.”

Read inspirational stories of recovery and kindness. Then send your own messages of thanks and encouragement to healthcare workers and residents in long-term care and assisted living at CareNotCovid.com.





## ADOPTION EQUALS LOVE by Jennifer Robinson



Adrienne Wingate

- are teens.
3. Only five percent of all children adopted in 2019 were 15-18 years old.
  4. The risk of homelessness and human trafficking is increased for teenagers in foster care.
  5. According to the most recent AFCARS report, of the 122,000 children and youth waiting to be adopted:
    - 52 percent are male
    - 48 percent are female
    - 22 percent are African American
    - 22 percent are Hispanic
    - 44 percent are white
    - The average age is eight years old
    - 11 percent are between 15 and 18 years old
    - Average time in foster care is 31 months

Many people do not think of themselves as having a permanent home because for most, it is a natural occurrence. They are born into a family and live in a home in which they grow up and thrive. They have the opportunity to sleep in the same bed from night to night and eat breakfast in the same kitchen. Christmas and other holiday memories are made from birth to adulthood without a thought of not having somewhere to call home. But there are children in our society who have not had the stability or permanency of a home.

Permanency is important to foster children because they are seeking unconditional love and never-ending support. The family foundation relieves stressors that come with instability. Children adopted into families have people in their lives they can see every day that will be familiar. Forming those attachments is important to their social, emotional mental and physical development.

A difference can be made in each child's life that is in the foster care system. The more that is learned about adoption, the more people can make an informed decision about the process to help more children experience permanency. The adoption process is one that is encouraged and supported by the Department of Social Services. Adrienne Wingate, DSS Pee Dee Adoption program manager, highlights the steps for adopting children.

### Moving toward Adoption ([dss.sc.gov](http://dss.sc.gov))

#### Step 1

If you are not already a licensed foster parent in the state of South Carolina, you must apply to become an adoptive parent through Heartfelt Calling.

#### Step 2

Attend a potential adoptive parent orientation in your region where you will receive a lengthy packet of paperwork that will need to be completed prior to the adoption process being completed. Please note:

Prior to this orientation, you will have to complete a Consent to Release Information (Central Registry Check) and SLED check for anyone in the home over the age of 18. Everyone in your family will also need to complete a medical exam by a licensed physician and a tuberculosis test and submit the supplemental paperwork.

#### Step 3

You and anyone in the home over the age of 18 will be sent for fingerprint checks. Once the fingerprints come back clear, you will be assigned an adoption specialist from the Department of Social Services who will help you navigate this process, all paperwork and referrals.

#### Step 4

This worker will refer you to enroll in two Saturday, eight-hour Foster/Adopt Parent training sessions through Heartfelt Calling.

#### Step 5

The adoption specialist will then schedule an additional four-hour adoption training.

#### Step 6

The adoption specialist will come to your home, conduct a walk through to ensure your home is appropriate and no safety hazards are present, discuss the process and the upcoming steps.

#### Step 7

Your adoption specialist will schedule a Fire and DHEC inspection of your home.

#### Step 8

Upon completion and passing of the Fire and DHEC inspection, your case will be passed to a certified adoption investigator. This person will be responsible to evaluate the prospective adoptive parent(s) fitness for adoption as well as assess their family and home environment for safety. To learn more about the CI program, please click [here](#).

#### Step 9

The CI submits your home study to the Region for approval or denial.

#### Step 10

If approved, your family will be assigned an Adoptive Family Worker who will begin matching your family a child who needs a forever family.

#### Step 11

Begin the post-placement period, which can take up to a year.

#### Step 12

##### Finalize the adoption in family court.

Social workers work diligently to ensure families are brought together. Wingate shared a story of twin teenagers who were placed in a permanent home after years of rejection due to the twins having mental and physical challenges. This was an intrastate adoption that ended in adoption due to the tireless efforts of adoption specialists.

Social workers are dedicated to placing children in loving families. Children need places to call home, and adoption is the permanent solution.



Pee Dee Adoptions Team





## DR. VICKI DIXON: MY ADOPTION, MY STRENGTH *by Jennifer Robinson*



*Vicki Dixon*

**DARLINGTON**—My adoption story is probably not the typical adoption by today’s standards. Rules were not as stringent when I was adopted as they are now. Nonetheless, the results are the same as they are for today’s situations.

I was adopted when I was six months old. My adopted mother was related to my grandmother and my birth mother. My adopted mother operated a farm; therefore, she frequently visited my grandmother’s house because they farmed together. Each time she visited, she would see me either wet, hungry, sick or all three. She would always pick me up, dress me, feed me or whatever she felt needed to be done to take care of me. After several months of doing the same thing over and over again, it became obvious that my birth mother did not have the maturity, resources or inclination to raise a child, so my mother finally confronted my birth mother about adopting me. My birth mother gladly consented. The transaction took place (which involved much less red tape than today’s adoption transactions), and my new life began.

My adopted mother had two sons and was unable to have any more children, but she and my dad wanted a daughter, so my adoption came at a perfect time. I could not have chosen a better set of parents. I received so much love and support from mom, dad, big brothers, uncles and other relatives. My parents constantly made sacrifices for me.

They provided a stable environment and sent me to good schools and colleges where I received a great education. They taught me how to be independent and how to work hard to achieve the things I wanted in my life. They encouraged me and taught me about setting goals for my life. My brothers “spoiled me” but at the same time taught me how to stand strong and speak up for myself.

My mother told me I was adopted at age eleven. At the same time, she told me about three other siblings (two sisters and one brother) who were also adopted. Two of my siblings attended the same school I was attending, and the one of my siblings (a sister) lived in a town about 15 miles away. There was a little boy in my class who was one of my best friends. Imagine my surprise when I was told that little boy was my brother. My brother and I were in the same class from first grade through junior high school. We graduated the same year, but not from the same school because I transferred to another high school in the area. As we got older and our friendship grew closer, my mother thought the timing was right to tell us the truth about our relationship to each other.

My first reaction upon finding out about my adoption was anger. I could not understand why my birth mother did not want or love me, and it affected me mentally for years. I even confronted my birth mother



*Family members attended the Rosenwald High School Alumni Reunion church service. (L to R) Daisy Allen, Pastor Sidney Swinney, Dr. Vicki Dixon and Sharon Moore*

about my feelings thinking she would tell me something to make me feel better only to get angrier because of her reply and reaction. I stayed angry for several years, but as I got older and matured more in my

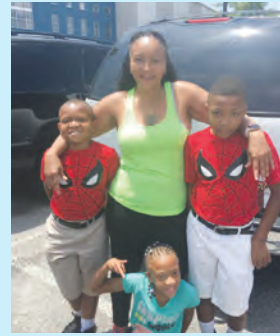
thinking (and observation of her life), I realized I should have thanked her. I am certain my life would have been a lot different had I stayed with my birth mother.

As I indicated earlier my parents gave me the best life they could. I appreciated their honesty about telling me about adoption and my siblings and allowing me to get to know them. All of us grew up in good homes, with good parents and are leading productive lives. Even though we did not “grow up” together in the same household, we have developed a relationship with each other that we maintain to this day. I have other siblings also that I still do not know but I am keeping my options open to meeting them.

Adoption can be a blessing for both the ones adopting and the adopted. While I have heard some horror stories about some adoptions, I have heard more positive stories.

My story is one of the positive stories. I am very thankful.

## FROM FOSTERING TO FAMILY *by Mallory Brayboy*



*Felicia Bradshaw with her children*

Felicia Bradshaw was a foster mom to two young brothers, Ta’Quan and Timmothy. She had been fostering children for 20 years and had no plans of adoption. When her biological children were of age, she planned on retiring from her role as a foster mom. That time came, and Bradshaw stuck to her plan. However, shortly after her foster sons had left, she realized that a part of her had left as well.

“I was miserable. I wanted my boys back,” said Bradshaw. Heartbroken, she sought to re-obtain Ta’Quan and Tim, which was not a simple feat. Her fight to return her foster sons included obtaining a lawyer and going to court, and in the end she prevailed. Her sons, who had left in June of 2018, were returned to her home in October of the same year. To ensure that she and the boys would never be separated again, Bradshaw officially adopted the brothers in August of 2019.

Ta’Quan, age 13, and Tim, age 11, initially entered the home in 2014. Both boys had multiple disabilities, and as a single mom, Bradshaw had her hands full, but she was up for the task. Ta’Quan, legally blind and autistic, was unruly and disrespectful when he came into her home, even breaking a window in the home. His younger brother, Tim, was deaf and unable to communicate. He often acted out, kicking and spitting in frustration. Despite these challenges, Bradshaw was determined to be the best guardian possible.

She worked to see that her sons had the proper accommodations at school. Ta’Quan sits at the front of the classroom and uses a magnifying glass as needed, while Tim has learned to communicate through sign language and has an interpreter with him during the school day. “They’ve come such a long way from where they were,” said proud mom, Bradshaw, who feels that the best part about adoption is seeing the changes the brothers have made. Just recently, Ta’Quan came to her and thanked her. When asked why, he responded, “For not giving up on me because I was bad.”

A few months after reuniting with her sons, Bradshaw was asked to foster their younger sister Carolina for a short time, and she agreed to assist. She had no plans of adopting another child, but destiny had another





### FROM FOSTERING TO FAMILY CONT'D



*Biological father Timothy Barksdale with Ta'Quan, Tim and Carolina*

idea. The siblings loved being under one roof together, did not want to separate, and pleaded for Carolina to stay. "Sure enough, she pulled on my heartstrings," said Bradshaw. "Thank God I had a good adoption worker and a good support team." Bradshaw is currently still in the adoption process for Carolina, as it has been postponed due to COVID-19. She says waiting has been the hardest part of the adoption process.

Bradshaw finds joy in providing love and security as an adoptive parent and has

been completely transparent about the children's biological parents as well. "Ta'Quan knew his mom and dad, but the other two were very young and did not remember their mom," she shared.

After inquiries from Ta'Quan, Bradshaw's biological daughter located and reached out to the children's father through Facebook. Bradshaw developed a good relationship with the father and says he and the children are very close. "They rotate weekends, and he keeps them for two weeks during the summer. He and his girlfriend also assist on family outings." She appreciates their relationship and his respect for her. "I thank God for him," said Bradshaw.

She advises prospective adoptive parents to not keep things a secret and to allow children to have contact with their biological parents. "If you help them with the process, they'll love you even more," she said. She also advises that you have a good relationship with your adoption worker so that you'll have someone to share and vent to.

During all of her years, to ensure her two biological kids did not feel neglected, Bradshaw had never taken on more than one child at a time. Yet, an inner connection fueled her generosity towards this trio. "I was adopted too, so I try to pay it forward. I know how it feels," she shared. "That's the reason I do what I do."

For more information on adoption, contact the following agencies used by Felicia Bradshaw:

- South Carolina Youth Advocate Program (Myrtle Beach)
- DSS Adoption Division (Florence)

### ANSWERING THE CALL TO ADOPT

*by Mallory Brayboy*



*Drew and Sarah Marlowe and their children Mack, 3, Grace, 2, and Mary Kate, 1*

Drew and Sarah Kathryn Marlowe share many core beliefs. One of their beliefs is that God is all knowing and when he speaks you should listen. Four years into their marriage, the couple decided to answer God's call to adopt.

Their journey began in 2017. The Marlowes opted for the foster care route and worked with Sumter DSS and Crosswell Home for Children to become licensed foster care parents and obtain their first child. They were met with hours of training and numerous screenings including background, medical and financial checks and even a home inspection that they initially failed. Sarah Marlowe admits that she cried upon learning that lead paint on the



*Mack, Grace and Mary Kate Marlowe*

exterior of her home, near the roof, would halt her from beginning the process. However, her pain would soon become tears of joy.

Four months later, in August of 2017, the couple received the news that they were officially licensed foster care parents for the state of S.C. "I felt like that was a positive pregnancy test! I felt like I had earned it because we went through so much to get that," said Sarah. When it came to deciding the ages of the children they would receive, the couple consulted God. "We prayed and came up with birth to four years old," Sarah shared. That December, the Marlowes received a phone call for their son, Mack, who was five months old at the time. They visited with him for about a month, each party becoming acquainted with the other before his arrival to their home in January of 2018. After getting their first child, the Marlowes felt another calling from the Lord, this time for a biological child. "We got pregnant very fast, and then we got Grace," said Sarah. The family received a call for their daughter, Grace, that September when she was six days old. Grace, and their biological daughter, Mary Kate, are only eight months apart.

After arriving as foster children with an uncertain future, Mack was officially adopted in August of 2019 and Grace in June of this year. The family had a great experience navigating the adoption process with Region IV Division of Adoption Services in Florence. "Actual adoption days are, by far, my favorite part! The day the judge declared them my son and daughter was the happiest day of my life," shared Drew.

The couple's transition from fostering to adoption was filled with many trials. Sarah shared her grief saying, "There are so many unknowns in foster care. There's so many times where you don't know if you will get to adopt them. Reunification is always the goal." As foster parents, they had to be open to that reality. The couple spent several nights in prayer, led by Drew. "It was a lot of surrender to the Lord," said Sarah. "Whenever we talk about him being our heavenly father, that's really how I had to look at it. He was so good to our children, and his plan was always going to be good."

The couple continues to uplift the Lord for pushing them throughout the process and hopes that others may see his glory in their story. Sarah urges others to not be afraid and to adopt if they feel they are being called to do so. Drew also advises prospective parents to be patient and have a realistic timeline, adding, "We thought things would happen much faster than they actually did. The Family Court System is backed up, and there are only a few attorneys that represent DSS, so getting a court hearing feels like it takes forever."

For the Marlowes, adoption is celebratory, and they've shared the amazing truth with their children. "We let them know that God gave them to us. God picked us to be their mom and dad, and he had a special plan for them," Sarah shared. Their journey through foster care and adoption has not only been emotional, it's been spiritually surreal. "For us, it's just the picture of the gospel and about how God adopted us into his family and how we become his children," she said.

The couple gives all of their gratitude to the Lord. "You experience a full range of emotions, but in the end all I feel is joy. The Lord has blessed us with two great kids by adoption. He has blessed us far beyond what we deserve! God is good!" said Drew.



## 5 STEPS TO BUILD YOUR EMERGENCY FUND



Many of life's interruptions can't be predicted. Not having funds set aside for unexpected problems can leave you racking up high credit card debt or putting yourself in other difficult financial straits.

When it comes to savings best practices, it is especially clear after the pandemic how valuable an emergency savings fund can become at a moment's notice. Here are some tips that might help you kick start your emergency savings.

**Here's how to create an emergency fund to protect your finances.**

### 1. Do the math; set a goal.

If your first instinct is to save an enormous sum that will cover all expenses for many months, think again. While financial experts recommend having between three and six months of living expenses in an emergency fund, this number might not be realistic if you're just beginning to save. It's often a good idea to start with a smaller goal: \$500 or \$1,000. Then, as you get into the habit of saving, you can slowly start to raise your future goals until you reach the three-to six-month threshold.

### 2. Decide where to put the funds.

The money in your emergency fund should be kept separate from accounts you use for paying bills or making purchases and be easily accessible when an emergency arises. Using just one account may make it far too easy to "borrow" from your emergency fund for non-essential items. Instead, place your emergency funds into an interest-bearing

account that's specifically designated for this purpose. Good options include a savings account or money market account. Either can be easily accessed without penalties and allow your money to grow.

### 3. Get creative and save.

Building an emergency fund means you'll need to trim spending elsewhere. Quick fixes like evaluating your cell phone plan, cutting the cord on cable or bringing your lunch to work can help free up money for savings. Or think bigger, like refinancing your home or car. Use a refinance calculator to see whether a new loan will save you money.

### 4. Save unexpected windfalls.

You can boost the balance of your emergency fund when you least expect it with found money. Invest birthday or holiday cash gifts, work bonuses and tax refunds directly into your account, and see how quickly you can reach your emergency fund goal. Since this money isn't part of your typical spending, it's easy to use it for saving without missing it.

### 5. Make saving automatic.

We all know that saving money for the unexpected is a good idea, but it's easy to delay in favor of more pressing concerns. Treat your emergency fund like any other monthly recurring bill and have funds directly deposited into your savings account each month. You'll be less likely to miss the money and can sleep easy knowing you have a safety net when life interruptions occur.

An emergency fund isn't a luxury. It's an important way to protect the things that matter most to you. We encourage you to talk to a financial institution you can trust, and get started saving as soon as you can.

## Shawn Ellerbe

Compliance Officer

*"Shawn is a steady advocate for uplifting others. He is such a good-hearted person. He's also an incredibly helpful and well-versed compliance officer."*

Shawn is a married father of 3, born and raised in Florence. He truly believes in doing as much as you can, for as many people as you can, for as long as you can. His greatest joy is seeing others happy.

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# CORONAVIRUS AND THE IMPACT OF THE PPP Submitted by Luke Gasque, Loan Officer, Anderson Brothers Bank



Luke Gasque

**MULLINS**-With the outbreak of the coronavirus and the uncertainty when businesses were forced to close, the once booming U.S. economy was decimated in a matter of weeks. On Feb. 12, the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed at an all-time high of 29,551.42 while dropping to a 2020 low of 18,591.93 on March 23. Unemployment had reached a low of 3.5 percent in February and increased to a 2020 high of 14.7 percent in April.

While many businesses were forced to shut down, others struggled to attract customers as growing concern of the virus spread. Once confident consumers were now facing reduced wages, temporary layoffs and unemployment. With no end in sight, Congress knew that something had to be done to combat an economic crisis from ensuing.

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was passed by Congress as part of the CARES Act that was signed in to law on March 27. The program was designed to support small businesses, sole proprietors, independent contractors and self-employed persons during these difficult times. The funds were to be used for payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent and utilities.

According to the Small Business Administration (SBA), the PPP approved a total of 5,212,128 loans at an average of \$100,729 per loan. While these loans ranged from a few hundred dollars to several million dollars, the program served a wide variety of businesses. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the following, "The PPP is providing much-needed relief to millions of American small businesses, supporting more than 51 million jobs and over 80 percent of all small business employees, who are the drivers of economic growth in our country."

Some may say that the PPP did not do enough during these unprecedented times. While it is still too soon to know, I believe the program was a success, and we will see that the PPP may have been a tool that helped save us from another severe recession. Hopefully, a vaccine will be available soon, and we can put this behind us.



**ANDERSON BROTHERS BANK**

## CIFELLI NAMED BRANCH OPERATIONS COORDINATOR Submitted by Susan Grant, VP Marketing Director, ABB



Nicole Cifelli

**MULLINS** - Anderson Brothers Bank (ABB) announces Nicole Cifelli as branch operations coordinator in the newly renovated North Myrtle Beach Office located at 1799 Highway 17 N. She joined ABB in May of 2020 and has advanced progressively in her short time with the bank. In her new role, Cifelli will provide administrative and supervisory support within the branch to ensure effective and efficient customer service.

"We are very fortunate to have Nicole as a member of the ABB family in NMB and excited to have her in the role of branch operations coordinator," said Jim Hanley, branch manager. "Nicole is well versed in product knowledge, enthusiastic, and sincere in her efforts to provide outstanding customer service. She is committed to community involvement while representing the bank and working closely with customers."

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# Retirement Planning Solutions

Retirement solutions to help ensure that you don't run out of money in retirement.



## IN RETIREMENT, GUARANTEES MATTER.

One in five Americans age 65 or older is working or looking for work.<sup>1</sup> Why do so many expect to postpone a typical, leisure-filled retirement? One theory points to the decline of pensions and the need to replace the income stream that used to come—guaranteed—from a past employer. Approximately 14 percent of private sector employers offer defined contribution or traditional defined benefit pension plans.<sup>2</sup> And traditional defined benefit plans are disappearing as only 16 percent of Fortune 500 companies offered defined benefit pensions to new employees.<sup>3</sup>

With private pensions becoming rarer, guarantees in retirement may be few and far between, but it doesn't make them any less important. For starters, guarantees might make you happier. Research shows that retirees with some form of insurance (e.g. annuity or LTC) spend more freely and improve their quality of life in retirement.<sup>4</sup> That's because you're more likely to be confident spending money when you know another check is right around the corner.

Guarantees can also help you be a more confident through market ups and downs. Guarantees can be the guardrails you need to stay the

course when investing, knowing that you have some protection built into your portfolio. And, with Americans living longer than ever before, guarantees<sup>5</sup> in your overall retirement plan, which can be provided by fixed annuities, may help assure that your money lasts as long as you do.

Just as no two retirements are alike, not all guarantees are alike, so it's important to understand the options available to you and to identify what's appropriate for your own retirement.

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 317-289-3010 or [jacord@ft.newyorklife.com](mailto:jacord@ft.newyorklife.com).

1 John F. Wasik, "Why Working Past Retirement Age Makes Sense," Forbes, June, 3, 2019.

2 "Ultimate Guide to Retirement," CNNMoney 2018.

3 Gabrielle Olya, "14 Companies That Still Offer Pension Plans," YahooFinance, June 6, 2019.

4 The Decumulation Paradox, Investments & Wealth Monitor, July / August 2018.

5 Guarantees are dependent upon the claims paying ability of the company issuing the annuity

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# PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE WHEN LIFE IS SO UNCERTAIN



As the ongoing coronavirus pandemic continues to present health and economic challenges, it is difficult to focus on anything other than the present. It's important though not to lose sight of the years ahead and to take steps that can put you in a better position when we emerge on the other side.

The youngest baby boomers--the generation born between 1944 and 1964--turned 55 last year. This coupled with the uncertain job picture, means many of us are thinking more seriously about what we will need to successfully retire.

In the past, the years leading up to retirement have been a time of hope and optimism. We've looked forward to fulfilling our dreams of doing the things we might have missed while working, such as dedicating more time to family and friends, checking items off a bucket list, or even pursuing a meaningful second career.

However, many of the traditional assumptions about this phase of life have been challenged over the past decade, including the idea that we'll retire at 65. Many of us are choosing to continue working and, in light of the current situation, some who have already retired, especially those in health care, are even being asked to return to work.

What's behind this change? It turns out that it's more than just the current market volatility. Perhaps one of the most significant reasons is the decline in company-financed pensions. Many companies have shifted from defined benefit, or pension, plans, which promise retirees a monthly income benefit for life, to defined contribution (DC) plans. DC plans, such as 401(k)s, are the main source of retirement savings for most workers.

While employers often make contributions to these plans, workers are primarily responsible for their retirement security. With this in mind, there are three key steps you can take now to prepare for the years after you finish working regardless of whether that day is decades away or just over the horizon.

## 1. Create a plan to eliminate debt.

Whether you carry a balance on a credit card, have student loans or a mortgage, start paying off your debts now. Reducing your monthly expenses not only allows you to save more for retirement, but also gives you more flexibility with how you spend money after you stop working.



## 2. Make retirement savings automatic, and don't miss out on free money.

Many employers offer a retirement savings plan, such as a 401(k), to their employees. The sooner you begin saving, the sooner your savings can begin to build up over time. Help your nest egg grow even faster by contributing enough to take full advantage of any matching contributions your employer offers. For example, your company might match 100 percent of your contribution, up to 6 percent of your salary. For example, if you earn \$50,000 a year and save at least \$3,000, your company will match that amount by contributing \$3,000 to your retirement as well.

## 3. Understand how your retirement savings translates into income.

Take the time during your working years to understand how much income you might receive in retirement based on your retirement savings. The U.S. Department of Labor offers a simple retirement income projection tool that can help you get started. If you see that projections are falling short of where you think you might need them to be, consider filling the gap by increasing the amount you are saving. Additionally, if you are over the age of 50, you can make catch-up contributions to your 401(k) or individual retirement account.

Having a predictable income can make a big difference and, fortunately, relief may be in sight. While many employers don't yet offer guaranteed retirement income options in their 401(k) plans, a new law passed at the end of 2019 that changed this. That's good news, considering that 95 percent of workers and retirees say it's important for retirees to have a source of guaranteed retirement income they cannot outlive.

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## IS NOW THE RIGHT TIME TO BUY A CAR? Submitted by Palmetto First Federal Credit Union



Have you been considering purchasing a vehicle? Now could be the right time for you to buy. Due to declining sales, dealerships are highly motivated to sell vehicles, but you may not necessarily get the

deal that is best for you. Our goal is to encourage you to do your due diligence, and buy a vehicle that's best for your lifestyle and budget. To help you make a smart decision, we're providing a few tips to ensure you're well-informed.

### Know you have choices

Due to dealerships looking to make up for lost sales, they're offering flashy, headline-making deals. However, once you take a look under the hood, the deals aren't as great as they seem. For instance, a cash rebate will be a better deal than zero percent interest when paired with a low-interest loan as it can lower your monthly payment. Therefore, you can take the rebate and finance with Palmetto First Federal Credit Union for your best deal.

If the dealership requires you to use their financing, you can finance with the rebate, and then refinance your auto loan with us. We will work with you to ensure you receive the best deal on your vehicle. TransUnion reports that car buyers who refinanced their auto loan lowered their rate by over two percent!\*

### Consider your warranty options

When you're buying a vehicle, whether new or used, dealers will try to sell you or automatically include add-ins like warranties to your loan. When buying a car, think of how long you plan to own it. If you trade or upgrade your vehicle often, you may not need an extended warranty. Typically, new vehicles come with manufacturer warranties that supersede any extended warranties. This means that your extended warranty has no value until the original manufacturer warranty expires.

If you plan on keeping your vehicle for an extended length of time, an extended warranty could be right for you. Compare the costs of the warranties the dealer offers with our warranty options. Our warranties usually lower in cost and have longer terms and more comprehensive coverage than those offered at the dealership.

### Watch out for GAP Insurance

GAP stands for Guaranteed Asset Protection. What is GAP insurance? It's optional car insurance coverage that helps you pay off your auto loan in the event that your car is totaled or stolen, and you owe more than the car's current value. This helps bridge the "gap" between what you owe and what your insurance is willing to pay. For example, say you owe \$25,000 on your car, but the actual value is \$19,000. If you incur a total loss accident, your insurance will most likely only pay the value amount of 19,000. GAP insurance will pay the \$6,000 so you are debt-free.

If you've made up your mind to purchase a vehicle, you don't have to be intimidated by the dealer. Take control of your car-buying journey, and get pre-approved with Palmetto First Federal Credit Union.

"Being a Palmetto First member has been and still is **one of the best choices** I have made. From buying my first vehicle to making retirement plans, the credit union has **helped me in every way**. If you need anything from opening a Christmas Club Account to making a major purchase, Palmetto First Federal Credit Union would be the best place to come.

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## WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU! Submitted by Dr. Edward Behling, Chief Medical Officer, HopeHealth



*Dr. Edward Behling*

As we accumulate birthdays, it often takes a little longer to get started in the morning. However, if you wake up with stiffness, and it takes an excessive amount of time to get moving, it could be a sign of a more serious condition.

The term “arthritis” is used to describe pain in the joints. Osteoarthritis, the most common type of arthritis, is a degenerative disease and occurs due to wear and tear on the joints, and there is very minimal inflammation. This type of arthritis is usually not associated with any significant degree of morning stiffness, and pain is aggravated by activity and improves with rest. Joint pain caused by osteoarthritis usually occurs after age 50 and is not linked to diseases of other organs.

On the other hand, inflammatory arthritis is an entirely different disease. This condition is caused by an overactive immune system that attacks the body’s own tissue. This generally causes warm joints that are swollen (“fever in the joints”) and prolonged morning stiffness and is frequently associated with signs and symptoms that involve other organ systems. This category of arthritis includes rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, psoriatic arthritis, gout and other similar conditions.

The most common type of inflammatory arthritis is rheumatoid arthritis. While osteoarthritis affects men and women equally, rheumatoid arthritis is more common in women, especially if there is a family history of this disease. Because this is actually a disorder of the immune system, other organs, such as the skin, eyes and lungs are often affected. Psoriatic arthritis, for example, is associated with a serious skin rash. The rash and joint pain are both improved with treatment.

In addition to the associated symptoms of inflammatory arthritis, this condition usually presents with a specific pattern. HopeHealth Rheumatologist Dr. Supen Patel states that the initial goal in evaluating patients with joint pain “is to determine if symptoms are caused by an inflammatory or non-inflammatory condition.” The age of onset of symptoms, number of joints, types of joints, family history, factors that make the pain better or worse and other relevant information can be critical in achieving the correct diagnosis. Laboratory studies and x-rays are usually essential in this process.

Some people may feel that as long as their pain is improved by an over the counter medication and a heating pad, they don’t need to seek additional evaluation. Actually, not knowing the cause of the joint pain can indeed hurt you – literally! Although controlling pain is part of the treatment, the main goal is to use medications to prevent the destruction of the joint, which occurs over time. “The majority of people with auto-immune conditions are prescribed medications that manipulate the immune system,” said Dr. Harrell Docherty, a rheumatologist at HopeHealth. “Generally, symptoms will not improve without some type of treatment.” The body produces chemicals that attack the tissue in the joint, and the joint is destroyed, causing worsening pain and permanent damage.

Medications called “disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs” (DMARDs) can dramatically change the course of the disease, improve pain and function and impact the patient’s life span. For this reason,

it is critical for these disorders to be diagnosed early and treated promptly. Postponing therapy can have devastating consequences. These medications are often expensive, and individuals receiving treatment need to be monitored very closely.

As with all chronic conditions, the first step is an evaluation by a primary care provider. If an inflammatory condition is suspected, a referral to a subspecialist may be necessary. The goal of your health care team is to reduce pain and damage, improve physical comfort and mobility and prevent the progression of symptoms and development of internal organ diseases. With proper treatment, many patients are able to achieve remission of the disease and lead normal lives.

Learn more about rheumatology from Dr. Supen Patel and Dr. J. Harrell Docherty Jr. in the new HopeHealth podcast series at [hopehealth.org/podcast](http://hopehealth.org/podcast).

## STIGMA AND TRENDS WITHIN ID

Submitted by Amber Maley, Practice Administrator, HopeHealth



*Amber Maley*

Webster’s dictionary defines stigma as “a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person.” Any kind of stigma is naturally thought of as unfavorable, and possibly even shameful. Disease-related stigma, however, can cause such distress and create barriers for individuals that could cost someone’s life. I have seen it happen too many times. Patients don’t want to walk into the clinic because they are scared of seeing someone they know. They don’t want family

and friends to question why they are taking a certain medication. They are worried about coworkers finding out and losing their jobs. The list of concerns is endless.

In today’s world, one would hope these problems and judgments would not exist, but for many they are very real and daily obstacles.

There are many different types of sexually transmitted infections, and they are not always transmitted through sex: HIV, AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, hepatitis, etc. The number of cases for each, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has been on the rise for the past five years.

Fortunately, there are treatments that can either suppress or cure each of these. The medications prescribed today for HIV/AIDS are incredible, considering not long ago the diagnosis was declared an inevitable and horrible death sentence. Patients are living long and healthy lives with little to no symptoms. They’re getting married, purchasing homes, having families, growing old. Thirty years ago, this kind of life would have been unheard of. There is even a cure now for Hepatitis C.

The stigmas that create barriers for people to access such treatment must end. And it is the responsibility of each of us to help.

**#ENDTHESTIGMA  
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# THE CHANCES OF YOU, TOO, HAVING COLON CANCER Submitted by MUSC Health

**CHARLESTON**—In the wake of South Carolina native and movie star Chadwick Boseman’s death, doctors at MUSC Hollings Cancer Center are urging people of all ages to be aware of the symptoms of colon cancer.

Boseman, 43, was diagnosed with stage 3 colon cancer in 2016. Stage 3 means the cancer had spread past the lining of his colon to the lymph nodes. The star of “Black Panther” and other high-profile movies died four years later, on Aug. 28.

Colon cancer specialist Virgilio George, M.D. was as surprised as anyone to see the actor born in Anderson had passed away. Boseman had kept his illness private and showed no signs of it in public. But George said another aspect of the Black Panther star’s death is less surprising: his age. “The incidence of colon cancer in a younger population has steadily increased through the years.”

The American Cancer Society predicts that this year 12 percent of colorectal cancer cases in the U.S. — which includes colon cancer and rectal cancer — will be diagnosed in people under the age of 50. That’s about 18,000 people.

“The overall death rate from colon cancer is decreasing, thanks to the use of colonoscopies to screen for it in people 45 and up, but younger people aren’t getting screened and aren’t recognizing the symptoms for what they are,” George said.

“They never imagine they have cancer when they have discomfort, changes in bowel movements or blood in the stool. When you are under the age of 45, people think either this is nothing, or this is benign. But if you have any symptoms of bleeding, change in bowel movement, indigestion and discomfort, don’t hesitate to ask your doctor, ‘Is there a chance I have colon cancer?’”

MUSC Hollings Cancer Center has a team of more than a dozen experts in gastrointestinal cancers, which includes colon cancer. The youngest colon cancer patient George has seen was just 18 years old.

“We do diagnose people at early ages with colon cancer, and these are not necessarily people with family members who have had colon cancer. These are young, productive males and females who are being diagnosed with colon cancer and sometimes advanced colon and rectal cancer.”

African Americans, like Boseman, have the highest rate of colorectal cancer and are more likely to die from it than any other racial group in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society. Scientists are studying the reasons for that.

Other risk factors that can’t be changed include:

- Age. Colon cancer becomes more common after 50.
- A history of polyps, which are clumps of cells in the colon that can turn into cancer.
- Inflammatory bowel disease.
- A family history of colorectal cancer or precancerous polyps.
- An inherited condition such as Lynch syndrome that can lead to cancer.

But there are plenty of risk factors people can change, George said, including:

- A low fiber diet.
- A sedentary lifestyle.
- Being overweight.
- Drinking too much alcohol.
- Smoking

George said Boseman, who played a superhero in “Black Panther,” could inspire others in real life to take the threat of colon cancer seriously. “He could be a hero for people with colon cancer, too.”



Chadwick Boseman’s family announced his death on Instagram.



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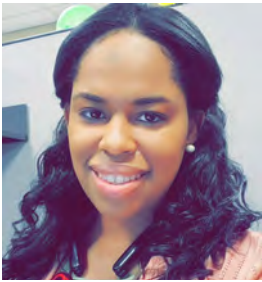
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# READY, SET, PREP!

Submitted by Ashley Wilson, PrEP Prevention Specialist, HopeHealth



Ashley Wilson is a PrEP prevention specialist at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence

Are you PrEPared? No, I'm not talking about getting cute masks, sanitizer and gloves for COVID. I'm not even talking about buying water, flashlights and non-perishables for hurricane season. Yes, all of those are super important, but what I am talking about is are you prepared for HIV?

With 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States, it is important you prevent yourself from becoming a statistic, especially if you live a life that puts you at risk for HIV.

Those risk factors include:

- multiple sexual partners or a partner who has multiple partners
- HIV status or partner(s) is unknown or is HIV+
- injecting drugs or sharing needles
- had a previous sexually transmitted infection
- in an abusive relationship where condom negotiation is not feasible

If you fall into any of those categories, you have nothing to be ashamed of. There is help!

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. It is a one-a-day pill a doctor can prescribe to prevent HIV. As long as your risk for HIV is present, you continue taking this pill. If your situation changes, you should have a conversation with your doctor about whether or not to stop the medication.

Currently, Descovy and Truvada are the only two medications approved for PrEP in the United States. Both are 99 percent effective at preventing HIV when taken properly. Follow up appointments and lab work are required every three months while taking PrEP. This helps ensure the drug is interacting with your body safely and you remain HIV negative.

To learn more about PrEP, talk to your primary care provider or a member of the prevention team at HopeHealth.

## CHILDREN OF HOPE CAMPAIGN RECEIVES LARGE DONATION

Submitted by Donna Tracy, Communication Coordinator, HopeHealth



Carl M. Humphries, HopeHealth CEO, accepts a \$10,000 donation from Julie Jebaily and her father, John Jebaily for the HopeHealth Compassionate Care Fund.

HopeHealth strives to make the lives of children brighter every holiday season through its Children of Hope Christmas program. Since 1996, the program has provided children of HopeHealth patients facing difficult circumstances much needed gifts of clothing and toys.

This year, Jebaily Properties stepped up to help in a big way. John Jebaily and Julie Jebaily presented a \$10,000 check to HopeHealth to add to the HopeHealth employees' Christmas in July internal campaign that helps fund the gifts.

"We are so grateful for the support of businesses and community members like John and Julie," said Scherrie Cogdill, director of development at HopeHealth. "These funds will help us add an additional 100 children to the annual Children of Hope holiday shopping list."

John Jebaily has been a long time supporter of HopeHealth and currently serves as a member of the board of directors.

If you are interested in donating to Children of Hope, please contact Scherrie Cogdill at scogdill@hope-health.org or 803-473-8718.



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# HOPEHEALTH WELCOMES NEW PROVIDERS

Submitted by Donna Tracy, Communications Coordinator, HopeHealth



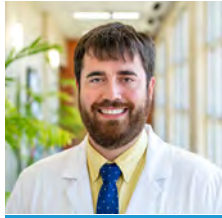
Melissa Brady, MSW, LISW-CP

**Melissa Brady, MSW, LISW-CP**, serves as a behavioral health consultant at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza. Brady graduated the University of South Carolina (USC) with a Master of Social Work and from Susquehanna University with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and minor in sociology. She is certified in trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy.



Jessica Green, LPC, LAC, CAC II

**Jessica Green, LPC, LAC, CAC II** serves as a behavioral health consultant at HopeHealth in Manning. She graduated from Webster University with a master's in counseling and from USC with a Bachelor of Arts in interdisciplinary studies with an emphasis on psychology and sociology. She is licensed as a mental health and addiction counselor and is a certified as an addiction counselor. She is also a "Prime for Life" and a "Prime Solutions" instructor and holds a certification for Trauma Recovery and Empowerment Model (TREM).



Richard Smith, DO

HopeHealth Florence welcomed **Richard Smith, DO**. Smith earned a doctorate from the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine-Carolinas Campus, Spartanburg, and a Bachelor of Science in biology from Francis Marion University (FMU). He completed his internship at Palmetto Health-University of South Carolina and his residency at Prisma Health.



Regina Stanley, FNP

A native of Florence, Dr. Smith is a member of the Student Osteopathic Medical Association, Phi Kappa Phi, American College of Physicians and South Carolina Osteopathic Society.



Samuel J. Tomlinson III, MD

HopeHealth welcomed **Regina Stanley, family nurse practitioner**, to HopeHealth at FMU. Stanley earned her Master of Science in nursing/nurse practitioner from Walden University in Minneapolis, Minn., and her Bachelor of Science in nursing from FMU.

From Mullins, Stanley is a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, National Society of Leadership and Success, American Nurses Association and South Carolina Nurses Association. She is a 2017 Palmetto Gold Nursing Award recipient.



Sara Davis Wallace, FNP

HopeHealth welcomed family medicine physician **Samuel J. Tomlinson III, MD**, to HopeHealth in Kingstree. Originally from Kingstree, he graduated from Clemson University and USC's School of Medicine and completed his residency at McLeod Regional Medical Center.

He is involved in the community through the Williamsburg recreation department, Williamsburg Academy and Kingstree Presbyterian Church. Dr. Tomlinson is accepting new patients. For an appointment, call 843-355-5628.

HopeHealth welcomed **Sara Davis Wallace, board-certified family nurse practitioner**, to HopeHealth Rheumatology services. Wallace will serve patients at HopeHealth on Palmetto Street in Florence.

Originally from Dillon, Wallace earned a Bachelor of Science in nursing and a Master of Science in nursing from FMU.

To become a HopeHealth patient, call 843-667-9414, or visit hope-health.org.



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# DOES STUTTERING AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE?

Submitted by Erin Ward, MSCCC-SLP, Speech Language Pathologist



Erin Ward

Dysfluency is a speech disorder that is commonly known as stuttering. It involves frequent and significant problems with normal fluency and the flow of speech. Stuttering causes the repetition of sounds and words, the prolongation of sounds or stoppages in speech. More than 70 million people around the world are dysfluent, or stutter, when they speak. Around four times as many men as women stutter, though stuttering can affect individuals of any age or sex.

There are three types of dysfluencies: developmental, neurogenic and psychogenic. Researchers continue to study the underlying causes of developmental stuttering, but a combination of factors may be involved. Some evidence indicates that abnormalities in speech motor control may contribute. Developmental stuttering may run in families because of an inherited abnormality in the part of the brain that governs language. Neurogenic stuttering is the result of a neurological event such as a brain injury or stroke. Psychogenic stuttering is caused by severe emotional trauma.

Stuttering is common among young children as a normal part of learning to speak. It is common for children between the ages of two and five years to go through periods when they may stutter. Young children may stutter when their speech and language abilities aren't developed enough to keep up with what they want to say. Most children outgrow this type of developmental stuttering. Sometimes,

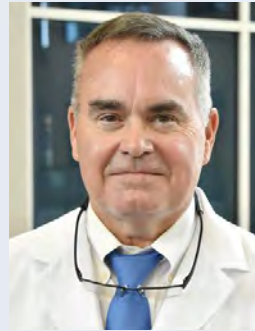
however, stuttering is a chronic condition that persists into adulthood. This type of stuttering can have an impact on self-esteem and interactions with other people and may require treatment to improve speech fluency.

If stuttering begins as an adult or occurs with other speech and language problems, call your doctor for a referral to a speech-language pathologist. If stuttering becomes more frequent as a child grows older or occurs with muscle tightening or visibly struggling to speak, intervention may be indicated. If stuttering affects the ability to effectively communicate at school or work or causes anxiety or emotional problems, speech therapy can help.

Erin Ward is a speech-language pathologist at MUSC Health Outpatient Rehabilitation Center located at 1925 Hoffmeyer Road in Florence. For more information visit [MUSChealth.org/florence](http://MUSChealth.org/florence), or call 843-661-4360.

## NOVEMBER IS "BLADDER HEALTH MONTH"

Submitted by Dr. Kevin O'Kelly, Urologist at MUSC Health



Dr. Kevin O'Kelly

**MARION**—First a little background: the bladder is an organ that stores urine until it's a good time to urinate. A normal bladder holds 10 to 16 ounces of liquid, which means using the restroom every three to four hours (no more than twice a night). How often we urinate is related to how much and what we drink during the day. Healthy kidneys produce more urine the more we drink. When our bladder is functioning properly, we can be in control of our lives: go to school, go shopping or

travel. We can be physically active or sit quietly through a movie with out "having to go."

In a healthy bladder, the sensation to urinate is not painful and can be delayed until socially acceptable and convenient to urinate. Urination should not be painful for a healthy bladder, and leakage should not occur.

How can you maintain a healthy bladder?

- First, consider how much you drink and what kind of fluids do you drink. Fluid intake should be related to thirst not amount.
- Try to avoid caffeinated drinks.
- Urinate when you feel the need, approximately every four hours.
- Choose water. It's healthier and the least expensive.
- Understand the more you drink the more you will go to the bathroom.
- Maintain a healthy weight by eating and exercising regularly. Obesity is linked to urgency, frequency and leakage.

Health care providers can diagnose and treat bladder problems with new technologies. We can study bladder function (how well the bladder muscle works) with urodynamics and treat with medications and possibly surgery. Surgical options include using a non-invasive robot, or open surgery to repair or correct the problem.

If you have bothersome bladder symptoms, talk to your health care provider.

Dr. Kevin O'Kelly is a urologist at MUSC Health – Urology – Marion Medical Park on the campus of MUSC Health Marion Medical Center. He is accepting new patients. To schedule an appointment, or for additional information, please call 843-431-2140.

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# MUSC PROVIDES ATHLETIC TRAINER TO MOORE MIDDLE Submitted by MUSC Health Florence



Wrakyia Platt-Gregg

MUSC Health Florence Medical Center is proud to announce it will provide athletic training services at John W. Moore Middle School in the Florence 1 school district. Athletic trainer Wrakyia Platt-Gregg will assist student-athletes with athletic injury prevention, assessment, management and rehabilitation. She comes to Florence with a broad knowledge in several different levels of sports and clinical athletic training experience.

“I am very excited to join the MUSC Health Florence team in providing optimal healthcare to our patients and student-athletes at John W. Moore Middle School. Parents can trust that safety will be top priority and that time and care will be committed to ensure the safest and most effective rehabilitative experience for their student-athletes,” said Wrakyia Platt-Gregg.

Platt-Gregg is a board certified athletic trainer at MUSC Health Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine in Florence. She received her Master of Science in athletic training from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and her Bachelor of Science in sport science – fitness management from North Carolina A&T State University.

“MUSC Health has an established reputation for great sports medicine care in Charleston and we are excited about bringing it to the Pee Dee area,” said Vance Reynolds, CEO of MUSC Health Florence Division. “I am glad we have the opportunity to serve our student-athletes in Florence 1 Schools in this capacity. On behalf of MUSC Health Florence Division, we all look forward to a healthy and safe sports

season.”

For more information please call MUSC Health – Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine at 843-413-6835, or visit [MUSChealth.org/florence](http://MUSChealth.org/florence).

## About MUSC Health

The MUSC Health Florence Division consists of MUSC Health – Florence and Marion Medical Centers and the employed practices of each hospital. Both hospitals and entities are a part of the MUSC family.

As the clinical health system of the Medical University of South Carolina, MUSC Health is dedicated to delivering the highest quality patient care available while training generations of competent, compassionate health care providers to serve the people of South Carolina and beyond. Comprising some 1,600 beds, more than 100 outreach sites, the MUSC College of Medicine, the physicians’ practice plan and nearly 275 telehealth locations, MUSC Health owns and operates eight hospitals situated in Charleston, Chester, Florence, Lancaster and Marion counties. In 2019, for the fifth consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the No. 1 hospital in South Carolina. To learn more about clinical patient services, visit [muschealth.org](http://muschealth.org).

MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets of \$3.2 billion. The more than 17,000 MUSC team members include world-class faculty, physicians, specialty providers and scientists who deliver groundbreaking education, research, technology and patient care.



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## CARESOUTH AWARDED \$269,712 IN GRANTS Submitted by Andrew Boardwine, Communication Specialist



The McColl Facility

**HARTSVILLE-** CareSouth Carolina was awarded a total of \$269,712 in Health Center Quality Improvement Grant Awards from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

HHS, through HRSA, announced over \$117 million in quality improvements awards to 1,318 health centers across the U.S. HRSA-funded health centers will use these funds to further strengthen quality improvement activities and expand quality primary health care service delivery.

CareSouth Carolina was awarded the most total funds of any health center in the state of South Carolina in addition to receiving recognition in the most categories.

By categories: CareSouth Carolina received \$44,956 in Clinical Quality Improvers; \$61,631 in Health Center Quality Leaders; \$11,500 in Access Enhancers; \$25,875 in Health Disparities Reducers; \$10,750 in Advancing Health Information Technology (HIT) for Quality; and \$115,000 for Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Recognition, for a grand total of \$269,712.

"This was exciting news for us," CareSouth Carolina CEO Ann Lewis said. "Everyone at CareSouth Carolina has been working diligently to provide outstanding care to our patients and communities, and this recognition, not only in the grant amount, but the total categories of recognition, is a measure of that work. It is an accomplishment toward our

mission 'to improve the health and well-being for everyone' in our service area. There is still more work to do, especially as the struggle with the coronavirus continues, but CareSouth will continue to improve, introducing even more innovations and improvement."

CareSouth Carolina will use the awarded funds to help provide access to care and to improve health outcomes in its five-county service region.

HRSA also recognizes quality improvement achievements with badges that recognize accomplishments by health centers. In total, CareSouth Carolina received five badges that include:

- **HRSA Health Center Quality Leader**, which recognized health centers that improved quality of care.
- **HRSA Access Enhancer**, which recognized health centers that increased the total number of patients served and the number of patients receiving comprehensive services.
- **HRSA Health Disparities Reducer**, which recognized health centers that met or exceeded the Healthy People 2020 goals, or made at least a 10 percent improvement across different racial/ethnic groups.
- **HRSA Advancing HIT for Quality**, which recognized health centers that optimized HIT services for advancing telehealth, patient engagement, interoperability and collection of social determinants of health to increase access to care and advance quality of care.
- **PCMH (Patient Centered Medical Home) badge**

"These quality improvement awards support health centers across the country in delivering care to nearly 30 million people, providing a convenient source of quality care that has grown even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic," said HHS secretary Alex Azar. "These awards help ensure that all patients who visit a HRSA-funded health center continue to receive the highest quality of care, including access to COVID-19 testing and treatment."



## CARESOUTH AWARDED CONT'D

Health centers deliver comprehensive care to people who are low-income, uninsured or face other obstacles to getting health care. On top of the safety-net that they provide, health centers have been on the front lines preventing and responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency, including providing over three million COVID-19 tests. Health centers continue to provide essential services for our nation's most vulnerable and medically underserved populations, including those who often do not have access to care, before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

HRSA's quality improvement awards recognize the highest performing health centers nationwide as well as those health centers that have made significant quality improvements from the previous year.

"Nearly all HRSA-funded health centers have demonstrated improvement in their clinical quality measures reflecting HRSA's strong commitment to providing high value health care," said HRSA administrator Tom Engels. "Health centers serve approximately one in 11 people nationally. These awards will support health centers as they continue to be a primary medical home for communities around the country. Today, nearly 1,400 health centers operate nearly 13,000 service delivery sites nationwide."

CareSouth Carolina is a private, non-profit community health center delivering patient-centered health and life services in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. CareSouth Carolina operates centers in Bennettsville, Bishopville, Cheraw, Chesterfield, Dillon, Hartsville, Lake View, Latta, McColl and Society Hill.

Services provided by CareSouth Carolina include family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, women services, OB/GYN, HIV/AIDS primary care, dental, chiropractic services, pharmacy, geriatrics, social services, clinical counseling, laboratory, 4D ultrasound, X-Ray, migrant services and veterans choice provider.

## MUSC BRINGS ADVANCED STROKE CARE CLOSER TO HOME

*Submitted by MUSC Health Florence*



### Florence Medical Center

MUSC Florence Medical Center continues to bring advanced system of stroke care closer to the residents of the Pee Dee region despite the coronavirus pandemic.

In March, before COVID-19 reached South Carolina, MUSC Health committed itself to bring an advanced "system of stroke care" to Florence, to include neurocritical care in the ICU and thrombectomy. The life-saving thrombectomy is a neuroendovascular procedure, which removes blood clots from large blood vessels in the brain.

In August, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center opened a Neurological Intensive Care Unit (NSICU) staffed by MUSC Health Florence intensivists. This NSICU is supported by MUSC Charleston tele-neuro critical care consults and tele-rounding on NSICU inpatients.

"This NSICU brings two added benefits for our patients. First, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center is able to receive, and treat, higher acuity stroke patients. Secondly, we can offer neurosurgeons a higher level of confidence to perform more complex cases at MUSC Health Florence than ever before. All of this is a necessary step toward becoming an accredited thrombectomy-capable stroke center," said Vance Reynolds, chief executive officer, MUSC Health Florence Division.

By the end of September, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center was set to offer lifesaving thrombectomy procedures and continue to work toward becoming the first accredited thrombectomy-capable center in our region.

Alejandro M. Spiotta, M.D. MUSC director of Neuroendovascular

Surgery, said, "Research has demonstrated that thrombectomy, a highly specialized procedure in which physicians navigate in the arteries of the body to reach the brain arteries and open a blockage, gives patients who suffer a severe stroke a much better chance of survival. Some will recover all their stroke symptoms immediately on the procedure table! But time is of the essence, and delays in transferring to other regions of the state lead to strokes progressing to the point where they cannot be helped. With more access to this life-saving surgery directly in our Pee Dee community, stroke victims here will have the highest possible chance of recovering from their stroke."

"Neurocritical care adds another layer of safety and acuity to an already advanced intensive care unit in MUSC Health Florence. We are committed to bringing cutting edge care here locally. We owe it to our patients, and we will not stop our pursuit of advancing care and fighting disease here locally," said Rami Zebian, chief medical officer, MUSC Health Florence Division.

"This is a community effort to improve stroke care for the residents of the Pee Dee Region," said Christine Holmstedt, DO, associate professor of Neurology and Emergency Medicine, MUSC Health medical director Comprehensive Stroke Program and Teleneuroscience Program. "Patients and families need to know the signs and symptoms of stroke, and call 911 immediately. Signs and symptoms of stroke include facial drooping, weakness or numbness on one side of the body [and] speech that is suddenly slurred or hard to understand. We are working with Pee Dee EMS professionals on proper assessments and transportation protocols to ensure patients are taken to the appropriate facility to best treat their stroke," she said.

Our foundation as a Primary Stroke Center with tele-stroke service and a 24/7/365 NSICU is why MUSC Health Florence Medical Center is the best choice for stroke care in the region. We stand ready to serve patients from around the Pee Dee region, whether native to Florence or transferred patients from surrounding facilities.

### About MUSC Health

As the clinical health system of the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), MUSC Health is dedicated to delivering the highest quality patient care available, while training generations of competent, compassionate health care providers to serve the people of South Carolina and beyond. Comprising some 1,600 beds, more than 100 outreach sites, the MUSC College of Medicine, the physicians' practice plan and nearly 275 telehealth locations, MUSC Health owns and operates eight hospitals situated in Charleston, Chester, Florence, Lancaster and Marion counties. In 2018, for the fourth consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the number one hospital in South Carolina. To learn more about clinical patient services, visit <http://muschealth.org>.

Founded in 1824, MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets of \$3 billion. The more than 17,000 MUSC team members include world-class faculty, physicians, specialty providers and scientists who deliver groundbreaking education, research, technology and patient care. For information on academic programs, visit [musc.edu](http://musc.edu).

**ADVANCED STROKE TREATMENT**

Attacking Brain Clots to Save Lives

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More than **690,000** U.S. strokes are caused when a clot cuts off blood flow to a part of the brain.

Stroke is the No. 5 cause of death in the United States, killing nearly 130,000 Americans a year.

**1 in 20 DEATHS**

**QUICK TREATMENT= LESS BRAIN DAMAGE!**  
Importance of Getting to the Hospital Quickly



# MUSC RECEIVES 14 S.C. HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION AWARDS Submitted by MUSC Health Florence

MUSC Health Florence and Marion Medical Centers have earned a combined 14 South Carolina “Certified Zero Harm Awards” from the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA). These awards are in recognition of the outstanding performance for patient safety and prevention of hospital acquired infections.

“Our Care Team members are dedicated to the patients we serve and focus on providing the highest level of care,” MUSC Health Florence Division Chief Executive Officer Vance Reynolds said. “These awards are proof that, even in the midst of a pandemic, we are diligent in our safety practices and patient care. This is truly something to celebrate and be proud of.”

“We take quality and patient safety very seriously at MUSC Health Florence Division. We pledge DO NO HARM in our medical oath, and we keep that pledge in every opportunity that we have with patients. We are lucky to have wonderful care team members that share the same goals, and we will continue to strive toward the health and safety of our patients and families,” said Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rami Zebian, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center.

“It is a great honor and privilege for MUSC Health Marion Medical Center to receive these prestigious awards. We are extremely proud of all our doctors, nurses and hospital staff that have made this award possible. This represents a fantastic team effort. As a surgeon, these surgical awards have a special meaning. The future of MUSC Health Marion is bright, and we all will work even harder to continue improving patient care in the future,” said Chief of Staff Dr. Robert De Grood, MUSC Health Marion Medical Center.

“I am immensely proud that MUSC Health Florence Medical Center has achieved this remarkable continued success. These awards speak volumes about our talented nursing and medical leadership. Ultimately, these awards are due to our tremendous nursing and ancillary staff. Thank you SCHA, and thank you to all the patients who trust us with your care,” said Chief of Staff Dr. Shawn McKay, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center.

The Certified Zero Harm Awards is a unique statewide program, thanks to SCHA’s collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control (DHEC). For each award, hospitals must experience no preventable hospital-acquired infections of a specific nature over an extended period of time, and data must be independently verified by DHEC. This unique third-party verification process with the state agency provides exceptional legitimacy to these patient safety awards and is a testament to the spirit of statewide collaboration that has driven so many patient safety efforts, from the adoption of surgical safety checklists in Safe Surgery 2015, to current efforts like the Birth Outcomes Initiative and Surgical Quality Collaborative.

MUSC Health Florence Medical Center sustained three zero bloodstream infection awards for 42 months in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit; 24 months in the Medical Intensive Care Unit; and 12 months in the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit. The other four awards are for no Surgical Site Infections (SSI): 78 months for knee replacement; 66 months for hip replacement; 30 months for abdominal hysterectomy; and 18 months for colon.

MUSC Health Florence Rehabilitation Center was recognized with two hospital onset awards for 60 months for no Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infections award; and 36 months for Clostridium difficile (C. diff) award.

Since the Zero Harm program started, MUSC Health Florence Medical Center has been awarded 50 Certified Zero Harm Awards.

MUSC Health Marion Medical Center was recognized with 54 months with no Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infections; 30 months with zero bloodstream infections; and 12 months Clostridium difficile (C. diff) award. For SSI, the hospital received 36 months knee replacement award and 18 months colon surgery.

The Zero Harm program began in 2014 acknowledging hospitals that are on the forefront of preventing medical errors, which by some estimates is the third leading cause of death in the United States with an adverse economic impact of up to \$1 trillion annually. Thanks to support from The Duke Endowment and The Joint Commission Center for Transforming Health, SCHA and South Carolina hospitals have engaged in numerous statewide efforts to create a culture of high reliability and reduce harm in our facilities by implementing robust, evidence-based practices that are making a positive impact on patients and the safety and quality of care.

## Zero Harm Awards 2020:

### Florence Medical Center

- CLABSI CV/CCU 12 Months
- CLABSI MICU 24 Months
- CLABSI S/CU 42 Months
- SS/ - Abdominal Hysterectomy 30 Months
- SS/ - Colon Surgery 18 Months
- SS/ - Knee Replacement 78 Months
- SS/ - Hip Replacement 66 Months

### Florence Rehabilitation Center

- Hospital onset C.diff 36 Months
- Hospital onset MRSA 60 Months

### Marion Medical Center

- CLABSI 30 Months
- SS/ - Knee Replacement 36 Months
- SS/ - Colon Surgery 18 Months
- Hospital onset C.diff 12 Months
- Hospital onset MRSA 54 Months

## About MUSC Health

The MUSC Health Florence Division consists of MUSC Health - Florence and Marion Medical Centers and the employed practices of each hospital. Both hospitals and entities are a part of the MUSC family. As the clinical health system of the Medical University of South Carolina, MUSC Health is dedicated to delivering the highest quality patient care available, while training generations of competent, compassionate health care providers to serve the people of South Carolina and beyond. Comprising some 1,600 beds, more than 100 outreach sites, the MUSC College of Medicine, the physicians’ practice plan, and nearly 275 telehealth locations, MUSC Health owns and operates eight hospitals situated in Charleston, Chester, Florence, Lancaster and Marion counties. In 2019, for the fifth consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the No. 1 hospital in South Carolina. To learn more about clinical patient services, visit [muschealth.org](http://muschealth.org).

MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets of \$3.2 billion. The more than 17,000 MUSC team members include world-class faculty, physicians, specialty providers and scientists who deliver ground breaking education, research, technology and patient care.



## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A NURSE DURING A PANDEMIC

Submitted by Tanya Baker, BSN, RN, CIC, Director of Infection Control and Employee Health at Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center



Tanya Baker

**HARTSVILLE** - Being an infection prevention nurse means functioning in the role as the subject matter expert on all topics related to infection prevention and control. This is especially critical during a pandemic. COVID-19 drastically changed the nature of infection prevention and control. In this role I must always be mentally prepared to deal with the unexpected and remain prepared for any outbreak or pandemic. One of the biggest challenges I faced in the beginning of the pandemic was

dealing with the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). I had to work closely with our supply chain department to make sure we were able to obtain the appropriate supplies to keep our staff and patients safe. My role as an infection prevention nurse has always involved education and communication to staff, but now more than ever, it is part of my day-to-day operations. I must ensure that I bring awareness to the frontline staff and make sure they are fully protected at all times. A lot of my work is educating the staff on the continuous stream of information coming from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The COVID-19 media coverage can sometimes overwhelm staff, so it is vital that I offer them sound guidance and resources that are used not only while working but also when they are away from work, whether it be at home or in the community. I want the staff to feel that they are being protected and supported.

One way to prevent the spread of infection in the healthcare world is to ensure that you are prepared to enhance your cleaning and disinfection methods when necessary. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center quickly enhanced its cleaning and disinfection methods to ensure that our hospital remains clean and safe--just like it always has been. One of the core elements of properly managing infectious diseases is the cleanliness of our physical facility. Our hospital remains current on the most effective cleaning and disinfection protocols available in healthcare today. Along with our enhanced cleaning and disinfection methods, our employees follow proper hand hygiene protocols and utilize appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times. We ensure availability and access to hand sanitizer and soap throughout the facility and continue to use proper disinfectants, cleaning agents and supplies that meet state and federal infection control standards. We validate cleaning and disinfection spaces and surfaces through ATP monitoring and testing. As an added safety measure, Carolina Pines leverages UV-C ultraviolet light technology to disinfect isolation rooms and COVID-19 treatment areas. In addition to reinforcing our routine cleaning techniques, we are also educating and training our teams on the latest guidance and recommendations for infection

prevention related to COVID-19. Carolina Pines continues to enforce limited visitor restrictions, restricts access to the facility and screens every individual who enters our facility including patients, staff and visitors, and everyone is required to wear a mask while in our facility.

Thank you  
Nurses



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## AMAZING GRACE: A MEMORIAL THAT'S MONUMENTAL by De'Angela Haynes



Reverend Senator Clementa C. Pinckney

**MARION**—On June 17, 2015, Reverend Senator Clementa C. Pinckney, a senior pastor at Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston was murdered along with eight of his parishioners. This tragedy occurred during their evening Bible Study class. The country joined South Carolina in sorrow as we all wept, broken-hearted and shocked at the senselessness of the events. While we can never forget this tragic loss of life, we can find healing through the memory of those we lost and deliver hope to all who join us in remembrance. We are asking you to join us as we work together to bring Amazing Grace Park, The Clementa C. Pinckney Memorial, to life in downtown Marion. This major park project has a total estimated cost of \$2.7 million, and we are proud to announce that over \$2 million has been raised.

The park design includes a 1/4 mile walking/jogging trail surfaced to ADA standards, a picnic structure, shade trees surrounding a large open lawn space and ample parking, all in the heart of downtown Marion. The park will also include a unique series of large copper and steel angel wing sculptures in tribute to the Emanuel Nine. These free-standing custom works of art, created by nationally recognized sculptor Jim Weitzel, will bring the illusion of flight and motion to the serenity of the park. Amazing Grace Park will be adjacent to the Marion County Museum, which will host a permanent exhibit honoring Senator Clementa Pinckney and the Emanuel Nine. Marion County, where Pinckney spent most of his childhood summers and where he has strong family ties, is his final resting place. He is buried next to his mother, Theopia Stevenson Pinckney (née

Brooms; 1945–2005).

Clementa Carlos Pinckney was a loving son and brother, a devoted husband and father, an inspiring pastor and a Democratic member of the South Carolina Senate, representing the 45th District from 2000 until his death in 2015. He was previously a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1997 through 2000. In 1999, he married Jennifer Pinckney (née Benjamin) in Augusta, Ga. They met while he was at Allen University, and she was at the University of South Carolina. The couple lived in Ridgeland with their two daughters, Eliana Yvette Pinckney and Malana Elise Pinckney. Pinckney was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and a man committed to his family, church, constituents, community and state. He began preaching at his church at age 13, and by age 18, he was appointed pastor and served as senior pastor at Mother Emanuel A.M.E. until his death when he was one of



nine church members murdered in a racially-motivated mass shooting at an evening Bible study at his church.

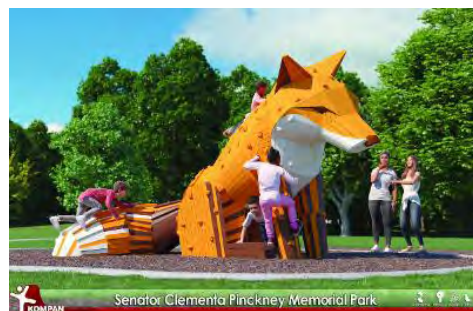
U.S. President Barack Obama delivered the eulogy at Pinckney's funeral nine days later. During Obama's heartfelt eulogy he said, "I've been reflecting on this idea of grace. The grace of the families who lost loved ones. The grace that Reverend Pinckney would preach about in his sermons. The grace described in one of my favorite hymnals--the one we all know: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind but now I see." President Obama went on to say, "Clementa Pinckney and the nine others killed that day found that grace. Through the example of their lives, they've now passed it on to us. May we find ourselves worthy of that precious and extraordinary gift, as long as our lives endure. May grace now lead them home. May God continue to shed His grace

on the United States of America."

In Marion, Amazing Grace Park, The Clementa Pinckney Memorial–Museum, Playground, and Pavilion is being built in honor of Clementa "Clem" Pinckney—son, husband, father, pastor and statesman. Here are a few highlights of this park:

- Amazing Grace Park, The Clementa Pinckney Memorial will be established to memorialize the life of the late Senator Reverend Clementa "Clem" Pinckney.
- The park vision focuses on "Celebrating the legacy of Clementa Pinckney, Promoting healthy lifestyles and communities, Respecting stewardship of resources, and Creating sustainable economic benefits."
- Senator Kent Williams, current South Carolina legislator and cousin of the late Senator Pinckney is spearheading the project.
- A park web-site and social media platforms are under construction to keep the residents of the Pee Dee Region and beyond informed, aware and empowered regarding park progress and park activities.
- Senator Kent Williams said, "It's an honor to celebrate and remember the legacy of my cousin Clem, and I encourage folks to get involved...it most certainly takes a village, and we have plenty of excitement to go around."
- Visit [www.marionsc.org](http://www.marionsc.org), and click on Amazing Grace Park for groundbreaking event photos and a peek at park construction progress.
- If you would like to learn more about how you can become a park partner, please contact Dr. Willena Rembert at [wrembert@marionsc.org](mailto:wrembert@marionsc.org).

It's certainly Amazing Grace that has kept the families of those affected by this tragic event. However, instead of just grieving, the family and leaders within the community wanted to move forward to make this memorial park into something that is monumental!





## 5 TIPS FOR REMOTE CAREGIVING DURING COVID-19



If you're one of the millions of caregivers in the United States, you know that COVID-19 and the realities of social distancing and isolation may complicate the day-to-day tasks of caregiving. But even now, it's

important to remember that you can continue to make a positive impact on your loved one's life.

While you may be unable to physically be with your loved one, remind yourself that what you're doing from a distance does matter. Careful, thoughtful planning and clear communication may help make remote caregiving easier on you and the person you're caring for.

### 1. Stay connected.

Communicate through video chats whenever possible to help them feel engaged. Encourage family and friends to call often or write letters and notes. You may also be able to set up a medical alert system that can help you track and monitor the person in your care. Look for a system that's designed with caregivers in mind.

### 2. Get smart with prescriptions.

If the person in your care regularly takes medication, talk to his or her pharmacist to see if they offer a mail-order option. You may even be able to order early refills or get 30- or 90-day supplies. During the COVID-19 outbreak, some pharmacies may waive delivery fees.

### 3. Explore remote options for food.

Visiting the grocery store may feel unsafe for those who are at

a higher risk of serious infection. The good news is, there are many options for food delivery. Whether its groceries, meal kits or Meals on Wheels, there are ways to help make sure your loved one is taken care of with nutritious meals.

### 4. Consider telehealth for medical needs.

If a medical appointment is necessary, connecting virtually through a phone or video app may be a good option for non-emergency needs. Call your loved one's doctor's office to see what options are available.

### 5. Have a plan of action.

With the current uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, it's important to regain a sense of control and confidence. Some steps may include:

- \* Collect contact information. Build a list of contacts, including family members, care providers, pharmacies, care managers, senior service agencies and anyone else that you may need to get a hold of.

- \* Gather health documents. Because care recipients often have complicated medical situations, keeping all paperwork in one place can be invaluable. This could also include important financial and legal records.

- \* Become an authorized representative. As an authorized representative, you're able to help with payments, the choice of doctor and other care decisions. To add an authorized representative, your loved one can visit his or her health plan website or call the customer service number on the back of the ID card.

Caring for loved ones at a distance may be unfamiliar territory, but knowing what tools and programs are available to help you can help ease uncertainty, both for you and those in your care.

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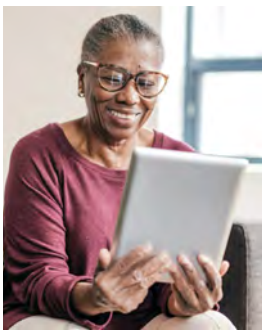
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## MEDICARE INSIGHT: WAYS TO ADVOCATE LOWER OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS



Medicare Part D provides coverage for prescription drugs that save and extend lives for millions of older adults and people with disabilities, many of whom would otherwise struggle to afford their treatments. However, despite the important purpose it serves, some people on Medicare, especially those taking expensive medications, still struggle to fill their prescriptions and maintain their health.

### **Two key challenges facing Medicare beneficiaries include the fact that:**

\* Medicare Part D insurance does not have an annual cap on out-of-pocket costs, so people sometimes have to pay thousands of dollars for their life-saving prescriptions.

\* For people taking expensive prescription drugs, there are very high out-of-pocket costs at the beginning of each calendar year due to the way the Part D benefit is structured.

The Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation, a national charity dedicated to increasing access to healthcare, is advocating for reforms to the program and encourages you to take action. Here are three ways you can help promote reforms to Medicare Part D that will lower out-of-pocket costs:

### **1. Learn more about the issues**

The PAN Foundation offers many resources on [www.panfoundation.org/advocate](http://www.panfoundation.org/advocate) to help you learn more about Medicare Part D and potential reforms that could help you and others pay less at the pharmacy counter for your prescription medications.

Additionally, signing up for healthcare newsletters, like the PAN Foundation newsletter, National Council on Aging newsletter or the Medicare Rights Center newsletter, will help you stay involved and informed.

### **2. Write to your members of Congress**

Send a letter directly to your representatives and senators to ask them to pass legislation to lower out-of-pocket costs in Medicare Part D, such as setting an annual limit and evenly distributing these costs throughout the year.

By using PAN’s “contact Congress” tool, you can quickly contact your elected officials and can even use a pre-written letter so that you don’t have to start from scratch.

Before hitting send, consider adding your own story to the letter. Real-life examples can explain why reforms are necessary, and the impact that lower out-of-pocket prescription drug costs would have on your financial security and quality of life. Personal stories leave a lasting impression on legislators.

### **3. Share your story on social media**

Another easy way to advocate for reforms to Medicare Part D is to share information on social media. This can help you stay informed while also spreading important information to your network.

Sharing your own story about how you are impacted by high out-of-pocket costs and tagging your elected officials will help inform your friends and family about the important changes needed to lower out-of-pocket costs for people on Medicare. The PAN Foundation has helpful resources for you to start advocating for changes to Medicare Part D on social media and encourage more people to contact their elected officials.





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## 4 DRIVING TIPS THAT SAVE LIVES

Bad driving habits aren't just obnoxious. They're also dangerous. Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death in the U.S., with more than 38,000 people having lost their lives and nearly 4.4 million injured in collisions in 2019, according to the National Safety Council.

Many car collisions are entirely preventable. The simple solution is for drivers to be responsible, obey traffic laws and stay focused on the road. Don't play with your phone while you're driving, don't speed and don't drink and drive. And if you practice these things regularly and keep your driving record free of accidents and traffic violations, it could lower auto insurance rates.

We recommend that you review the following four tips to stay safe behind the wheel:

**1. Remove distractions.** The majority of crashes are caused by distracted drivers. Driver distractions extend beyond texting--anything that takes your attention away from the road is a distraction. While you should put your phone away when behind the wheel, some driving tech can actually help improve your driving habits, such as a usage-based insurance program that comes with a virtual coach to let you know how you can improve behind the wheel.

**2. Maintain proper following distance.** Following a car too closely reduces the time you have to react if the car you are following suddenly slows or stops. This can lead to a rear-end collision, which is the most common auto insurance claim, according to Mercury Insurance. Make sure you give yourself enough time and distance to react to the car in front of you. You should always maintain at least three seconds of space in between your vehicle and the car in front of you, and during bad weather conditions, five seconds of space is recommended.

**3. Be aware of your speed.** Speeding is one of the most common causes of traffic-related deaths, so pay attention, and stick to posted speed limits--they're there to keep you safe. Give yourself some extra time for your drive so there's no need to rush, and be sure to exercise extra caution while driving in bad weather.

**4. Pay attention to other drivers.** Safe driving isn't just about your behavior, but also depends on those around you. Don't assume other drivers are being attentive--they may be distracted and not see the stop sign or traffic light ahead of them. Use caution when entering and exiting parking spots, turning, entering intersections and changing lanes on the freeway, especially if you're driving in heavy traffic or late at night when other drivers may let their focus wander.

Drivers may also want to consider enrolling in a usage-based insurance program to help improve their driving skills. These apps and devices allow drivers to get a crystal-clear view of their behavior and see which areas need some improvement. Plus, auto insurance customers who enroll in these programs may even qualify for a discount.



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# FLORENCE REGIONAL ARTS ALLIANCE

## SAVE THE DATE

# Online 2020 Arts Awards Night

Tuesday, October 27 • 6:30 PM

FACEBOOK LIVE: [HTTPS://RB.GY/UJWX4R](https://rb.gy/ujwx4r)

*City of Marion*  
**Annual**  
Holiday Prelude & Community Tree Lighting Celebration

**Saturday, November 28th**  
Holiday Craft Market 10am-1pm  
Main Street Commons  
Sales—Downtown Merchants

**Sunday, December 6th**  
Marion Christmas Parade 5:00pm  
Annual City Tree Lighting Celebration 6pm  
Marion County Courthouse  
Fireworks at Withlacoochee Park 7pm

**Saturday, December 12th**  
Pilot Club of Marion Bazaar 10am—2pm  
Marion County Museum Luncheon 12-2pm  
All events at Marion Opera House

\*call the Chamber office for information/details 843-423-3561



# Darlington ANTIQUES TRAIL

Come to Darlington for a historic day, and tour our fine collection of antique malls, five historic districts with stunning architecture, and many historical markers.

**B&B Variety & Antiques**  
703 Pearl St.



**Darlington County Historical Commission**  
204 Hewitt St.

**Darlington Raceway Stock Car Museum**  
1301 Harry Byrd Highway



**Pee Dee Treasures**  
117 E. Broad St.

**Scarlett's Antiques**  
500 E. Broad St.



**So-lina Auction Market Inc.**  
2085 Lamar Hwy.

**The Collector's Box**  
114 Cashua St.



**The Jeweler's Bench**  
60 Public Square



[www.CityofDarlington.com](http://www.CityofDarlington.com)



## SIMPLE IDEAS FOR CELEBRATING EVERY DAY VIRTUALLY

For most people, 2020 is a year of change. Remote work, social distancing and more have challenged people to find new ways to connect with each other. Fortunately, humans are resilient and their spirit for finding innovative ways to connect is alive and well.

Even as the country reopens, many are still finding the ease of virtual connections to be appealing. In fact, there are many unique ways to connect with friends and family virtually. Here are some simple ways people are elevating every day and prioritizing relationships even from afar:

### Recognize simple moments and celebrate little things

Shift your mindset to focus on the little things that brighten the day. You can elevate every day by taking time to recognize the simple moments and special events that make life so wonderful. There's no need to wait for a big occasion to celebrate. Send your friend a text with your favorite memory of you two together.

### Think outside the box with video gatherings

Your bond with friends and family can grow even stronger when you set up video meetings to celebrate and connect. Fortunately, there are many high-quality video apps to choose from. Maybe you want to set up a Skype date to play a board game together even in different locations? Propose a movie night, and set up a Zoom meeting to watch the same movie at the same time.

### Host a virtual wine tasting party

Cheers to any occasion or just everyday delights with a virtual wine tasting party with friends. This is a fun way to sample different varieties and connect in a meaningful way. Designed to enhance everyday occasions, Flat Top Hills is an ideal choice, meticulously crafted while offering approachable wines that satisfy the palate and inspire conversation. For a tasting party, select a variety of options, such as a fresh, crisp Sauvignon Blanc and tropical Chardonnay for whites. For reds, consider a rich Red Blend, and a Cabernet Sauvignon satisfies the craving for a full-bodied wine. Don't forget a ripe Rosé, everyone's favorite summer wine.

### Explore different video backgrounds

Get creative with your setting for virtual gatherings. Yes, there are times when your living room or deck will do, but other times you may want to jazz things up a bit. For example, set up tropical decorations, and pretend you are taking a trip to the islands, or explore digital backgrounds that can be added to the technology of your choice. For example, visit <https://www.pinterest.com/flattopwines/flat-top-hills-virtual-zoom-backgrounds/> to download a virtual Zoom background that features the stunning setting of the Flat Top Hills vineyards in sunny California.

### Utilize social media platforms

Social media has been a way to connect with friends and family for years now, but recently with quarantines and social distancing, even more people are using it to connect to others. Share images and captions of whatever is meaningful to you, and tag with related hashtags. Some popular options are #love, #family and #friends. You can even be more specific and use branded hashtags to connect with other brand fans, such as #FlatTopMoments when sipping your wines during your virtual wine tasting.



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## Ready to BUY or SELL?

Mallory Brayboy, REALTOR  
(C) 843-598-9739  
mallorybrayboy@gmail.com

The advertisement features a large, high-quality photograph of a two-story stone house with a prominent red front door and a grey garage door. The house is set on a well-manicured lawn with some shrubbery. In the bottom left corner, there is a small inset photo of a woman, Mallory Brayboy, wearing a red dress. The Coldwell Banker logo is in the bottom right corner.



## ELEVATE COMFORT HOLIDAY FOODS WITH HAVARTI AND BLUE CHEESES



At a time when you may be craving comfort food more than ever, specialty cheeses make it easy to bring a little more indulgence--and a lot of flavor--to your home-cooked meals and snacks. Simply switching to different varieties, such as a buttery havarti or a sharp blue cheese,

can easily elevate your go-to dishes.

Everyday comfort foods like macaroni and cheese, omelets, grilled cheese sandwiches and burgers, can benefit from the marvelous meltiness of havarti or a tangy kick of blue.

Both cheeses are ideal to add to classic comfort foods, according to Katlin Sautner, New Product Development manager Castello Cheese. "Havarti is a sliceable cheese with a creamy body that's mild enough to suit all palates, making it a great choice for the entire family. And while you may be intimidated or even skeptical of the boldness of blue cheese, its unique nutty taste adds more flavor and creaminess to every bite."

### Go on a flavor adventure without leaving home

Here are some tips for incorporating cheese varieties into your meals, along with some cheese pairing ideas for comfort-food snacking.

**Mac and cheese:** A favorite among all ages, homemade mac & cheese spells comfort food like no other and requires little effort in the kitchen. Havarti cheese is the perfect selection to achieve ultimate creaminess. And, for a truly indulgent meal, try a version made with

lobster.

**Cheese omelet:** Cheesy omelet recipes give a lovely texture to a time-honored, protein-rich breakfast treat, and topping with shredded creamy Havarti adds just a hint of tanginess. Add a salad, and it becomes a simple, flavorful dinner too.

**Blue cheese Bloody Mary burger:** What's better than burgers on the grill? Give an old standard an extra kick with a burger recipe using ketchup made with Bloody Mary mix, horseradish, celery seeds and pepper, topped with onion and crumbled blue cheese that packs a bold punch.

**Buffalo hot wings with blue cheese dip:** A true classic pairing, a decadent recipe uses traditional Danish blue cheese to take a bar snack favorite to an at-home dining experience. Crumble blue cheese in a bowl with mayonnaise, crème fraiche with a light topping of salt, pepper and honey, and voila! It's joy in every savory bite.

**Cheese pairings to explore:** Looking for something new to nibble on throughout the day? Castello cheeses easily lend themselves to grazing and snacking, and both Castello havarti and blue cheeses are available in multiple flavorful varieties. For example, havarti dill cheese pairs well with cut vegetables, while blue cheese, with its sharper tones, pairs beautifully with apples, pears and another ultimate comfort food: dark chocolate.

For recipes, plus more information and ideas, visit [www.castellocheese.com](http://www.castellocheese.com), or visit it on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest.





10th Annual

# Holiday Goodness

ARTS, CRAFTS & BAKED GOODS BAZAAR

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## ONE DAY EVENT!!

### Sat., Nov. 21, 2020 --- 9am - 3pm

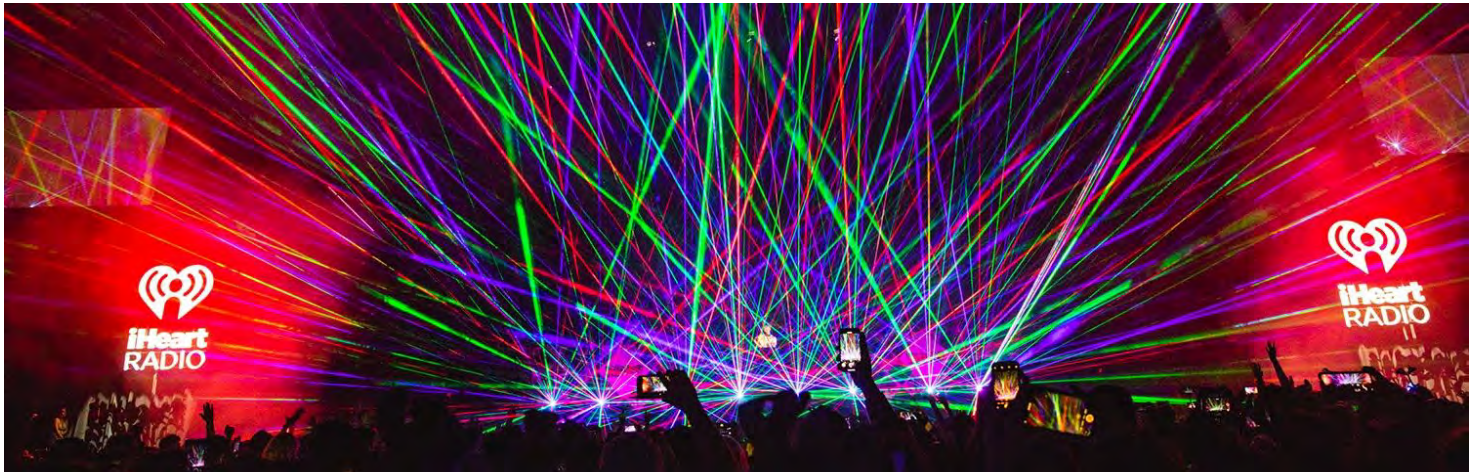
Free Admission -- Free Carriage Rides -- Entertainment for All  
40 vendors -- Drawings for \$10.00 "Vendor Bucks"  
MC Dan E. Lockemy will be on site all day broadcasting

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