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DIVERSITY WORKS

APRIL 2021 VOLUME 11 ISSUE 2

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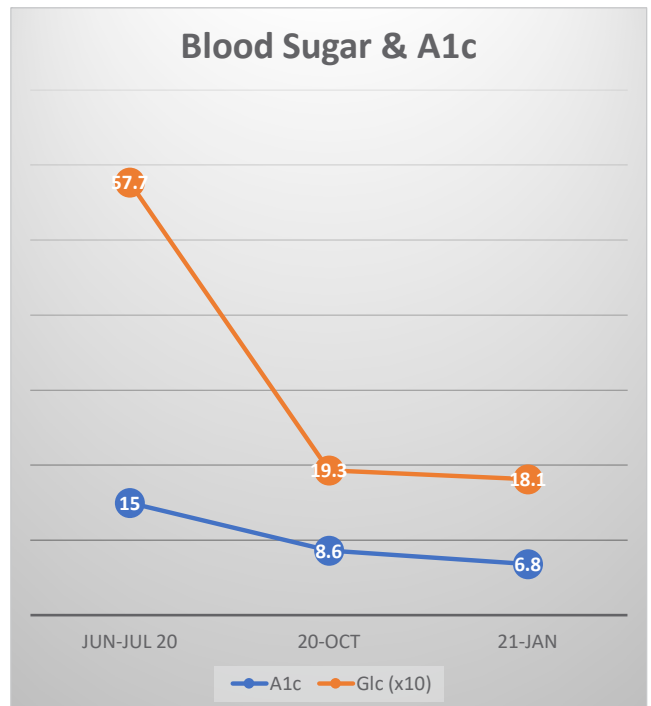
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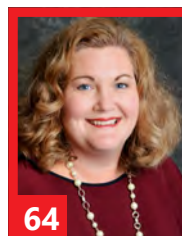
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MISSION AND VISION

OUR MISSION

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

OUR VISION

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

Spanish Version - *Translated by: Yadira Santiago, MA*

NUESTRA MISIÓN

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

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

NUESTRA VISIÓN

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

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In Loving Memory



Renetha "Rennie" Lunn-McAllister

December 21, 1957 – March 8, 2021

On behalf of Diana M. Murphy-Eaddy, CEO/publisher/visionary and the teams of both Diversity Works Magazine© and our non-profit arm Diversity Works Initiatives...

For many years, Renetha "Rennie" Lunn-McAllister was a true God-send to us. We will miss her dearly.

Rennie entered this world on December 21, 1957 as the fifth of six daughters of the late Rev. David J. and Mrs. Gladys Bristow Lunn. Raised in Timmons ville, Rennie was an active member of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, in Hartsville, where her father was the pastor.

After graduating from Lamar High School, Rennie attended Winthrop University, Francis Marion College, Florence-Darlington Technical College, and Morris College (her parents' alma mater), ultimately earning her Bachelor of Science (BS) in Organization Management in 2008.

Rennie enjoyed a career in media, beginning as a journalist with the Florence Morning News, Pee Dee Times, and later working in radio with Cumulus Media. She served as a producer and on-air personality with her show, "Pulse of the Pee Dee" that aired

on Sunday evenings on Florence's Magic 94.3 FM (WCMG). As part of her work as a media personality, she frequently served as an event consultant and host, including hosting City Talk for Francis Marion University. Most recently, Rennie was one of the visionaries at DMM Advertising and Marketing Publishers of Diversity Works Magazine where she also served as Executive Editor and a board member of the non-profit arm, Diversity Works Initiatives.

A gifted musician, Rennie was called into the music ministry at a young age. Over the years, she served in the music ministry for Antioch Baptist Church, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Mt. Zion United Methodist, New Zion Baptist Church, and New Haven United Methodist Church in Timmons ville, SC, Angels All Around Ministries in Florence, SC, and Round-O Baptist Church in Darlington, SC. Rennie also served as a guest musician throughout the Pee Dee area.

Rennie wed childhood sweetheart Morris McAllister in 2005. Through her marriage, she became a proud step-mother and step-grandmother.

In addition to her parents, Rennie is predeceased by four sisters: Mrs. Garcia Lunn Alston of Hackensack, NJ, Ms. Rebecca S. Lunn of Timmons ville, SC, Rev. Cheryl J. Lunn of Greensboro, NC, and Mrs. Deborah Lunn Greene of Effingham, SC.

Rennie Lunn-McAllister leaves to cherish her memory her loving husband, Morris McAllister of Timmons ville, SC, her sister, Mrs. Andrea W. Lunn-Herring of Timmons ville, SC; Brothers- and Sisters-in-law: Marion McAllister, Society Hill, SC (Latasha McAllister & Mya McAllister); Kenneth (Catherine) McAllister, Timmons ville, SC (Kiwani Kirven, Keyatta Kirven & Brice McAllister), Carl (Brenda) McAllister, Sumter, SC (Kasi Wilson, Brandie, (Ferdinand) Williams, Brittany and Whitney Cole Martin (Francis) McAllister, Oxon Hill, Md. (Travis and Tara McAllister), Neal (Norma) McAllister, Columbia, SC (Nelorea Robinson, and Navisala (Seth) Smalls, Reginald McAllister, Timmons ville, SC, Audrey Jones, Timmons ville (Le'shellete McAllister, Derrick and Antonio



The Diversity Works & Diversity Works Initiatives Team

Jones), Kateria (Willie) Reddick, Clinton, MD (Willie "Jay" Reddick), Patricia (Darrold) Harper, Chester, VA (Darrold "Terrell" Harper), Rodrick McCullough, Ft. Lauderdale, FL (Chauncel McCullough), Christopher (Sandra) McCullough, Hepzipah, GA (Brittany and Chrishauna McCullough), Craig McCullough, Brooklyn, NY (Craig and Lavon McCullough), and James N. Alston of Atlanta, GA. Step-Children and Step-Grandchildren: Maurice Green (Trevon, Aalliyah & My'Asia, Green), Tierra Green (Nazariah Durant), Martina Hickson-Hart (Destiny Hart), Xaxier Hickson, (Tanisha Cockfield, Xavieryon Cockfield, & Ty'kia Cockfield), Miracle Hickson (Asani Miner, Ashton Minor, A'Jayce Minor), Morris McAllister Hickson (Ja'markez Toney). Nieces and Nephew: Mrs. Regina G. Pompey of Effingham, SC, Mrs. Bonita (Derrick) Greene Bowens of Columbia, SC; Mrs. Melanie (Earl) Alston-Balaputra of Hackensack, NJ, Ms. Alisa L. Alston of Atlanta, GA, and Mrs. Morgan (Don) Lewis-Laster of Durham, NC; a nephew, Mr. David J. Lunn II of Timmons ville, SC; grandnieces, Ms. Courtney J. Pompey of Florence, SC, Peyton Laster of Durham, NC, and Serena Grace Alston of Atlanta, GA; and grandnephews, Mr. R. Joseph Pompey of Florence, SC, James Alston Balaputra of Hackensack, NJ, and Donald "Trey" Laster, III of Durham, NC; and a great-grandniece, Selena Pompey of Florence, SC; and a host of cousins, church family, friends, and colleagues.

The Memorial services were held at Hines Funeral Home in Hartsville on March 27.



**"How do you say 'thank you'
for sunshine or health...
for clear days or gentle rains...
for happiness, joy or love?
You say it by
sharing what you have.
You say it by
making the world a better
place in which to live."**



FROM THE EDITOR'S HEART

CHEERS TO 10 YEARS!!!



Dawn "D.A." Goodwin
Editor

We very recently lost the original editor of Diversity Works Magazine®, Rennie Lunn-McAllister, but in this edition, we honor her legacy. On top of that, with the help of a few partners, including New York Life, Anderson Brothers Bank and Ruiz Foods, we celebrate our 10-year anniversary and reflect on partnering to make diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) top priority in our community.

In this edition, you'll get the latest from other partners and area businesses. For starters, The Legacy of Women, Inc. announces its new partnership with Amazon that will bring essential supplies to underserved communities in the Pee Dee region. This is just one of the organization's initiatives aimed at building generational wealth for families. But stick around to learn how you, too, can take control of your financial future. In celebration of National Credit Union Youth Month, Palmetto First Federal Credit Union reveals how it gives young members a strong financial start. In other news, Robert Wilson of Raldex Hospitality applies God and The Golden Rule to the hospitality industry, and we're always excited to read what Dr. Nika White has for us about diversity and inclusion in the workplace. This time, it's no different as she breaks down mental models of DEI and how to deal with them. Then, potential employees will be glad to find out about the diverse culture at Atlantic Tooling and Fabricating (ATFC), a place whose Family Day slogan was "We Didn't quit when COVID hit." Be sure to check that article out as well as "5 Ways to Put Employee Safety First," which touches on workplaces reopening since the pandemic hit.

COVID-19 itself has revealed just how complex health disparities are and have been in America. Fortunately, we have local doctors addressing those disparities and addressing the COVID vaccine as related to communities of color and cardiovascular risk factors. In addition, health care providers have updates for you that you do not want to miss. After all, your health depends on it.

Did you know that having good mental health is just as important as good physical health? Therefore, for Mental Health Awareness Month, we have the talented radio personality Bionce' Foxx, who uses her platform to advocate for mental health awareness. She is letting others know that it is okay to seek professional help with their mental health. And see how art has supported mental health recovery for some individuals and how self-care reduces depression and promotes good mental health.

Self-care can begin with you stepping out for some entertainment. The City of Florence encourages you to get up, get out and spring forward, and it's time to celebrate Main Street in Dillon. If that isn't enough to get you going, Darlington has a host of exciting events coming, including free concerts and the Freedom Fest.

But there's more. You had to have noticed on our cover that ArtFields is back, literally, like never before. This year, the team will be masked-up, sanitized and socially distancing when the long-awaited festivities begin on April 23. But when you are out

and about, enjoying the fun, still be mindful of safety precautions that can protect you and others.

If you have elderly relatives, be sure to read "How to Choose a Safe Healthy Senior Living Community" and "Social Isolation Among Seniors." The tips can help you ensure your loved ones have resources they need if they feel anxiety or loneliness and that they are in a living environment that is taking precautions to keep residents healthy during the pandemic.

Inside, we also bring awareness to several topics. For Autism Awareness Month, SOS Care introduces three impressive young adults with autism who are gaining skills to help them achieve their goals of independence. All 4 Autism shares how the pandemic didn't stop the nonprofit's fundraising efforts to honor individuals on the Spectrum. And Alcohol Awareness Month is right on time as many parents, like myself, are reminding our impressionable youth that underage drinking can ruin more than just their prom. Making sure our children are safe and responsible is of utmost importance. That's why any individual who cares about the well being of children should know that there is help for child abuse victims and their families.

As a community, it's time that we #KnowMore about both child abuse and sexual assault so we can step up to support abuse prevention. CARE House of the Pee Dee makes sure that families are not forgotten. Hear from Joyce Ford of The Naomi Project and from Savannah Wright of the Pee Dee Coalition about sexual assault prevention and why you should not be a bystander. Not only that, but you'll also catch up with author Latoya Johnson McRae, who is giving away copies of her new faith-based journal for survivors of sexual abuse. In addition, you'll meet the SANE nurse who devotes her time exclusively to survivors. Jennifer Harvey's compassion and patience are just what the doctor ordered.

Elsewhere, we discuss healing communities through education, and we make sure you are current on news from our school districts, colleges and universities. One school district, in particular, is recognizing its custodians and food service employees for going above and beyond to support learning. Then, we have the story of an area college that is disbursing \$2.6 million in grants. FMU honors four esteemed alumni, and HGTC announces which of its employees were nominated for statewide awards. Several school districts name Teachers of the Year and other award recipients. Learn about virtual internship opportunities that can be highly beneficial for college students.

Outside of school, young people can even get involved in volunteer activities in the community. Doing so teaches them responsibility, says Hubert McFadden of Lake City, who volunteers as a teen advisor and lead volunteer for ArtFields. We thank the countless organizations, like Honda of SC, McLeod Health and HopeHealth, that promote volunteerism, and we thank local volunteers who selflessly dedicate their time to serving others. Some include Charlene McKnight, Laura A. Preston, Brenda Bradley and Scott Collins, to name a few.

We have so much more from FDTA, CareSouth Carolina, MUSC, Circle Park, Rubicon Family Counseling, PharmD, Leaf Lounge, Charisma Events & Catering and more, but you have to continue reading.

As always, thanks for being such dedicated readers. Be safe, and enjoy!

REFLECTING ON 10 YEARS OF PARTNERING TO MAKE DEI TOP PRIORITY by Les Echols

April is always an important month for Diversity Works Magazine©. But this year it means even more as we are celebrating our 10th anniversary. Thanks to all the support we have gotten throughout the years, Diversity Works has become a major outlet to tell stories of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Over 10 years later, we continue to build our partnerships by helping to change the conversation about how diversity is perceived and implemented within organizations. Anniversaries tend to encourage us to reflect on our successes through a positive lens, and this is no different. At the same time, we are thrilled moving forward as Diversity Works continues to inspire, inform and celebrate diversity across the Southeast region.

Several of our community partners have joined us to celebrate this milestone by providing input about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion, and what DEI means to their respective organizations. Amanda Pope, municipal clerk with the City of Florence, gave her insight on how important company buy-in is to changing company culture. According to Pope, "The City of Florence takes pride in recognizing that diversity and inclusion strengthens our workforce and makes us more accountable to the community and citizens we serve. Managers and supervisors are trained on the importance of diversity and inclusion in order to ensure employee engagement and to capture the innovation and problem-solving strategies evidenced with inclusion."

Mindy Taylor of Duke Energy echoed Pope's company-wide commitment to diversity. "At Duke Energy, we are committed to living by our values and cultivating a workplace that makes diversity, equity and inclusion a priority. We believe deeply that having diverse backgrounds, experiences and skills allows us to serve our customers better, innovate and attract the talent we need to be successful."

As we continued to get feedback, we were reminded that diversity can take on different connotations for different organizations and positions. Dr. Willette Burnham-Williams, of the Medical University of South Carolina, put this into perspective. "I think it is important to acknowledge that DEI means something different, depending upon the context from which a person responds. I live and breathe the work of diversity, equity and inclusion as a chief diversity officer for a large, complex organization. Therefore, DEI for me refers to the tangible and intangible ways that an organization creates environments for every community member to feel valued, respected, acknowledged and safe. The road to establishing DEI as the DNA which makes up an organization should include direction, resource, space

for learning, space for mistakes and accountability of every community member," said Burnham-Williams.

As a minority-owned and led company, and major employer in the Florence area, Ruiz Food Products has made diversity a part of their corporate identity. "At Ruiz Food Products, the values of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) are not only a part of what we work to embrace daily," said Pete Mayadag, Ruiz Foods Florence director of Operations, "but a philosophy that has been an integral part of the company since its beginning...in 1964. During my tenure at Ruiz Foods, I've had the opportunity to spend time at each of our manufacturing facilities, geographically located in smaller communities that are, in and of themselves, diverse. As a result, it is a pleasure to see how our entire workforce reflects the diversity of each community in which we live and work," Pete continued. "We view our own company's beginning and subsequent success as an example of the American Dream come true," said Kim Ruiz Beck, chairman Ruiz Food Products, Inc., and elder daughter of co-founder Fred Ruiz. "With that in mind, our commitment is to pay it forward whenever possible—providing opportunities to our team members as well as our vendors and suppliers who are family-owned or minority-owned, working together so that we all grow together. We are proud of our diverse workforce and their amazing accomplishments, and we are pleased to be able to celebrate what makes us different. We work hard to encourage an atmosphere of equity and inclusion. We also thank my dad and grandfather for laying the groundwork for the culture we fully embrace. We recognize what DEI brings to our workplace is invaluable and, as a result, continually encourage our Team Members to take advantage of an opportunity to work with other Team Members from different backgrounds, different experiences and different working styles. This gives everyone the opportunity to not only learn—but share—other views, insights and reasonings. Diverse views, combined with an atmosphere of equity and inclusion, make

for better decisions that serve to fuel what we believe we have...a high-performance culture," Ruiz Beck explained.

Anderson Brothers Bank also acknowledges diversity as one of its key corporate values. "In 1933, Anderson Brothers Bank was opened with the idea of helping the families and businesses in the community," stated Michele Rogers of Anderson Brothers. Today, our commitment to customers and communities remains unwavering and strong. To be a successful workplace, you must have diversity. Diversity brings new perspectives, wider talent pools and more innovation. Diversity adds growth to a business, employees and customers which is what our Mission Statement states is our goal as a corporation."

Since 1845, New York Life has also been a proponent of diversity from the top down. "As an agent of The New York Life, I am proud to be associated with an organization that fosters an environment that values the diverse perspectives of the employees, managers, agents, and clients," said New York Life agent Julie Cord. "All voices are encouraged, welcome, and heard. In my own practice as an agent of New York Life, I work every day to cater to the needs of diverse community members and to assist them with their need to protect their families and businesses. Although we all have similar life goals to build better futures for those we care about, strategies for clients are as varied as the clients themselves. Being involved with a variety of diverse organizations in my community helps keep me tapped into cultural differences and individual needs."

Diversity Works Magazine© would like to thank all our wonderful partners for continuing to support not just the publication, but diversity in general. By building diverse and inclusive workplaces and philosophies, they help our communities grow, thrive and learn from past mistakes. We at Diversity Works will continue to improve, grow and bring inspiring stories with practical strategies to our readers. Continue to join us for this amazing journey that is Diversity Works!

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DIVERSIFYING THE CULTURE OF ATFC

by Les Echols



Debra Wingate

QUINBY - Debra Wingate is a manufacturing support and /ISO representative for Atlantic Tooling and Fabricating (ATFC). Based in the town of Quinby near Florence, ATFC is an efficient and cost-effective supplier for custom, precision stamping and tooling needs. Wingate joined ATFC in April of 2018 as a receptionist, and within three months, she was hired in the position of office support/AP. Her second promotion to production support/ISO representative came within her first year with the company. By the end of her second year,

she was promoted to her current role of manufacturing support/ISO representative.

Wingate has several duties at ATFC, including tracking production, ordering raw materials, maintaining inventory, shipping, receiving, supporting the production and tooling departments and making sure standards are being met to maintain certifications. Throughout her tenure, she has played a big role in diversifying the core values and culture of ATFC. She works with the management team in making sure Key Performance Indicators (KPI) boards are updated with vital information pertaining to production, shipping and tooling. This information is visible for all to see so that everyone knows what the day-to-day operations look like. Wingate also helped to create ATFC "Commandments" that all employees are required to adhere to.

Wingate implemented a Family Day for the company to allow time for employees to bring in their families, tour the plant and have a chance to see what they do. "We spend so many hours together outside of our



They had a team building experiment mixing the employees from the tooling department and the production department. The idea was to use the spaghetti and marshmallows to erect a tower. This meant they had to pool their ideas and work together on the best way to construct it. This meant listening to each other's ideas and working together to implement them. They had 20 minutes to do so. Once that was completed, we shifted teams, and tried it again.

immediate family, and this serves as a relaxing gathering. We do an annual Biggest Loser competition because health is a key concern. We involve different departments and make it fun and challenging so that everyone is engaged as a team," continued Wingate.

ATFC has given Wingate the green light to implement a diversity and inclusion program in the workplace and has supported it on a corporate level. "Diversity and Inclusion has so many meanings, but at ATFC we believe that everyone deserves a chance to prove themselves regardless of race or gender. A person is not judged by their race or gender, but by their character and their ability to do their job. There is trust and respect that has been built with the leadership that is now in place," explained Wingate. "There is no discrimination," she proudly announced. "You are received by your character, your work ethic and how you treat others."

ATFC Director Jacob Knight speaks positively about the company's sentiments on diversity. "Together at ATFC, we believe that it is vitally important to build and support a culture of diversity and inclusion. Our culture fuels improvement, promotes employee growth and brings unique innovation to our valued customers," Knight states.

DIVERSIFYING THE CULTURE CONT'D

Like many businesses and industries in 2020, ATFC felt the effect of COVID-19 and had to downsize its staff, which meant everyone had to take on extra duties. Social distancing guidelines shifted some of the events Wingate facilitated those that were in-person. In lieu of the Family Day gathering, ATFC held a t-shirt design contest for its slogan this year. The winner was “We Didn’t quit when COVID hit,” a slogan Wingate calls “a testament to the dedication that ATFC employees have for the company. We never shut down. We never stopped. These are an

amazing group of people that we have, and I am honored to work alongside them,” she concluded.

Debra Wingate was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and moved to South Carolina in 1992. She is a mother of three children and four grandsons. She enjoys singing with the gospel choir and serves on the media ministry at her church. She is a graduate of Erasmus Hall High School for Music and Art in Brooklyn, and she has an associate degree in business administration from Kaplan University.

HEMINGWAY CLUB COULD CLOSE IF GRANT NOT MATCHED

Story Credited Matthew Christians, Morning News



Neal Zimmerman, the director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee, spoke to the Florence Rotary Club.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee area needs someone in the area surrounding Hemingway to step up to keep the club that serves the community running.

Neal Zimmerman Jr., the director of the six units of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee Area, recently spoke to the Rotary Club of Florence and concluded with a request: Help the Boys & Girls Clubs find a local donor or donors to match a conditional \$100,000 grant to help operate the Hemingway club.

Zimmerman said that a donor to the club—whom he described as a kingpin for the Hemingway Boys and Girls Club—put a condition on the grant he usually gives to the club. He said the donor wanted to see the community match the grant.

“Our Hemingway club – we have a \$100,000 matching grant opportunity,” Zimmerman said. “Hemingway is 476 people. We don’t send Florence money to Hemingway. Money raised in the community stays in

the community. We need to know people down there that we can go talk to.”

He asked the Rotarians to pass along the names of people and businesses in the community. Zimmerman included Johnsonville and several cities and towns in Williamsburg County in his list of places where people could help match the donation.

“I can tell you, that grant opportunity is their lifeline to the future,” Zimmerman continued. “If we can’t get that this year by getting it matched this year, I bet you that within a year that club closes.”

He estimated that if the club closes, 250 children would be denied club services.

Zimmerman also spoke about the clubs’ efforts to operate in person and virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that when the state ordered schools to shut down to slow the spread of the virus, he worked to get sanitation supplies and was planning on opening the clubs up that Monday. However, a call to the insurance company ended that plan.

Zimmerman added that the clubs are currently open but serving a limited capacity and, in the summer, they offered virtual programs and newsletters to children and parents served by the clubs.



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5 WAYS TO PUT EMPLOYEE SAFETY FIRST



Of all the milestones in our nation's COVID-19 recovery, workplaces reopening is one of the biggest. Everyone deserves to feel safe at work. How can employers help make that happen? The key is planning ahead, says Christopher Gill, vice president of EnviroPro Solutions.

Here are 5 easy steps employers can take:

Pick up plenty of PPE. The bare minimum should include disposable masks and hand sanitizer. Depending on the sanitizing steps your business is taking, gloves and goggles may also be necessary. Designate a responsible party to be in charge of tracking supplies and re-ordering.

Post or share information on the supplies available and whom to report any shortages or concerns to where employees can access them.

Re-assess restrooms. Restrooms should always be well-stocked with soap, hot water and paper towels. Increase the frequency at which restrooms are checked for supplies and sanitized.

For large restrooms, consider closing off some stalls and sinks to limit the areas that require frequent sanitizing. Placing out-of-order signs can help deter use. Post clear instructions for hand washing--it should be done for at least 30 seconds with hot water and soap.

Scale back shared spaces. Shared spaces may mean break rooms, employee kitchens, copy rooms, lobbies, supply closets or more. If any of these spaces aren't strictly necessary, consider closing them off. This will discourage congregating and limit the areas that need frequent sanitization. For shared spaces that stay open, limit furniture and supplies to the absolute essentials. This may mean reducing seating and tables or removing communal dishware.

It's also vital to establish clear expectations for sanitizing shared spaces before and after every use. Prominently post and share sanitizing guidelines with all staff. Include information on where sanitizing equipment will be stored and how it can be accessed and used. To help ensure everyone follows guidelines, look for a sanitizing solution that's fast and easy-to-use, like electrostatic sprayers from enviroprosolutions.com, made by Victory or Graco.

Sick? Stay home. Wherever possible, encourage employees to stay home or work from home if:

- * They are experiencing any symptoms of illness.
- * They suspect they may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- * They have just returned from traveling.
- * There have been any changes to their household, such as a child returning from college.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provides guidelines for length of self-quarantines and more on its Guidance for Businesses & Employees page.

Provide proper equipment. Empowering employees is the best strategy for building trust. When it comes to sanitization, providing individual sanitizing tools is a terrific way to empower. Some companies offer kits to keep multiple employees in-stock at once, such as the Millennium Q Viral Disinfecting Kit. When all employees have their own set of supplies, they can take full responsibility for the safety of their workspace.

Even with shared workstations, having dedicated sets of sanitizing tools is highly effective. Try to post or share clear instructions on how to sanitize and the necessary frequency. Particularly for shared workstations, it's advisable for employees to sanitize before and after every shift.

After more than a year at home for some workers, returning to the workplace is an enormous step. Emotions may be running high, and it's up to employers to set a positive example and tone. Making your dedication to safety clear and tangible will boost employee confidence, all while keeping your workforce healthy.

MEET RUIZ FOODS FLORENCE NEW HR MANAGER



Jaime Moore in action at Ruiz Foods Florence

Ruiz Foods welcomes Jamie Moore as human resources manager of the Florence facility. A resident of Florence for over 20 years, Moore is very familiar with the community. "I clearly remember hearing about Ruiz Foods when they announced they were joining the Florence business community," said Moore. "And from day one, I heard a lot of good things... family values, excellent benefits, great working atmosphere, a solid, good culture and a love of community."

"Jamie is a welcome addition to our Ruiz Florence family," said Pete

Mayadag, Ruiz Foods Florence, director of Operations. "She has a wide range of experiences and is familiar with the community, which will complement our current community partnerships. I am glad she has joined the team, and I look forward to working with her."

"When I saw this position open at Ruiz Foods Florence, I knew I had to reach out," said Moore; "While I was looking for a challenge with the opportunity for growth, it was just as important to be part of a culture that promoted teamwork and had that feeling of family. And here I am, doubly excited because Ruiz Foods Florence continues to expand, actively and aggressively hiring."

Positions are available at Ruiz Foods Florence for all shifts to include: packaging, production, processing, pre-batch, sanitation, maintenance and machine operator. Ruiz Foods offers excellent medical benefits: life insurance, dental and vision coverage, paid holidays, a 401K and more.

"At Ruiz Foods Florence you're not a number—you're a person, and we want you to know we're glad you're a part of the Ruiz Florence family. We want you to be successful, and so we are eager to invest in you. We understand that when you're successful we're successful, and we want nothing less. In fact, the Ruiz Values are paramount to how we interact every day: teamwork, innovation, safety, integrity, quality and respect. I'm looking forward to introducing potential employees to Ruiz Foods Florence," adds Moore, "and talking through what the work experience will look like."

Currently, select skilled jobs are offering sign-on bonuses. Resumes are welcome at florencejobs@ruizfoods.com. Join the team that makes America's most popular frozen Mexican food—El Monterey and one of the most popular roller grill items in convenience stores: Tornados.

As the company continues to grow, Ruiz Foods Florence, Ruiz Cares and Ruiz 4 Kids programs actively respond to the needs of the Florence area community. "It's who we are," said Matt Ruiz, Ruiz Foods director of Corporate and Community Relations. "And we look forward to Jamie's involvement as we continue to give back to the communities where we live and work."

"The Ruiz Foods' philosophy of giving back to the community means a lot, particularly knowing the focus is on children and education," said Moore. "And working together on a special project gives Team Members an opportunity to get to know each other. I'm excited for the future of Ruiz Foods Florence and invite anyone who would like to be considered for a position to reach out. I look forward to meeting with you."



Ruiz Foods Florence Team Member Bridgette Brown and Ruiz Foods Florence HR manager, Jamie Moore



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GET UP, GET OUT, SPRING FORWARD

Submitted by the City of Florence



FITLOT Outdoor Fitness Park

This year is breezing by as the months continue to push 2020 further behind us. It is no secret that the global pandemic has greatly impacted our daily lives. Although we are not completely out of the woods yet, we see the sun peeking through as we

slowly start to return to normalcy. While the days are getting warmer and Daylight Savings time offers longer light hours, the City encourages residents to take advantage of opportunities to engage in health and wellness throughout the community.

Recognizing that community wellness and livability are multi-faceted, the City of Florence actively works to build a network of partners and resources that provide access to fresh fruits and vegetables for residents and local restaurants. The City invested in a commercial kitchen and farmers market to increase access to locally-sourced food and products. The market operates exclusively as an open-air grocery store with extensive precautions for health safety and provides a commercial production space located on site. The City Center Market is open Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and will also reopen its Tuesday night markets starting in May from 4-7 p.m. Partnership between the City and the Eat Smart, Move More (ESMM) Florence Chapter is another wellness effort. This collaboration allowed the development of an application process to provide community gardens to interested schools and churches to supply fresh produce and serve as an educational tool for students. ESMM is an excellent example of leadership in community wellness as it has facilitated a network of various organizations in Florence that share the same interest.

City Council has also demonstrated its commitment to wellness with the enhancement of recreational activities to include the City's trail system and many improvements to parks, fields, and facilities. The Florence Trail System contains a series of connections that link nearly 22 miles of trails together throughout the City. The Trail System connects to parks, cultural features and historical sites and provides users a safe space to experience the outdoors. You can access city trails through multiple locations around the city – check out a trail map at www.cityofflorence.com. The High Hill Creek Mountain Bike & Run Park is also a new addition that runs alongside Interstate 95, offering four miles to bike and run.

More wellness initiatives include activities and programs offered through the City's Recreation Services Department and the Athletic and Sports Tourism Department. These departments have several programs and activities for youth, adults and seniors this summer. The City of Florence Recreation Services Department takes pride in offering summer camp opportunities to youth in the Florence community. Camps will be held June 14 through July 23. These camps will keep your child engaged in a safe and fun environment and keep him or her entertained and engaged over summer break. Physical and educational activities, such as arts & crafts classes, sports, fitness sessions, cultural and enrichment classes, games and much more will be available to your child. Our Barnes Street Activity Center also hosts a senior group, the Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors (OWLS) that stay active through a variety of programs. Barnes



City Center Market Produce

Street also has a new FITLOT Outdoor Fitness Park that was funded through an AARP Grant. This outdoor fitness area is for youth, adults, and senior adults. To inquire about any of these activities, please call 843-665-3253.

The City of Florence

Athletic Department & the Florence Youth Basketball League will begin registration for summer youth basketball on May 1. The Florence Track Club in conjunction with the City of Florence Athletic Department will be offering Youth Track and Field this summer. The Florence Track Club is open to ages 6-18. The Freedom Florence Batting Cages will be available for use, and the Dr. Eddie Floyd Tennis Center will offer several clinics and youth camps this summer. Similarly, the City of Florence Athletic Department will have several Adult Leagues. The Adult Sports programs offer Adult Softball League, Adult Kickball League and Adult Flag Football League. For more details, please visit www.cityofflorenceathletics.com.

As summer approaches, we encourage the Florence community to get up, get out and spring forward. The City's mission addresses its commitment to "elevate the quality of life in our city and region." Acknowledging that wellness is an essential component of our mission, the City will continue addressing issues affecting residents' health and collaborating with partners to improve overall health for the community. So, let's get moving, Full Life. Full Forward.



Legacy of Women Incorporated & AMAZON PARTNERSHIP

Submitted by Toyinda L. Smith

The partnership enables Legacy of Women, Inc. to acquire essential supplies--hygiene products, food, household products and personal protective equipment--to distribute in underserved communities.

HARTSVILLE—The Legacy of Women, Incorporated is an organization with core functions centered around the needs of women and families. Our organization is about building capacity through the distribution of essential supplies, training, development and educational programs created around the three components, mental and heart health, philanthropy and leadership.

Through our partnership with Amazon, Legacy of Women, Inc. will receive complimentary essential supplies. The supplies will be distributed directly to underserved communities through additional partnerships with local nonprofits serving children and families, especially within the Pee Dee region of South Carolina.

"As a resident of the Pee Dee community, Legacy of Women, Inc. is uniquely positioned to positively impact this region through the creation of job training programs, professional job coaching, financial literacy as well as by providing family sustainability assistance," said Toyinda L. Smith, founder and CEO of Legacy of Women, Inc.

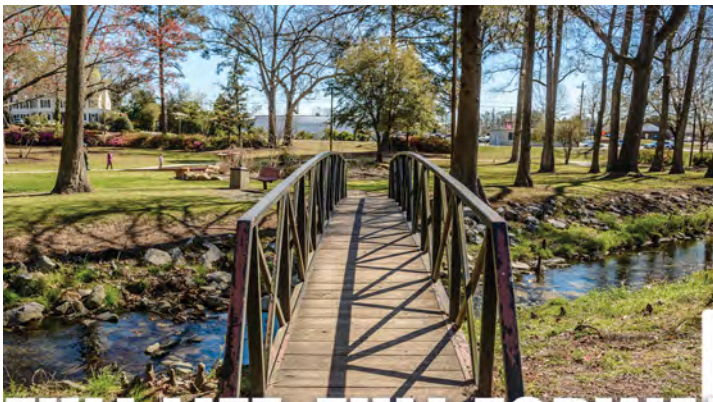
Legacy of Women, Inc. is committed to actively engaging underserved communities by fostering innovative collaborations to respond to community needs. This partnership with Amazon is just one of many initiatives to build generational wealth and legacy.

Legacy of Women, Inc. was established in September 2017 with the specific purpose to focus on the distribution of essential supplies, education, leadership training, development and growth for women and families at all levels in an effort towards advancement, support and capacity building.

For more information on Legacy of Women, Inc. visit our website: www.legacyofwomeninc.org.



Toyinda L. Smith



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IDENTIFYING THE MENTAL MODELS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

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



Dr. Nika White

influence the likelihood of others engaging in inclusive leadership practices. Because mental models can vary, contained in this article is a breakdown of a few examples and signs to help identify them.

Active Opposition

Active opposers are typically deeply rooted in their choice to be a strong opponent of DEI. These are the people whose minds cannot be changed and who are committed to disrupting the work of DEI. The potential for engagement is slim and often leads to the determination that the energy of trying is in vain. My advice is to let them be—there are far too many other people that can be persuaded. Putting our energy into changing the minds of active opposers can cause burnout. The best way to interact with these individuals is to not engage in heated conversation and to show them love—not hate—in the best way you can. In the wise words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.” Light drives out darkness.

Passive Unawareness

These are the people who are unaware and cannot engage in the work DEI simply because they are uninformed. Passively unaware individuals can be identified by their lack of engagement in the conversation and their inability to recognize the severity of the problems that loom of equity and equality.

If you notice a group discussing the lack of brown and black people on a panel, and a person doesn’t engage, bring that person into the conversation. If he or she shares, doesn’t have much to add to the subject or doesn’t have the point of view to weigh in, we can infer that he or she is passively unaware. This is an opportunity to connect and expose the individual to broader perspectives. Reach out to have a one-on-one conversation. Ask questions, share your personal investment in DEI, and listen. Make sure to listen to learn.

Passive Awareness

Passively aware individuals are the ones who can appreciate that attention is being given to the work of DEI, but see it as someone else’s responsibility, the bystander effect. To illustrate passive awareness, we can use the same situation from passive unawareness.

If you notice a group discussing the lack of brown and black people on a panel, and a person doesn’t engage, bring that person into the conversation. If he or she realizes it is essential but trusts other people to get the job done, we can recognize passive awareness. This person sees this as the work of someone else instead of taking ownership to help solve for inequity. Often time, this disengagement comes from feeling that DEI is about marginalized communities. If someone doesn’t identify with a marginalized community, he or she may be dismissive about personal accountability.

Because this person is aware of the need to value DEI, he or she can be persuaded to deepen their engagement and begin to see him or herself as part of the solution. Meet passive aware people where they

are. Invite them for coffee or tea and have a chat. Ask them questions to suggest entry points of engagement in DEI that feel comfortable to them as they start an intentional journey of modeling inclusive leadership. This is an opportunity to show their voice matters. They can serve as allies and be advocates for change for those in their circles of influence.

Active Awareness

Our actively aware mental modelers are the ones who know this work is necessary and are actively working to advance it. These can be our DEI practitioners, human rights activists and social justice workers, but they are also regular people who work to advocate for others daily. These individuals work to bring others to the forefront and to make space at the table to center voices that are rarely heard from.

Active awareness can be practiced by speaking up for silenced voices; self-educating through books, documentaries, discussions, etc.; and pushing for equity and inclusion in personal and professional spaces. Because the actively aware are so involved, they are the key champions to bring the passively unaware and passively aware to the party.

Overactive Awareness

At times, active awareness can go a little too far and even sometimes hinder the efforts to advance one’s engagement in DEI work. Those who have hyper awareness are often early adopters of the work, or they have been victimized in such a way that they are headstrong about the work and wish to see results by any means necessary. An example of overactive awareness is cancel culture. If a person/organization shares something offensive, exclusionary, or politically incorrect, this mental model will cancel the person/organization. Instead of extending grace and allowing for correction, growth and progress, these people automatically ostracize.

We are all human. We are GOING to make mistakes. By going to extremes when a person or organization makes a mistake, we push people further away from this space. While we need to hold people accountable to change and learn from their mistakes, we must extend grace and avoid being overactive or aggressive because aggression will only be met with aggression. When this occurs, we lose all opportunity to influence change and increase the likelihood of behavior change. Sure, you want people to do the work of DEI, but do you want them to do it despite or because of?

To recap, our mental models for DEI are: Active Opposition, Passive Unawareness, Passive Awareness, Active Awareness and Overactive Awareness. Now that we have identified mental models of DEI, we can recognize where people are in their journey and collectively work to individualize our approach to bringing people along on this journey to create a more equitable society.



WHAT'S NEW AT THE LEAF

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CIGARS

Submitted by Leaf Lounge



"Cigars are our life at the Leaf. We are a Cigar Lounge that serves fine spirits, not a bar that allows cigar smoking." - Jesse Wiles III

Do you enjoy cigars? If you do you will enjoy Florence's only true cigar Lounge. We offer fine cigars including La Galera Connecticut

Lector, Perdomo Double Aged Vintage, La Aurora 115 Anniversary Edition (shown below) and many more premium cigars.

Buzzwords like "natural" and "artisanal" are overused and abused, but premium, handmade cigars, like the ones we sell at the Leaf, have truly earned the right to flaunt these credentials. They are made of one thing and one thing only—tobacco. Pure, unadulterated tobacco. Not a single leaf is chemically treated or artificially altered for taste. Everything from flavor to color is achieved through natural means—and that's part of the cigar's inherent beauty. In fact, few consumable products are so natural. Perceptible flavors, whether sweet or spicy, are naturally occurring.

On the craft side, rolling the perfect handmade cigar is an artisanal skill, and one that takes many years to fully master. Blending tobacco is as much art as it is science, and because tobacco is subject to the whims of nature, the blender must be able to work effectively with an ingredient that can change from year to year due to crop variations.

Like wine, some vintages are better than others, but cigarmakers will do everything in their power to ensure that their product is consistent, even though crop quality is highly dependent on the weather. Consistency, however, isn't the same thing as cloning, and there will always be minute variations from cigar to cigar. As with any handmade product, no two premium cigars will be exactly alike. The finest, most sincere cigars are natural expressions of both the cigarmaker and the soil from which the tobacco was grown.

The various alluring shades of brown are achieved through an organic process free of dyes or ripening accelerants. There are no preservatives to increase shelf life and no sweeteners—artificial or natural. Such additives and chemicals are the domain of cigarettes and machine-made cigars, which are mass-produced in the billions.

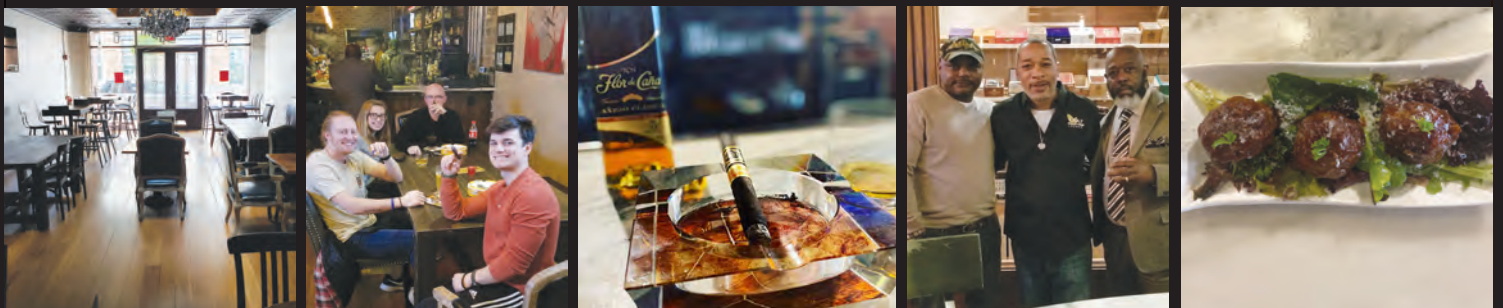
Honestly, a cigar is about enjoyment and savoring the moment. It takes about 45 minutes to smoke a 5-inch cigar. We invite you to stop by and spend some time with us.

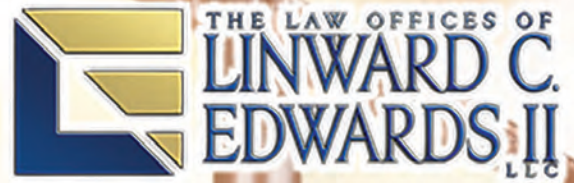


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DOWNTOWN FLORENCE RECEIVES NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

Submitted by Florence Downtown Development Staff



In February, Downtown Florence was designated as an accredited Main Street America™ program after meeting rigorous performance standards set by the National Main Street Center, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Accredited status is Main Street America's top tier of recognition, and it signifies

exemplary commitment to preservation-based economic development and community revitalization through the Main Street Approach™.

Downtown Florence was evaluated by Main Street South Carolina, which works in partnership with the National Main Street Center to identify local programs that meet national performance standards, including diverse community support and ethical historic preservation and evaluation criteria that determine which communities are building comprehensive and sustainable revitalization efforts through strong community partnerships and programs.

The earliest revitalization efforts began in 2002 with small committee meetings and the organization of a promotional non-profit that works in concert with the City of Florence Downtown Development Office to drive progress in the historic core of Florence. The Downtown Florence Historic District was designated in 2006 and expanded in 2008, and the first major catalyst project, Hotel Florence, was completed by 2013. Hotel Florence, and the investors who took a chance to make the project happen, were the trailblazers bold enough to start the train down the tracks—and we've only picked up speed from there. Over the past decade, Downtown Florence has seen nearly a quarter of a billion dollars of public and private investments, and since 2010, every

dollar of City of Florence investment has yielded a cumulative seven dollars return in private investment.

This work could not have been accomplished without Downtown Florence's and the City's partners, investors, small business owners, community leaders, citizens, volunteers and a comprehensive planning process. So, the big question remains: Where does Downtown Florence go from here? Project Urban Square at the corner of Evans and Coit Streets has been announced and will soon be underway generating a \$65 million investment in the City of Florence. Francis Marion University continues to expand its footprint downtown. Special community events are reviving after lying dormant due to COVID-19. New businesses are opening each month offering unique retail and dining experiences, Sav-a-Lot will soon provide a full-scale grocery experience downtown to serve area residents and Downtown Florence has engaged in planning for its next ten years of growth, revitalization and connection.

Main Streets are the historic cores of our community—and having a healthy core is crucial to the vitality of our City and region. The Main Street Approach™ is a powerful holistic tool for transforming places, and the work to re-engage, revitalize and connect our community is never finished. Downtown Florence's continued success is a testament to the commitment of our community to make the place we live better, and the ripple effect generated from targeted investment in the greater downtown redevelopment district is felt community-wide through increased employment opportunities, expansion of medical and education facilities, quality of life for our residents and generation of tourism revenue from visitors. We invite you to come to Downtown Florence, experience the Main Street movement and become a champion for small business and our local community this year.



Spring has sprung in DOWNTOWN FLORENCE, and the weather is perfect for patio dining. Enjoy one of the many outdoor patios, or grab a meal to go from one of your favorites and dine in a downtown plaza this spring!

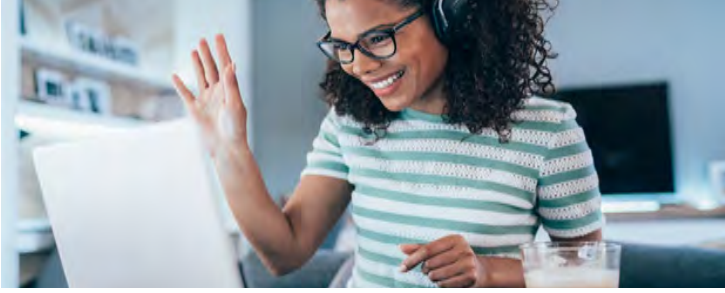
Outdoor Dining Downtown

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- Victors
- Wholly Smokin'



For a complete directory of downtown shops and restaurants, visit www.florencedowntown.com.

TIPS TO REMAIN POSITIVE AND THRIVE THROUGH THE PANDEMIC



Many people continue to work and study from home as they navigate the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While remote life has its benefits, it can also be challenging. There are a few smart steps you can take to avoid unnecessary stress and help you thrive in both your personal and professional life.

No matter what your personal circumstances, quarantine, social distancing and remote work have been challenging. Now is a good time to reassess and take steps to revive your routine. By being proactive, you can help fuel positivity and productivity in all aspects of life.

Here are the top five ways to stay positive and better manage a remote lifestyle:

1. Block time for self-care.

Chronic stress of pushing through the pandemic can cause brain fog. Examples of brain fog include difficulty getting motivated, easily losing your focus, searching for your words when trying to communicate and having difficulty making up your mind. At times, small tasks can feel overwhelming.

To prevent brain fog, take a break from work, school or other must-do's, and schedule time to do something you enjoy for 10 to 15 minutes. Without these breaks, you'll end up less productive and less engaged at work, overall. This inevitably forces you to expend more mental energy to reach the same goals. A quick break will help you refresh and refocus.

2. Take a fake commute.

Although long and unpredictable commutes can increase stress, there were aspects of commuting that may have been beneficial, such as listening to music or reading a book. Instead of doing these enjoyable activities at home, many people have simply replaced this lost time with more work.

Rather than working from the time you wake until dinner, consider being more mindful, and try scheduling a fake commute instead. That means taking the same amount of time you would have spent in your car or on the subway and replacing it with a walk, listening to your favorite podcast or spending time with loved ones. Did you know the average round-trip commute is 48 minutes? While working from home, reschedule that time to focus on your well-being.

3. Reduce video meeting fatigue.

The average worker has experienced a 24 percent increase in meetings since the start of the pandemic, and video meetings can be especially taxing. Overall, meeting fatigue has shown to increase stress and reduce productivity. To lessen the effects of meeting fatigue for yourself and your team, ask these questions:

- * Is this meeting necessary? If yes, then ask:
- * Does it have to be a video call?
- * Does it have to be longer than 30 minutes?
- * Which attendees are essential?
- * Can you turn off the cameras and use photos or avatars?
- * Can you do an audio-only conference for a screen break?

Of course, some video meetings are necessary, so for those, consider starting with a check-in by asking: How are people feeling? Does anyone have a back-to-back call? What time of day is it? If you're leading the meeting, set a timer so you can end promptly.

4. Unique times require flexibility.

Always remember, people are not working at the same productivity and engagement levels as they did before the pandemic started. In addition to chronic stress and anxiety, people are juggling competing demands, like homeschooling and not having access to daycare.

It's important to have realistic expectations of what demands can be met for yourself and your colleagues. Create daily and weekly goals, and have regular, honest conversations with your managers about work-life balance. If you are a manager at an organization, keep this in mind for employees as well as yourself, and embrace a responsive approach to these conversations. What's more, keep this in mind with your family also, as your kids and partner may also require some flexibility at home too.

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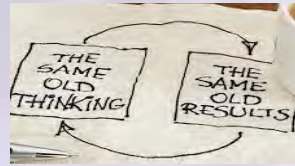
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WHY WE SHOULD RUN FROM POPULAR THINKING

by Robin Lewis



HEMINGWAY-“You can lead a person to knowledge but you can’t make them think.” –Unknown



Bill Needs Discernment

There once was a man named Bill who wanted to know what was really going on, so every day he tuned in to networks like CNN, HuffPost, The New York Times and Fox News. When Bill would hear the same thing on more than one network, he would assume it to be true. When any conflicting report emerged, Bill just went with what sounded and felt right to him, not realizing that his choices and decisions were many times being manipulated. Bill ended up duped without realizing it because he didn’t do his own research, and he never prayed about his choices and decisions. Poor Bill.

In America today, we are heavily influenced by the media from news outlets, commercials, Facebook and Instagram. We’ve been conditioned to believe what these major tech giants tell us is true. There is now a need for web sites like truthorfiction.com and snopes.com



for finding out if an Internet rumor is true or false. So, what’s wrong with that?

Popular thinking is defined as thoughts or beliefs regarded by the general population to be true and acceptable. Popular thinking is the lazy way to carry an opinion, but it gets worse. When we submit ourselves to an ideology, to a belief, to a culturally accepted standard, we are also spiritually submitting ourselves, almost like we’re bowing down to it. We will become like what we bow down to, in thoughts, words and behaviors.



The Power of What You Believe

The way we think and believe will determine the outcome of our lives. In fact, every thought, choice, word and outcome is the product of our beliefs. Where are you reliant on popular thinking or tradition? Is it holding you back from the best that God wants for you?

Henry Ford said, “Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason so few engage in it.” John Maxwell says, “If you value popularity over good thinking, then you will severely limit your potential.”

In speaking to an audience recently, I talked about the power of one’s potential to achieve more, exceedingly more, than most of us can imagine. Those of us who pursue growth end up pursuing broader, deeper thinking.

The problem with popular thinking is that it doesn’t require you to think at all. – Kevin Myers.

Do the Work of Thinking

Whether you are part of a business, church or family, popular and traditional thinking can stop you from going forward. It’s only

when we stop and do the work of thinking that we solve problems with new creativity. When we do the work of personal spiritual growth, we learn to solve problems with the help of the Holy Spirit, not...

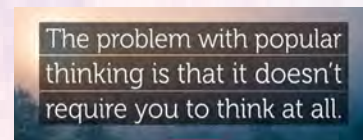
- “What is everyone else doing?” or
- “What have we always done?” or
- “Isn’t this good enough?”

Paul wrote his letter to the Romans encouraging them to not take on the thinking of the world, but to be transformed by having their minds renewed by the truth (Romans 12:2). The original Greek word in this verse is “schematizo” from which we get our English word “schematic,” meaning design or blueprint. The root word actually means to twist together.

If we are not supposed to model our lives after the blueprint of popular thinking (which models us after the image of society and the whims of culture), then that requires we engage in better thinking that leads to greater discernment. Without strong discernment or astuteness, our thoughts and lives can get so twisted up with what is not true that we begin to believe it. Someone said, “A lie doesn’t become truth, wrong doesn’t become right, and evil doesn’t become good, just because it’s accepted by the majority.”

If You Want To Change Your Life...

Today our world is plagued with many rumors, lies, contrary beliefs and mixed philosophies. Do you find yourself wondering what is true? So do I. We need to pursue personal growth, deepen our relationship with God and ask him for greater wisdom and discernment. In Ephesians 4:23-25, Paul is exhorting us to “untangle ourselves from what corrupts our lives,” and be renewed in the spirit of our minds...to push aside the false, and speak only what we know to be true. This comes from growth! If there’s no renewing of our minds in biblical truth, then we grab whatever is believed in our



culture, and it becomes ours.

Then the same old thinking always brings the same old results.

Our thoughts have the power to create what we experience, and whatever we focus on grows larger. If you’re wondering if you have some “stinkin thinkin” holding you back, here are some steps to consider:

1. Stop and think before you follow popular thinking and opinion. Don’t do something because “everybody’s doing it.”
2. Include strong believers in your circle of influence who know how to hear God speak to them.
3. Continually question your own thinking—what worked yesterday might not be best for today. Does what I believe line up with God’s truth?
4. There may be something new to discover, so ask questions and seek options. Ask God to speak to about every decision.
5. Even if uncomfortable, make decisions based on what is right according to the spirit of God rather than on what is commonly accepted.

Author Mark Twain is noted for saying, “Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it’s time to pause and reflect.” God designed our minds with the ability to be renewed, which means we can change the way we think. **If you want to change your life, you must change the way you think!**

Be more than a follower. Become a strong leader who exercises good thinking, births innovative solutions and shares new ideas. Become comfortable with being uncomfortable. Know your values, and let the Holy Spirit be your guide. Remember, everything begins as a thought, and our thoughts determine our destiny. It takes nothing to join the crowd, so before you follow popular or traditional thinking, think!

Robin L. Lewis is a certified life coach, speaker and author who challenges others to grow and achieve. For more information, email Robin at <https://www.RobinLewisLife.com>.

HGTC EMPLOYEES NOMINATED, HONORED FOR STATEWIDE AWARDS Submitted by HGTC



HGTC nominee for Individual Innovator of the Year: Stanton Greenawalt

CONWAY – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) nominated Stan Greenawalt, professor of cybersecurity, to represent the college for the A. Wade Martin Innovator of the Year for his innovation to build a Cyber Security Operations Center and create an Ethical Hacking and Penetration classroom, the only one of its kind in the South Carolina Technical College System. HGTC also nominated Brandon Haselden,

assistant vice president/dean; Charles Granger, chair and professor of Golf Course Management; and Ashley Wilkinson, professor of Golf and Sports Turf Management, to represent the College for the A. Wade Martin Innovation Team of the Year for the vision and innovation to complete the new Turf Care Demonstration Center on the Conway campus.

The A. Wade Martin Innovator of the Year Awards are presented annually by the SC Technical College System Foundation at an Awards Ceremony held at the South Carolina Technical Education Association (SCTEA) Conference in February. The award recognizes individuals in the technical college system who employ innovative approaches to meet the ever-changing needs in the technical education arena and whose achievements impact most positively in the system's statewide efforts in economic development and the education of technical college students. A. Wade Martin was the executive director of South Carolina's first technical and industrial training program.

HGTC is proud to announce Greenawalt as A. Wade Martin Innovator of the Year 2021. A notable authority in the field of information systems, Internet and firewall security, Greenawalt has been a member of the HGTC Computer Technology faculty since August 2015. He has brought a diverse background in academia, private sector management and military command to the classroom. His distinguished 25+-year U.S. Navy career encompassed leadership positions as combat systems director, training director, chief of staff and commanding and executive officer for two squadrons and the USS WASP Aircraft Carrier.

"Professor Greenawalt is highly regarded in cybersecurity for the work he has accomplished at HGTC in developing, configuring and bringing online an advanced cybersecurity facility dedicated to learning at all levels. He has been interviewed by the broadcast news as well as being invited to present at conferences attended by all levels of expertise in the field of cybersecurity," said Dr. Daniel Wysong, HGTC assistant vice president for Academic Affairs/dean.

Greenawalt has built significant partnerships between the College and public and private STEM employers including the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SPAWARSSYSCEN) Atlantic.

"Professor Greenawalt had a vision of taking our Cyber Security Certificate to the next level of a two-year degree. With that vision, he worked diligently and applied for a \$750,000 ONR grant through the Navy and the department was awarded the grant to be used over three years to improve our program and acquire equipment for the program. Again, this has made our cyber security program top notch across the State of South Carolina and no other technical college system across the country has this type of cyber security program available," said Lou Ann Timmons, HGTC academic chair/professor of information technology.

From the success of his partnerships, Greenawalt developed "Creating a Coastal Carolina Cyber Workforce Education and Awareness Pipeline for National Security" (C4WEAPNS), which has expanded efforts to recruit. It has also improved the processes to train

residents who fill high growth STEM occupational shortages in our regional economy. C4WEAPNS is supported by a comprehensive partnership that leverages a talented team of faculty and staff, an established institutional outreach network, accessible facilities, extensive student recruitment and support resources and an active curriculum advisory committee of employers including SPAWAR. The program involved the innovation of a new associate degree in cybersecurity in the fall of 2019.

"Mr. Greenawalt has made significant contributions to the cyber workforce in the Grand Strand region of South Carolina and beyond through his accomplishments at Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC). His innovative approach to expand HGTC's degree and certification programs in cybersecurity and computer forensics as well as adding a state-of-the-art instructional lab, has enabled the college to serve critical workforce needs affecting our national security," Peter Reddy, executive director for the Naval Information Warfare Center Atlantic.

Because of Greenawalt's efforts, HGTC received \$750,000 in multi-year grant funding through the Office of Naval Research (ONR), substantiating an educational partnership with the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SPAWARSSYSCEN) Atlantic. The grant and advanced cybersecurity degree program is not only inventing a pipeline to fill critical cybersecurity jobs at SPAWARSSYSCEN, but also equipping HGTC with the state-of-the-art training technology and highest quality resources to meet cybersecurity and forensic training needs throughout the state. Greenawalt also added a server room within the COC that modernized the department's "online" program, which can support up to 600 students remotely. This includes the expansion of Virtual Private Network (VPN) capabilities so students can remotely access live equipment for training and enhanced virtual labs. The program is unique to South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia.



HGTC nominees for Innovation Team of the Year

and degree programs in Cybersecurity and Forensics. This lab gives students hands-on development and mastery of the knowledge, skills and abilities required for positions in defense and industry including the Navy. His work has led to the establishment of strong relationships with the Navy through partnerships with the Naval Information Warfare Center Atlantic (NIWC LANT)," said Michael Simpson, director of Education and Workforce for the Office of Naval Research in Arlington, Va.

In addition to serving as a workforce pipeline for SPAWARSSYSCEN and the existing technology sector in Horry and Georgetown Counties, the expanded degree program serves as the catalyst needed to make the Grand Strand a technology hub, particularly in cybersecurity.

Prior to HGTC, Greenawalt was on faculty at St. Johns River Community College as director of Computer Science and Technology and CISCO certified academy lead instructor (for which he was awarded State College Professor of the Year). He completed his graduate work (M.A. in computer technology and information systems management) from Webster University following his B.A. from Clemson University. He has also been recognized as both the Senior Naval Instructor of the Year and Teacher of the Year by the Naval Education and Training Command.

"Since the start of his grant, Greenawalt and his team at Horry-Georgetown have worked diligently to establish a Security Operation Center and Cybersecurity Forensics Lab augmented by a new and expanded certificate

FDTC HONORS OUTSTANDING FACULTY AND STAFF FOR 2021

Articles submitted by FDTC



Shelanda Deas

Florence-Darlington Technical College faculty and staff members have chosen their 2021 Outstanding Employees of the Year. Each year, FDTC faculty and staff members are invited to nominate three of their colleagues for the titles of Staff Member of the Year, Administrator of the Year and Faculty Member of the Year.



Bob Garand

For 2021, Shelanda Deas is the FDTC Outstanding Staff Member. Deas is a student counselor with the College's Removing Underserved Student Hurdles (RUSH) program. Bob Garand, an administrator with the Online College, is FDTC's Outstanding Administrator, and computer technology Instructor JoAnn Mack is FDTC's Outstanding Faculty Member.



JoAnn Mack

Deas says she enjoys serving RUSH students at FDTC. RUSH is a federal grant program at FDTC. Garand is a nearly 20-year veteran employee of FDTC and served as FDTC's bookstore manager before taking an assignment with the Online College. Mack teaches computer technology at the college and is the mother of three children. She has spent the last four years as a full-time instructor at FDTC.

"We are proud of our outstanding employees," said Interim President Edward Bethea. "They all have a strong commitment to helping our students succeed at the college and in their future jobs."

Deas, Garand and Mack will compete against outstanding employees at other institutions in the S.C. Technical College System for statewide awards. All technical college outstanding employees were honored at this year's South Carolina Technical Education Association (SCTEA) annual conference that was held virtually in February.

FDTC INSTRUCTOR ACCEPTED INTO ACADEMY FOR TEACHING



JoAnn Mack

Florence-Darlington Technical College's (FDTC) JoAnn Mack was recently accepted into the South Carolina Technical College System (SCTCS) Faculty Academy for Teaching in Non-Traditional Fields.

Mack has been a full-time computer technology instructor in the Department of Business and Computer Technologies at FDTC for more than four years. The competitive application process for the SCTCS Faculty Academy was open to both full-time and adjunct faculty from all 16 technical colleges within South Carolina.

"I will be participating in seven monthly training sessions facilitated by Engineer Inclusion," said Mack. "These sessions will include one-on-one support to develop a plan based on data-driven strategies to address issues related to non-traditional programs."

The SCTCS Faculty Academy in Non-Traditional Fields is a practical, hands-on program that allows faculty to explore specific topics designed to recruit and retain students in non-traditional fields. This initiative will focus on non-traditional career and technical education fields as defined by the Perkins V legislation. A non-traditional field is one that is enrolled by less than 25 percent of a gender.

"I am very excited to have been chosen to participate in the Faculty Academy and to help establish a plan to increase enrollment and retention in our programs," Mack said. "I am grateful for this opportunity."

Computer technology falls under the category of being a non-traditional field. Mack will develop a plan, along with measurable outcomes to address issues related to non-traditional fields with the goal of increasing enrollment and retention.



LANDER AND FDTC PARTNER TO ADVANCE EDUCATION



Lander University Campus
(Photo Credit Lander University)

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) students can now transfer to Lander University in Greenwood as juniors thanks to a newly formed partnership between the two institutions.

Articulation agreements were recently signed by Lander University and FDTC, allowing transfer students to

earn a bachelor degree from Lander in Criminal Justice and Human Services. The students will be admitted to Lander University as juniors and will receive priority acceptance into the major they have selected.

"Florence-Darlington Technical College is a greatly valued partner of Lander University," said Dr. Scott Jones, provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs at Lander. "This partnership with FDTC helps both institutions honor our shared commitment to the State of South Carolina to develop a strong and able workforce through high-quality education, as well as empower our students to lead satisfying and productive lives."

The agreements apply to the following majors:

- Criminal Justice: FDTC's Associate of Applied Science in criminal justice technology to Lander's Bachelor of Science in criminology
- Human Services: FDTC's Associate of Applied Science in human

services to Lander's Bachelor of Science in human services

FDTC's Interim President Ed Bethea said, "We are very proud of this new partnership with Lander and look forward to our student's continued success in Greenwood."

"Florence-Darlington Technical College has always sought articulations agreements with four-year colleges that understand our goals and value our mission. This recent articulation agreement with Lander University will be a welcomed addition, and we look forward to a robust and prosperous partnership," said Dr. Marc David, FDTC's vice president of Academic Affairs.

"FDTC's graduates are well-prepared for success at Lander," said Dr. Lucas McMillan, dean of Lander's College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. "In addition to our existing Criminology program, which is now offered online as well as on-campus, Lander's new Human Services program is also available to students online and on-campus, and shows Lander's commitment to quality instruction and mentorship of students. As a native of Mullins, I am excited about more students from the Pee Dee region coming to study at Lander."

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GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND TO SUPPORT LEARNING

Submitted by Dr. Kandace Bethea



Dr. Kandace Bethea, Superintendent

MARION-In what has been a challenging year for school districts across the country, the contributions made by school employees have been monumental. Teachers and administrators have put in countless hours to ensure the continuation of excellent education for our students. And while the efforts of these professionals are rightly front of mind, the critical work done behind the scenes by custodial and food service employees also plays an important role in the return of full-day,

five-day traditional schooling. Without the necessary support provided by these key services, Marion County School District's safe return to this model would not have been possible. Undoubtedly, the unsung work done every day by our custodians and food service employees is worthy of recognition and praise.

While a custodian's job has always been to ensure the cleanliness of schools, never has maintaining the safety of the learning environment fallen so heavily on their shoulders. Each morning, custodians arrive to our buildings early to begin a comprehensive list of cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Some of these procedures are routine, practiced in any school year. Some are evolving or expanded tasks added to meet new health guidelines. Custodians wipe and disinfect surfaces ranging from door handles to desks, ensuring that any surface a student may encounter has been thoroughly and regularly cleaned.

These responsibilities continue throughout the day until students and staff have cleared out of the building. The custodians then use electrostatic foggers to mist all classroom surfaces with a sanitizing agent. This new procedure, in combination with all the other work done by our custodial staff, allows students to arrive the next morning



Custodial Lunchroom Thank You's

to a building that is clean, safe, and ready for face-to-face instruction.

Like the responsibilities of custodial staff, the role of Marion County School District's food service staff has evolved to meet the moment. For the entire school year, food service in our district has provided meals to students

learning both on-site and remotely via virtual instruction.

To meet the needs of students learning from home, our schools have provided prepared meals available for pickup. Food service staffs in each of the district's buildings have displayed unparalleled flexibility in providing this service. They have accommodated the schedules of families to ensure all students are receiving the meals they require to keep their minds fed. Addressing the nutritional needs of all students supports the work done by teachers and allows virtual and traditional scholars alike to stay focused and energized for rigorous instruction.

We here in Marion County immensely thank our custodial and food service employees for all they have done this school year. Changing conditions and evolving responsibilities have made their work more challenging than ever, yet more important than ever. Were it not for their resilience and courage in taking up these expanded roles, the Marion County School District could never have made its return to traditional schooling. We appreciate our custodians and food service workers, and we invite our community to do the same.



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THE WORLD NEEDS VISIONARIES!

TSF AWARDS \$46,128 IN PANDEMIC GRANTS

Submitted by Debbie Hyler, Executive Director



Trisha Caulder, chair of The School Foundation's (TSF) grants committee, announced the foundation will distribute a total of \$46,128.48 to Florence 1 Schools (F1S) in pandemic grants for the current school year.

The grants committee funded 11 grants submitted by F1S educators. Briggs Elementary was awarded \$5,000 for its "Leading the Way back from Covid!" grant addressing

the learning loss its students may experience during this time of turmoil by focusing on culture and academics. Carver Elementary was awarded \$3,956.54 for its "STEAM-Tastic Learning at Carver" grant designed to integrate STEM in all aspects of its curriculum. Delmae Elementary was awarded \$5,000 for its "Forming Math Foundations" grant that will provide early math intervention as well as strategies for struggling students in all grade levels to support and solidify student learning. Dewey L. Carter Elementary was awarded \$5,000 for its "Terrific Tuesday Kits" and "Let's Go, OSMO" grants. "Terrific Tuesday Kits" will provide weekly activities, materials, supplies, instructions and rewards, allowing the students the opportunity to practice their learning and basic skills at home while increasing their academic achievement in the classroom. Its "Let's Go, OSMO" grant is designed to allow access to hands-on activities along with technology in order to reinforce core skills in reading and math in our digital world; Greenwood Elementary was awarded \$4,900.59 for its "Gearing UP for Guided Reading (Virtually!)" grant that provides leveled texts and materials that are appropriate for its virtual platform teachers to continue to provide small group guided reading instruction with its students. Lester

Elementary was awarded \$3,150 for its "Hydroponics in the Classroom" grant, which will create a school-wide STEM project that allows students to acquire real-world science skills, career skills and basic life skills while also supporting core academic subject areas. McLaurin Elementary was awarded \$4,222.44 for "Read Across McLaurin – School Wide Read Aloud," a school-wide read aloud project targeting literacy skills such as oral comprehension, character analysis, understanding plot and storyline, vocabulary development and other literacy skills. John W. Moore Intermediate was awarded \$4,998.35 for its "Exposure, Exploration, Experience" grant intended to promote student initiated learning through a construction based and hands-on learning environment. North Vista was awarded \$4,992.28 for its "Literacy Cannot Wait: Building Home Libraries" grant designed to improve reading levels and build home libraries. Southside Middle was awarded \$4,908.28 for its "Falcons Soar in ALL Things" grant that provides incentives to face-to-face and virtual students for showing growth in the classroom as well as on standardized and district tests.

"We are certainly in challenging times, and the foundation felt it necessary to show our support of the students and educators at F1S by providing these one-time grants," Caulder stated. "We remain committed to providing the support and resources needed until things return to a normal state." Debbie Hyler, executive director of TSF stated, "Despite difficult times, the F1S educators remain steadfast in providing our students with the best education possible. Their adaptation to an ever-changing learning environment has been amazing."

To date, TSF has awarded \$1,716,572.78 in grants to F1S. This funding would not be possible without the support of the community and its donors.

For additional information, please contact Debbie Hyler, executive director, at dhyler@theschoolfoundation.org or call 843-662-9996.

WILSON RECEIVES FEMALE DIVERSITY AWARD

Submitted by Melissa Rollins, Communication Specialist



Florence 1 Schools Students first

The College Board AP recently announced that Wilson High School was a recipient of their Computer Science Female Diversity Award for 2020.

This award is given to a school whose percentage of female computer science exam takers meets/exceeds the school's female population or a school that achieves a 50 percent or higher female representation in exam takers for AP computer science courses.

The award letter stated, "New research shows that female students who take AP computer science are more likely to major in computer science in college compared to matched peers. Through your leadership in diversifying computer science education, you prepare your female students for the high-paying, in-demand jobs of the future and give them the opportunity to help solve some of society's most challenging problems."

Wilson Principal Eric Robinson said that he and his school staff have worked hard to have a variety of coursework options available for all students. "I am very proud of our effort to improve the academics, while expanding access to AP and IB courses to a diverse group of students, especially young females," Robinson said. "Being a father of a daughter, I take a special interest in providing opportunities for young females in areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)."

Robinson said that he has been pleased to see an increase in the number of female students taking advantage of the computer science course. "Currently, over 50 percent of the students in our AP Computer Science class are female, and 36 percent are African American females," Robinson said. "The increase in female participation is due to a great effort from our School Counseling Department to reach underrepresented students in AP courses, and also having a great instructor in Myron Frieson to teach the class. It is truly an honor to be recognized on a national level."

Gregory Hall, assistant superintendent of Secondary Education, said that award was well-deserved. "I applaud Wilson High School for this recognition," Hall said. "Closing the opportunity gap, ensuring access, and promoting enrollment in advanced coursework in STEM content areas for female students is an outstanding accomplishment. When we keep 'Students First' in Florence 1 Schools, the pathway to success is broadened for all students."



FOUR ESTEEMED ALUMNI HONORED AT GALA

Articles submitted by FMU



Left to Right: Linward Edwards II, Deborah Hopla and Keith Callicutt

Francis Marion University honored four of its most esteemed alumni at its annual Alumni Awards Gala at the FMU Performing Arts Center. Dr. Deborah Hopla ('89) of Florence was recognized as the University's 2021 Outstanding Alumni.

Hopla ('89) received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Francis Marion University. In 2012 she became one of the foundational faculty members for FMU's family nurse practitioner program. She is an associate professor of nursing at FMU and the director of the FMU School of Health Science's MSN Family Nurse Practitioner and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs.

Hopla is practicing DNP herself. She is on the staff of HopeHealth, working in pain management and primary care. And she volunteers within a variety of community organizations including Help 4 Kids, the House of Hope for the Pee Dee, the McLeod Angels and the Felician Center in Kingstree.

Dr. Keith Callicutt ('79) received the Professional Industry Award in Education. Callicutt earned his master's in education from Francis Marion, and in 1999 he received his Ph.D. in educational administration. Callicutt's more than 40 years of service in education have spanned the gamut in various capacities including teacher, assistant headmaster and principal, athletic director, principal, superintendent, and now, the executive director of the Pee Dee Education Center.

Linward Edwards ('04) was the recipient of the Professional Industry Award in Public Service in Law. Edwards earned his Bachelor of Business Administration in management from Francis Marion. Edwards began his legal career in 2012 when he opened his practice, The Law Office of Linward Edwards II. He was appointed to the position of municipal court judge for the city of Florence in 2014.

Jennifer Darr ('14) received the Benjamin Wall Ingram III Young Alumna Award. Darr earned her Bachelor of Science in biology from Francis Marion University. Darr currently works for a non-profit pharmaceutical drug manufacturer where she ensures the supply of essential generic quality drugs to hospitals throughout the country.

FMU NURSING STUDENTS HELP WITH VACCINATIONS



FMU nursing students

Francis Marion University nursing students are doing their part in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students from FMU's Department of Nursing are helping to administer vaccines in conjunction with MUSC Health-Florence Medical Center. They were at MUSC-Florence's drive-

through vaccination event at the Florence Center recently, and will be working at clinics around the region in the weeks and months to come, like the clinic held on March 5 at Darlington Raceway.

The students can give vaccines if they work under the supervision of FMU faculty members. That's what is required by the South Carolina Board of Nursing. Their participation is part of a nationwide effort to

mobilize more help in distributing the vaccines. At the same time, it gives the students a real world taste of their chosen profession.

Senior nursing student Lauren Knight of Florence called her first volunteer shift "an incredible opportunity," and said it reminded her of why she decided to become a nurse.

"I saw hope in the eyes (of thousands) of people that day," Knight says. "That's something I haven't seen in a long time and something I will never forget. ...I feel honored that we, as FMU students, were able to be a part of such a huge initiative to fight COVID-19," she says. "I'm honored to have been a part of making our community safer."

Faculty members from FMU's School of Health Sciences are pitching in too. They're providing guidance for their students, but they're delivering vaccines too.

Karen Gittings, the dean of FMU's School of Health Sciences and a nursing professor, says the ability to take part in the fight against COVID-19 is a privilege for all involved.

FMU NURSING STUDENTS CONT'D

"It is truly an honor for our students and faculty to be involved in the vaccination efforts in the Pee Dee region," Gittings says. "It gives the Department of Nursing at Francis Marion University the opportunity to serve our community and more than anything, we're proud to be a part of this important moment in the fight against COVID-19."

The MUSC clinic is part of a larger campaign that involves mass vaccination events and clinics across the Pee Dee. FMU students have been working at other sites and will continue to do throughout the spring. So far, the students have administered more than 2,000 COVID-19 vaccines in Florence, Marion and Marlboro counties since mid-January.



O'MALLEY NAMED SCAAA SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

Submitted by Melissa Rollins, Communication Specialist

Florence 1 Schools Superintendent Dr. Richard O'Malley has been named the South Carolina Athletic Administrators Association (SCAAA) Superintendent of the Year. The SCAAA Awards were presented virtually on March 14.

The award nomination came from Florence 1's three athletic directors: Cody Slaughter, Greg Johnson and Derrick McQueen.

O'Malley said he greatly appreciates the recognition, specifically because the award recognizes that the changes being made around the district are having a direct, positive impact on students.

"I have worked very hard to provide the leadership to move FIS forward, while providing equity across the district," O'Malley

said. "This includes facilities, equipment, uniforms and athletic opportunities that have not been afforded in the past. I am thrilled that FIS is being recognized across South Carolina and, more importantly, that our student-athletes have the athletic opportunities they deserve."

Johnson, athletic director for West Florence High School, highlighted numerous achievements in his nomination letter, including the on-site stadiums being built at all three high schools. "(Dr. O'Malley's) belief in and perseverance of equity across the district of FIS is so strong that when the referendum was defeated, he sought feedback and then did what he seems to always do -- he got creative... The sight of bulldozers and dirt and pipe might look like a mess to some people, but for those of us 'in the know,' the mess looks like beautiful, promising progress. The high school stadium sites look like what thousands of people before him wanted, but weren't willing or able to fight for and produce."

McQueen, athletic director for Wilson High School, said in his nomination that O'Malley's strong vision has brought a restored sense of pride to Florence 1 Schools, for both students and staff. "I'm very excited for the future of Florence One School district under the leadership of Dr. Richard O'Malley. He has shown his HUGE vision and expectation for our students, our district and the community. As a manager, he's truly an inspiration to our staff. His strong leadership skills, along with the support and dedication he shows to our team, has earned much deserved respect and admiration. Over the past 2 years, he's restoring the PRIDE for our students, our staff, our district and the community. He has been a voice for students, student-athletes and our school communities."

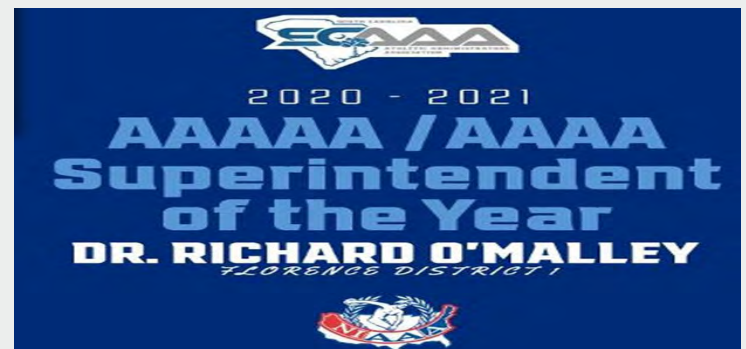
Florence 1 Schools Board Chairman Porter Stewart said that he is happy to see O'Malley's hard work in the district being recognized. "I am pleased to learn of the recognition of Dr. O'Malley by the SCAAA," Stewart said. "It is well deserved. He has worked very hard since his arrival in Florence to improve opportunities for students in both academics and athletics. We have seen significant improvements

and renovations in our indoor facilities and the creation of completely new on-campus stadiums at all three of our high schools that serve track and field, soccer and football. Students and our community will be well served by all of these initiatives for many years to come."

Florence 1 Board Member Barry Townsend said that O'Malley has brought positive change to the district and continues to push for improvement in all areas. "Dr. Rich O'Malley is the physical embodiment of Florence 1 Schools' commitment to putting students first in everything we do," Townsend said. "His unwavering leadership and commitment to improving every aspect of the district has transformed the 2020-21 school year from a year of survival to a year of progress. When our community is finally able to return to a more normal way of life, our students will return to schools that have continued to improve and move steadily forward towards Dr. O'Malley's goal of Florence 1 being a model school district, not only for South Carolina, but for the nation. During my time on the board, there has been no accomplishment I am prouder of than the role I played in helping bring Dr. Rich O'Malley to FIS, and I cannot imagine a more deserving individual for this recognition."

Shawn Armstrong, strength and conditioning coach at South Florence, said that the remodeled weight rooms are a huge asset to Florence 1 student-athletes. "Dr. O'Malley is a huge supporter of athletics for all of Florence 1. This is my first year here at South Florence and, coming in, I've had the opportunity to basically design this weight room from scratch," Armstrong said. "To know that he was backing us the entire way put our minds at ease because we knew he wanted to get this done and he wanted to have a top-of-the-line facility, and that's definitely what it is. We are so fortunate to have it and so thankful to Dr. O'Malley to allow us to have this nice facility. I talk to Coach Slaughter and Coach Marlowe all the time about changing the culture, and the kids are really starting to buy in. The kids are super excited, and we just can't wait for big things to happen."

West Florence Varsity Boys Soccer Head Coach Billy Andrews has worked in education for more than four decades and said that the amount of change that has taken place in just a few years has been amazing. "All of the things that have been created for athletics in this school district over the last three years is something that I have never seen in my 44 years of teaching and coaching in Florence School District 1," Andrews said. "Thank you, Dr. O'Malley, for leading the way for our student-athletes."



BRAUSS RECEIVES FMU'S AAFSC DIVERSITY AWARD Submitted by FMU



Dr. Daniel Brauss

Dr. Daniel Brauss, assistant professor of Mathematics at Francis Marion University (FMU), received the FMU African-American Faculty and Staff Coalition's (AAFSC) Diversity Award at the organization's annual scholarship celebration.

The event was extra special because it marked the 25th anniversary of the AAFSC, an organization that supports and champions diversity on the FMU campus and beyond. It was unusual in that it was held in front of a small, socially distanced audience in Chapman

Auditorium, and no meal was served. The event was also live-streamed to friends and supporters of the coalition.

The AAFSC Diversity Award, given annually by the coalition, highlights the work of individuals who are dedicated to celebrating diversity and inclusiveness at FMU and beyond. Organizers noted Brauss' commitment to encouraging inclusivity, especially within the FMU student body.

Brauss is a native of St. Louis, Mo., who joined the FMU faculty in 2017. He received his Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering from Clemson University and his Ph.D. in computational and applied mathematics from Auburn University. Prior to becoming an FMU faculty member, Brauss was a lecturer at the University of Belize in Belmopan, Belize, and a visiting assistant professor at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.

The presentation of the Diversity Award was one of many highlights from the event. Recipients of AAFSC-sponsored scholarship were also recognized. WPDE ABC 15 reporter Tonya Brown was the master of

ceremonies, and FMU President Dr. Fred Carter lauded the group during brief remarks.

"This has been the toughest year in the history of the University, but the Coalition has been an important part in the cohesion that has held this University together," Carter said. "Not every university has a coalition."

Carter presented founding members of the AAFSC who were in attendance with a framed photograph of the commemorative campus plaque that honors the group's founding. He also announced that a new scholarship had been established in honor of AAFSC President Linda Sullen.

Sullen, a long-time employee in FMU's payroll department, is the current president of the AAFSC.

The AAFSC's scholarships are funded through donations to the AAFSC, as well as support from the Francis Marion University Education Foundation. The AAFSC funds named scholarships for Dr. Freda Campbell Wilson, Dr. Joseph E. Heyward, Dr. Leroy "Pete" Peterson, Rebecca Lunn, Dr. Dorothy Harris, and now Sullen.

The AAFSC was founded at FMU in 1995 to stimulate and enhance cultural awareness, and to promote professional development and welfare among faculty, staff and students.

The organization's goals include increasing morale, and communication among members; creating an atmosphere of community for FMU African-American faculty, staff and students; serving as a liaison between the administrative personnel of FMU and the African-American faculty and staff; and examining the university's efforts in recruitment and retention of African-American faculty and staff.

Past winners of the AAFSC Diversity Award included Dr. Rebecca Lawson, Dr. Louis Venters, Angela Crosland, Dr. Rhonda Brogdon, Yvonne Davis, Crystal Graham, Dr. Will Wattles, Dr. Jason Owens, Dr. Ruth Wittmann-Price, Dr. Shayna Wrighten and Dr. Erica James.

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FOUNDATION BOOSTS MEDICAL EDUCATION Submitted by FMU



The Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation is once again helping Francis Marion University broaden the scope and complexity of medical education programs throughout the Pee Dee region.

The Foundation, which has partnered with FMU on a number of important projects through the years, will give the University \$12.5 million—\$2.5 million each year for five years—to further the development of medical education programs and facilities in the region. The gift is tied to a new medical education consortium that includes FMU, the University of South Carolina and the Medical University of South Carolina.

The donation will also assist FMU in developing the former Circle Park facility on Cheves Street. The City of Florence purchased the building and land and conveyed it to FMU last year.

Dr. Fred Carter, FMU's president, lauded the transformative power of the new donation. "Dr. Eddie Floyd, Judge Haigh Porter and the other members of the Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation have been strong advocates of both FMU and our medical and health science programs over the past decade and a half," said Carter. "This is another example of their vision and staunch support. The education that young men and women will receive through these programs will change their lives. More importantly, it will change the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in this area who will see improved health care at all levels."

The Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit based in Florence. Its aim is to advance the general welfare of people in Florence and the surrounding region. The foundation supports a broad range of charitable purposes and is a long-time partner with FMU. University projects supported by the foundation in the past include the FMU Performing Arts Center, the Carter Center for Health Sciences, the Lee

Nursing Building, the Hugh and Jean Leatherman Medical Complex and annual nursing scholarships at the University. The foundation recently donated 148 acres to FMU as a site for its new environmental research facility and conference center.

Currently, FMU works with the University of South Carolina School of Medicine to bring third- and fourth-year medical school students to Florence to complete their education—primarily through clinical rotations with MUSC Regional Medical Center-Florence, McLeod Health and HopeHealth. The new consortium will increase the number of USC students, add MUSC medical students and work with regional hospitals to expand medical residency programs.

Planning for the development of the former Circle School and Circle Park facility will begin soon. Carter said construction at the Cheves Street site will depend heavily on legislative appropriations. "I know that (Senate Finance Committee) Chairman Hugh Leatherman, Representative Philip Lowe and the other members of our delegation are keenly interested in this effort and strongly supportive," said Carter. "We wouldn't be where we are without their support and leverage within the General Assembly."



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HGTC DISBURSING \$2.6 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR STUDENTS Submitted by HGTC



CONWAY – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is awarding nearly \$2.6 million in grant funding to students. These funds are part of the 2021 Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), which was enacted by Congress on Dec. 27 to provide

\$22.7 billion for institutions of higher education to lessen the economic hardships that COVID-19 has placed on students and their families.

Colleges and universities are required to use CRRSAA funding to provide grants to students for expenses related to disruptions to their education due to COVID-19, including things like tuition, fees, course materials and technology, as well as food, housing, healthcare and childcare.

One student that expressed appreciation for the funding is Kim Halterman, an associate in science major completing her degree online. “When I read the email from HGTC that I qualified for the emergency pandemic grant, my eyes filled with tears. It was the best news I had received in a very long time. Last year and this year so far have been the most difficult of my life as my family has dealt with much more than just the struggles caused by the pandemic,” said Halterman. “I still haven’t even looked to see the amount of the grant because it really doesn’t matter; however much it is, I am grateful beyond words. Thank you, HGTC.”

To be eligible for a COVID-19 Relief grant, students must meet the following criteria:

- Students must be enrolled at HGTC for the spring 2021 semester,

which includes any of the following: Full spring (January 11); Fast Forward I (January 11); and Fast Forward II and Flex Start (February 1) with Fast Forward II classes starting March 3.

- Students must also be Federal Title IV eligible with all requirements completed.

Individuals who are Federal Pell Grant recipients will receive a one-time grant of \$900. Those who are not Federal Pell Grant recipients will receive a one-time grant of \$400.

“We will use the same criteria to guide our grant awards process as we did in spring 2020 when we disbursed \$2.5 million in CARES Act funding to over 3,000 eligible students,” said HGTC President Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore. “We are expecting more students to receive funding with as many as 3,700 students eligible this year.”

Refunds will be processed with paper checks being mailed by Feb. 18 and direct deposits being deposited into bank accounts by Feb. 19. Questions regarding refunds should be directed to HGTC Student Accounts at StudentAccounts@hgtc.edu or 843-349-5310.

Students can check their WaveNet accounts to view award amounts and click https://www.hgtc.edu/current_students/covid-19/crrsaa-information.html for additional information.

About HGTC

HGTC offers college transfer and skilled associate degree programs in 70 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.

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www.HGTC.edu/HR

ARTFIELDS IS BACK!

Submitted by Roberta L. Burns, Marketing Manager



ArtFields 2021 will culminate with live music and fireworks on Finale Night, May 1, when the winners will be announced. Photo shows ArtFields 2015 Top Prize Winner Charles Anderson.

LAKE CITY—As the daffodils start blooming in downtown Lake City signaling the arrival of warm weather, artwork packages of all shapes and sizes signal the arrival of ArtFields—the South’s most diverse exhibition of visual art. Each year since 2013, as sure as the seasons change, ArtFields transforms Lake City into an art gallery with artwork placed in over 40 venues downtown, be it barber shops, clothing boutiques or restaurants.

This was until 2020, when something different arrived—COVID-19, and with it the cancellation of countless events, ArtFields included, and the closure of businesses to protect the health and safety of the community. The celebration of Southern artwork through the exhibition, student field trips, concerts, public art and people’s choice voting was sorely missed, but as hope springs eternal, ArtFields is back for 2021, opening April 23 and continuing through May 1. Masked-up, sanitized and socially distanced, the team and the town are ready to invite everyone to this year’s event.

“The last year has certainly put things in perspective and gives so much more meaning to the things we may have once taken for granted,” shares Director Jamison Mady Kerr. “Our volunteers, businesses and townspeople are more excited than ever to celebrate this year, and we are so eager to welcome artists and visitors back to Lake City!”



The design of ArtFields naturally encourages social distancing throughout our 40+ venues around town. Pictured is “Whom Do We Save?” by Melinda Hoffman during ArtFields 2019.

Indoor, outdoor, big and small...there’s a little bit of everything at ArtFields.

“The crux of the experience is in ‘meeting’ artwork for the first time!” explains Kyle C. Coleman, ArtFields fine art manager. “Step back, and take in the artwork. Step closer, and observe the details. Each individual may find aspects of artwork that no other person may notice.”

The range of the mediums isn’t the only thing that sets ArtFields apart. Artwork is hung outside of the traditional white walls of a gallery or museum. Do you need a morning coffee? Are you shopping for a gift? Is it time for your haircut? On the hunt for a new outfit? Picking up flowers for someone special? No matter what, you’ll see artwork in all these businesses and more. It’s the best of a shopping experience and art experience rolled into one.

“Guests can spend the entire day looking at the work, and they may find something interesting to purchase while they are at it,” says Operations Manager Helen Luna.

Plus, let your inner art critic shine, and vote on favorite pieces for the People’s Choice 2D and People’s Choice 3D awards. Pre-register to vote online, activate your voting capabilities in Lake City and then vote away to help determine who will take home \$12,500 each. A panel of art professionals selects the Grand Prize of \$50,000,



Art will be displayed indoors and outdoors throughout downtown Lake City. Pictured is “Passenger” by Andrew White during ArtFields 2019.

only be a spectator, but to be an active participant!”

But, wait, there’s more! ArtFields Jr. features nearly 200 artworks from talented South Carolina student artists. These pieces showcase the incredible talent from our youth as they compete for Student Choice and cash prizes. Visitors can also enjoy the Portrait Contest on April 24, Makers Market on April 24 and April 25 and Artist Talks on April 30, as well as numerous events hosted by businesses and community partners. The variety of not only the artwork, but also the special events, has kept ArtFields intriguing to visitors each year.

“ArtFields is really special because you see all types of artwork and experience so many creative events. With all there is to appreciate, it’s impossible not to walk away with a piece that completely moved you or an interaction that put a smile on your face,” says Roberta Burns, ArtFields marketing manager.

It’s those interactions that have helped ArtFields flourish in a small, Southern town. The event is so much more than just the staff working to pull it off. Each venue owner, vendor, artist, sponsor and volunteer is integral to achieving the “Christmas in April” type of feeling that descends on the town.

“Every year our guests tell us that our volunteers are what make the event special,” says Luna, a volunteer turned team member. “They really are good at making everyone feel welcome. The excitement that we all have for ArtFields is contagious, and people feel that energy and can’t help but enjoy themselves.”

While this event is best experienced in person during the nine days in Lake City, ArtFields is accessible to anyone with a computer. Every piece of competition artwork from adults and students is viewable online, complete with the artist’s statement and biography. By visiting the ArtFields website, everyone is able to experience the power of art whether travel is feasible or not. Virtual student field trips are also being offered to help students gain an understanding of and appreciation for the arts.

“We’re so fortunate that the design of this event was encouraging social distancing over our 68 acres of downtown before it was a necessity,” shares Burns. “However, we want to showcase the



Students can participate in virtual field trips during ArtFields 2021 or schedule their group of eight or more for an in-person experience.

Second Place of \$25,000 and five \$2,000 Merit Awards to round out the impressive prizes up for grabs.

“Voting for ArtFields is unique because two of our top prizes are selected solely by our visitors,” Luna continued. “This allows our guests to not

only be a spectator, but to be an active participant!”

immense talent displayed in this year’s group of artists regardless of travel ability, which is why our online gallery is more important this year than ever before.”

This year, join the celebration of

art in Lake City from April 23-May 1. When you get to town, stop by the Welcome Center at 110 East Main Street to pick up your field guide, and get the low-down on all things ArtFields. This contains an event schedule, map and comprehensive listing of all competition pieces. The Welcome Center also hosts the official ArtFields 2021 merchandise and friendly volunteers to help make your trip the best it can be!

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FORGING AHEAD TO INDEPENDENCE Submitted by SOS Care



Left to right: Sommer Bauerle, Melissa Goldfine and Garrett Seidman

CONWAY-Sommer Bauerle, Melissa Goldfine and Garrett Seidman are three young adults with autism who are currently completing internships with SOS Care, a non-profit direct service provider that empowers those with autism and intellectual disabilities to thrive on their own. SOS offers a range of programs, camps, activities and classes that teach the life and social

skills one needs to live as independently as possible.

Bauerle, 25, has attended numerous programs with SOS through the years and currently receives job-coaching services. She is employed with Ripley's Aquarium, where she serves donuts, drinks and ice cream to guests. Bauerle's goal is to be one of the next residents to move into Oak Tree Farm, an affordable housing community for adults with disabilities, currently being built by SOS Care. "When I'm at home, I am making mandalas out of paper tubes, seashell wreaths, drawing or painting pictures for card designs and knitting. In order to sell my artwork, I'm planning to open up an Etsy account or sell them at upcoming craft fairs." Bauerle is also looking for a more fulfilling job: "I'm researching for affordable in-person or online classes to become a veterinarian assistant."

Melissa Goldfine, 20, currently attends SOS Care's Independent Living, Recreation and Walking Clubs. Originally from New Jersey, Goldfine received her certificate in digital media technology from the County College of Morris before moving to South Carolina.

She loves to act, create videos and go to musicals. She plans to be Bauerle's roommate at Oak Tree Farm once construction is complete next year. Goldfine has been volunteering with SOS and says that this opportunity "is helping me prepare for a paying job that I will need in the future when I am living independently."

Goldfine and Bauerle are both interning as "Goodwill Ambassadors" at SOS. Goldfine says, "It is really a great pleasure to be volunteering at the SOS clinic in Murrells Inlet. One of my tasks is to create inspirational videos and cards based on weekly values with my co-worker, Sommer. These are sent out to SOS Care employees and volunteers to inspire them. It is helping me to get work experience in an office setting."

Bauerle says, "I've been doing videos with Melissa Joi by reciting inspirational quotes by famous people based on core values to support individuals with special needs so that they're not alone. Melissa and I design cards to appreciate and congratulate future SOS employees based on core values."

Garrett Seidman, 26, attends SOS Care's Independent Living and Recreation Clubs. He is also receiving job-coaching services from SOS. Seidman is an artist, and one of his goals is to have his artwork become better known through social media. He has drawn artwork that is currently being used by SOS on "thank you" notes. Seidman is interning with SOS and working with Justin, the technical support specialist. "Before I moved to South Carolina, I had a job as a QA tester for a gaming company. I had to leave my job when we moved here. My mentor, Justin, is teaching me data entry and some new computer skills so I can achieve employment someplace that utilizes computers. I am excited about the prospect of a new job."

Bauerle, Goldfine and Seidman are gaining valuable skills that will help them achieve their future goals of independence.

TOPGOLF

SOS Care & Pyle Financial
**TopGolf Charity
Tournament**

Presented by **CAROLINA
HOLDINGS
GROUP**

Monday, April 26th
@ 12PM

We invite you to join us for an afternoon at TopGolf to benefit SOS Care, a local non-profit who answers the call for help for people with autism & intellectual disabilities.

Event Schedule

Registration & Lunch: 12:00-12:45pm
Presentation & Rules: 12:45-1:00pm
Golf Play: 1:00-3:30pm
Silent Auction: 12:00-3:00pm
Closing & Awards: 3:30pm

Register and Pay Online
bit.ly/sosgolf2021

Location
TopGolf Myrtle Beach
2850 Robert Grissom Pkwy
Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

sos care
Autism & Intellectual Disability Services

PYLE
FINANCIAL SERVICES

DIVERSITYWORKS
SC

PACING 4 PIECES 2021 Submitted by All 4 Autism



Left to right: Jessica Brown, Francois Barcomb and Amy Pennington

When life throws you lemons, you make lemonade. I don't think anyone knew what fundraising would look like this year due to the pandemic. As a nonprofit organization, we did not know what to expect. We were hoping that it would be all behind us within the year. However, life happens, and you have to roll with the punches. Questions started to spiral in our minds. Would we receive the same amount of support? Would the participants even enjoy a virtual race? Exactly what is a virtual race? All of these questions brought us back to our foundational verse, Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

This race was God's vision that he prepared in advance for us to do. Why did we doubt? If we truly believed God prepared it, we would be willing to be the hands and feet to make it happen. After looking into virtual events, we realized that there were several positives. Participants could get together anywhere, even in the convenience of their own neighborhoods. It also allowed people to participate from other locations. We had participants in Texas and even as far as California, all honoring people they knew on the Autism Spectrum. What a site to be a part of! We did realize that some of our participants didn't want to come up with a route or have an idea of where to begin. That is when our organization decided to come up with a suggested route that



Left to right: Ryder, Billy and Abbi Gibbs

would allow people to come out if they felt comfortable. We were able to give a suggested route behind Naturally Outdoors that included Florence's beautiful rail trail along with a time frame to participate. This allowed people to be able to join in and keep a safe distance.


On March 13 we were able to gather and participate in a sweet and enjoyable walk/run. We had over 330 people register for the event, and about 100 of those participants showed up in waves for the suggested route. Each participant that signed up, along with the unbelievable sponsors, has a special place in our hearts. Happy tears filled our eyes each time a participant or sponsor decided to support us. It meant even more during such a difficult year. We cannot thank them enough. Believing in us and showing us that even when hard times come our way we will not be forgotten means more to us than you know. It was a beautiful day full of blessings and sunshine. We are looking



Left to right: Raleigh, Brian, Ronan and Amy Crisp

forward to next year's race, which will be held on Saturday, March 12, 2022. Be sure to save the date.

For more information about this organization please visit: all4autism.org.



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BE A HERO FOR AUTISM



Jon, age 3

AUTISM SPEAKS™



COLLABORATION IS KEY TO CARE

by Anna Bowman



Jennifer Harvey

Jennifer Harvey always knew she was destined to be a nurse. After all, in some way so to speak, it was the family business. Following in the footsteps of her mother, Jane Smith, and aunt, both nurses, Harvey proudly professed, “Nursing is in my DNA!”

Harvey’s 18-year career as a nurse (16 years as a labor and delivery nurse) has been nothing short of amazing. “As a labor and

delivery nurse, I’ve shared in some of the happiest moments of a woman’s life!” But, in her current position as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) nurse, she shares what could be one of the worst moments in a person’s life.

For the past two years, Harvey has been the SANE program coordinator for the Pee Dee Forensic Nurses under the umbrella of Durant Children’s Center (DCC) and the Pee Dee Coalition. As a SANE nurse, she is certified (trained) in an area of nursing that provides trauma-informed forensic evidence collection for acute sexual assaults for the pediatric and adolescent victims. As a certified SANE nurse with the agency she is responsible for performing sexual assault forensic examinations for sexually assaulted victims.

Unlike other emergency medical providers who busily tend to multiple types of patients every day, SANE nurses devote time exclusively to survivors, often spending three or more hours one-on-one with an individual. The time-consuming, in-depth nature of their work is part of why they receive special training to treat survivors of sexual assault.

SANE nurses must be extra compassionate and patient beyond the standard of a good bedside manner. They are taught to be supportive and sensitive but professional to be there for a patient emotionally while also treating any physical injuries and collecting evidence.

As the program coordinator, Harvey is responsible for the management of a team of nurses, which includes continuing education and training for them, peer review and being a resource

for them 24/7 while they are on call. She is also responsible for maintaining relationships with community partners. “We work directly with all area law enforcement agencies, local hospitals, DSS, the solicitor’s offices and other medical professionals. Fostering these relationships is so important to provide the best possible outcomes for our victims. Collaboration is key when it comes to caring for our victims.”

Harvey, who is also responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the forensic nursing program, knows how important it is to provide education to partners in the community and participate in multiple teams that also provide services to our victims.

Most of the referrals for acute exams come from the local hospitals and law enforcement agencies. However, her agency is also contacted by DSS, pediatricians, Pee Dee Coalition and many other agencies in need of direction. The Pee Dee Forensic Nurses provide 24-hour care for victims and community partners. Aside from forensic evidence collection, Harvey is a resource to these agencies as well. “I often get calls asking for guidance on anything related to the sexual assault process,” she said.

Harvey said that she is often asked, “How do you do what you do?” And she said her best answer is, “I know that I am providing the best care possible for that patient. As a forensically-trained and trauma-informed provider, I can give the patient/victim the best possible care that is available to them.” Additionally, she said, “I treat all of my patients with the utmost respect and dignity that they deserve. I have three daughters, and the care I provide to all of my patients is at the level that I would want my own to be cared for.”

Forensic nursing is not for everyone. “It is a field that we often have nurses think they are interested in pursuing, and after they get their feet wet, they realize that it is not for them,” said Harvey. “Self-care is a HUGE part of this job. You must know your limits. You must have an outlet, someone to talk to and debrief. You must take care of you first or you won’t be able to provide the best possible care for your patients and their families.”

Jennifer and Brian Harvey are the parents of daughters, Addison (12), Blythe (11) and Malorie (10). She received her bachelor’s in speech language pathology from Columbia College and her ADN in nursing from Florence Darlington Technical College, and she will receive her Master of Nursing this month and will become a family nursing practitioner.

“One in six women will be a victim of sexual assault in her lifetime...”



EMPOWERING CLIENTS AFFECTED BY SEXUAL ASSAULT by Ta'Meeka Epps



Wendy Charles

is an annual campaign that seeks to shine a light on sexual assault and the issues surrounding sexual harassment and abuse.

The Pee Dee Coalition, serving eight South Carolina counties, is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to the reduction of sexual assault, family violence and child abuse, and to the needs of its victims. It is the belief of the Pee Dee Coalition that the aforementioned concern the total community--not only women, not only service providers, but all who value the basic human desire to be free from physical threat and harm.

The Pee Dee Coalition of Marion County answers crisis calls time and time again and continuously strives to bring awareness and prevention to the community. The Marion County Volunteer and Community Education coordinator, Wendy Charles is one of the many serving in the trenches.

Charles was a volunteer with the Pee Dee Coalition of Marion County in 2017, and in March of 2019 she became the coordinator. Her primary duties are to recruit and place volunteers where they

MARION - Sexual assault is defined as "an illegal sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent or is inflicted upon a person who is incapable of giving consent (as because of age or physical or mental incapacity) or who places the assailant (such as a doctor) in a position of trust or authority" (Merriam-Webster). April 2021 marks twenty years of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). SAAM

are needed while providing community education on the interpersonal violence issues that exist in Marion County. Charles, along with the Coalition, work closely with other service providers in the area to ensure clients receive the most up-to-date information and resources available.

For SAAM, the Pee Dee Coalition is using the theme "KnowMore" and will focus on how recent changes to everyday life have changed the ways we combat issues of abuse and/or assault. The Coalition will focus on providing information on the issues most relative today, like online safety, mental health, virtual signs of abuse, and how to find outside support in isolated environments. The Marion County staff will be contributing education primarily on the topic of online safety.

Charles and the team of dedicated volunteers empower their clients by providing individualized services, giving each person exactly what they need. "Every client is different and may need something different. There are people who simply need advice on where to go or how to fill out paperwork. Then there are those who need immediate shelter or a hospital forensic interview," Charles explained. "Our most important job is being there and helping clients overcome the many challenges and barriers that accompany assault. We are there for them, and we help guide them on their journey to healing."

For more information about the work being done through the Volunteer and Community Education division, visit www.peedeecoalition.org. You may also find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PeeDeeCoalition. Private Facebook groups are available for each county.

Pee Dee Coalition is a member of the United Way.

WORKING TOGETHER TO RAISE AWARENESS by Adalia Ellis



Savannah Wright

educate boys and men about consent?

SW- With boys and younger children, have conversations about safe touch and boundaries. Oftentimes when people ask, "How do we teach our boys about consent?" they want to know how to teach boys to respect and honor consent from others. A good thing to remember is that boys and girls both experience sexual assault, so when we address the topic of consent with young boys, it is important they also understand their own power to give consent. For men, it is imperative they have conscious conversations with partners before engaging in or pursuing a sexual relationship. Consent cannot be given when someone is intoxicated or coerced, and consent cannot be given by minors. It is about having honest conversations with those with whom you choose to be intimate.

DW - How can boys and men help to prevent sexual assault?

SW - Don't be a bystander! If you see something that looks suspicious or dangerous, intervene or call for help. Talk with friends about consent and the ways in which consent is given and violated. If you are not sure if you have consent, you don't have it.

DW- How often do females and males experience sexual assault? (RAINN.org)

SW - Every 73 seconds an American is sexually assaulted. These

Sexual Assault Awareness month is a campaign that aims to increase awareness about the causes and risk factors for sexual assault and to empower individuals to take steps to prevent it in their communities. Our interview with Savannah Wright, director of Communication for the Pee Dee Coalition, informs us of ways that our community can work together to reduce and, ultimately eliminate, sexual assault.

DW - What are the best ways to

are reported cases, and we know that cases are underreported. On average, there are 433,648 victims (age 12 or older) of rape and sexual assault each year in the United States. One out of every 10 rape victims is male, and one out of every six women has experienced sexual assault in her lifetime.

DW - What are resources parents can use to educate their children about sexual assault?

SW - Pee Dee Coalition has education for parents, as do most state and national agencies. RAINN and SCCADVASA both have great toolkits for parents. It is important for parents to teach children about their personal safety as well as their responsibility to respect others' boundaries and right to consent.

DW - What are the causes and risk factors for sexual assault?

SW - Oftentimes, the risk comes from being a victim. Those who experience assault are more likely to commit abuse or assault themselves, and they are sometimes more likely to be victimized again. Substance abuse, mental health problems and socioeconomic stressors may also result in more risk for sexual assault (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>).

DW - What are the best ways to prevent sexual assault?

SW - There are many ways in which prevention can be successful. Teach children and young ones about their own personal body safety and that others have the same right to such boundaries. Understanding the importance of intervention (not being a bystander) should be a basic foundation of learning. Taking part in community programs, (such as round table discussions on campus or participating in webinars) also helps to better understand different aspects of assault, especially on a community/local level. Join groups and pages online where content about assault is shared (like our Pee Dee Coalition Facebook page), and talk with friends about how you can prevent sexual assault as a community. By inviting others to be aware and educated, you are creating a positive culture and space around the topics, making it easier for people to get information and to speak

WORKING TOGETHER CONT'D

out about their own experiences

(<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/prevention.html>).

DW - How can social media be used to raise awareness and support?

SW - Facebook and social media are invaluable avenues for education, support and awareness. We relied on these channels heavily before COVID, but after shutdowns and stay-at-home orders, we started to really depend on online platforms to distribute information. The value in these platforms is partially in the free exchange of resources and information, but it is also extremely powerful in the sense of support. Survivors and victims alike can turn to social media to talk about their experiences and interact with others who have endured similar challenges. It is a way to connect advocates, survivors and victims, agencies and nonprofits, and even trends. A great example of trends was the #MeToo movement. Users were able to use a hashtag to be a part of a bigger conversation, and the participation from all over the world created a level of awareness that led to action. Furthermore, many people are hesitant to reach out for help from law enforcement or even organizations, and that fear does not seem to exist quite as much online. We see a great number of people who confide in online spaces who otherwise might not seek help. For many suffering from abuse, online spaces offer a more personal and less intimidating path to healing.

There are numerous ways to stand with sexual assault survivors and support those who provide vital services to victims and survivors. #KnowMore is the theme for April for the Pee Dee Coalition and the United Way, of which they are a member. The intention is to educate the community about both sexual assault and child abuse. They will be sharing content throughout April on their website www.peedeecoalition.org/KnowMore as well as on their Facebook and YouTube social media pages.

You can raise awareness and funds by participating in the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes®, the International Men's March to Stop Rape, Sexual Assault & Gender Violence (www.walkamileinher shoes.org); by participating in Denim Day on April 28; or by making a monetary gift to the Pee Dee Coalition.

If you or someone you know needs to receive crisis support, please call the Pee Dee Coalition crisis line: 1-800-273-1820 or 843-669-4600.

HEALING IS A SAFE JOURNEY!

by Jennifer Robinson



Jennifer Robinson

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) is an annual campaign to raise public awareness every April about sexual assault to educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence. Together, we can work to further reduce, with the goal to eliminate, sexual assault from the armed forces.

Our military is the most trusted institution in America and our service members have signed a blank check to the American people, payable with their lives. You can stand with sexual assault survivors and raise awareness and funds

by participating in the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes® and by participating in Denim Day on April 28 or by making a gift to a local sexual abuse prevention or healing organization.

What often does not get discussed is the healing process that many survivors of sexual abuse have to go through after they experience abuse or assault. Healing is not monolithic. What many survivors have to face are triggers from their incidences, which

include continued harassment from their offenders, recurring nightmares, health issues and mental problems. Each person who has experienced trauma has to choose his or her course of healing. However, most courses of healing include reliving painful trauma experiences. Revisiting these experiences sometimes hinders the healing process, but more often than not, most survivors move through the journey with strong support systems.

What does the healing journey look like? Well, once again, it is not monolithic. There are templates that people can use, but many choose paths that help them to be successful based on their own strengths. The theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month this year is "Protecting Our People Protects Our Mission." Protecting survivors mean providing them the resources needed to get the assistance for healing. Most survivors need:

- **Support**- Personal and group support provides the encouragement survivors need to move forward on their journeys. Survivors need to be believed, given affirmations and shown love.

- **Resources**- It is not easy to ask for help, especially when you believe you may be judged for doing so. They need help with mental and emotional recovery.

Though sexual abuse is a traumatic and life-altering experience, recovery is possible. A compassionate therapist can often help those who have experienced rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Self-care and social support can also be vital to recovery.

THERAPY FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT AND ABUSE

There are many types of therapy that can treat sexual abuse survivors. A therapist can assess a person's situation and determine which treatments are most appropriate. In some cases, a therapist may use a combination of strategies.

The following therapeutic approaches are commonly used in treating sexual abuse:

- **Depth therapy** focuses on a person's unconscious thoughts, feelings and memories. In therapy, a person can learn how his or her unconscious emotions affect conscious behaviors. As self-awareness increases, a person can learn to recognize and change problematic behaviors.

- **Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy (EMDR)** uses subtle eye movements to help "rewire" the brain. EMDR can change the way the survivor processes the memory of the abuse. This way, the memory feels less present and threatening.

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** can teach survivors to abandon dysfunctional thinking patterns and behaviors. In therapy, survivors may work on reducing anxiety through mindfulness exercises.

- **Play therapy** can help young children who have encountered sexual abuse. Young children may not understand what happened or be able to articulate their feelings. Play therapy can help children express their emotions and help them process difficult memories (www.goodtherapy.org).

Healing takes time. There are some steps that may make the journey easier. The first step is to talk about what happened to you. It is challenging to think about the trauma experienced, but for many, simply revealing this information is a major first step to healing. The next step on the journey is to cope with feelings of guilt or shame. Being assaulted is never the fault of the victim. Reassuring survivors reminded them they are important and are not responsible for what happened to them. Survivors must next prepare for flashbacks and triggers. Assaults occur with various circumstances surrounding them. Therefore, upsetting memories may happen at any moment. People should be sensitive to those who experience flashbacks by offering comfort. And finally, survivors must stay connected and must nurture themselves. It is a myth that self-care is selfish. Survivors should have access to self-care strategies to help them find balance. Honoring the healing journey is necessary to protecting survivors and to the mission of battling sexual violence. We must raise awareness about sexual violence and then share the resources available to help people to fight for their lives and their survivorship.

OVERCOMING SEXUAL ASSAULT

Submitted by Joyce Ford, Executive Director, The Naomi Project



Joyce Ford

Sexual assault is a serious issue, especially in these unprecedented times. However, all hope is not lost. Those who have suffered sexual assault at the hands of others can leave this situation feeling hopeless with no future. We often hear of those who have lost their lives, and the negative effects left on the families and their children. Yet, we should also bring focus to those who are survivors: the strong women and their children who were able to overcome this assault.

I was called to the hospital on a domestic case, and once I got there, I met with a young lady who stated that she wanted to get out of her marriage. She explained that she met her husband when she was 13. He controlled and manipulated her for the past 10 years. She stated that he never let her out of his sight, and if he did, his mother would watch her. She was anxious because she knew if she didn't get back to the emergency room within a certain amount of time, she would be beaten. We contacted the hospital police and the city police for support. Once they got there, they escorted her back to the emergency room area. We put a plan together to get her out of the room

with the abuser. The nurse announced that everyone other than the patient needs to go to the waiting room. Once she got out of the room, the police escorted her to their car to take her to the shelter. She said on the way that she could not leave her son. He was with her sister-in-law. While we were trying to figure out how to get her son, her sister-in-law came in the emergency room with him. The police drove her around to the emergency room to get her son and take them to safety. The next day I went to see her to find out what the emergency was because she had been there 10 years. She said that her husband took her in the hallway at the hospital and raped her. He has raped her since she was 13.

We were able to contact the young lady's father, who lived in another state. We arranged for them to reunite. She recently reached out to me and informed me that she enrolled in a nursing program, married a man who loves her and her son and is expecting her second child. She also speaks to small groups about overcoming sexual assault.

In this world of "everybody stay in their own lane," can we afford to? No, let's get busy, and get involved.



NO LONGER SILENT

Submitted by Latoya Johnson McRae, Author, Certified Life Coach, Motivational Speaker



Latoya Johnson McRae

April is the 20th anniversary of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). Every 98 seconds an American is sexually assaulted. Sexual violence happens in every community and affects people from all walks of life.

Forms of sexual violence may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Rape or sexual assault
- Child sexual assault and incest
- Sexual assault by a person's spouse or partner
- Unwanted sexual contact/touching
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Nonconsensual image sharing

As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, I know firsthand the lasting imprint sexual violence leaves on someone's life. That impact can affect their self-esteem, decision making skills and their ultimate goals in life.

Unfortunately, when a child is exposed and introduced to a concept before maturity, it can bring along many confusing arrays. For instance, a child cannot verbally articulate emotions, which is the reason his or her abuser can use fear as a tactic to keep him or her quiet. For many years, fear silenced me.

After many years of brokenness and hurt, I decided to take my power back. I turned pain into purpose. Healing had begun. May 2020, I published "Rubies: 40 Promises for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse" through Lincross Publishing.



"Rubies" is a faith-based journal that provides inspiration to survivors of

sexual abuse and offers an outlet to reflect on their own experiences while using scriptural references to aid in a healthy healing process.

Prayer and therapeutic journaling has been a vital source in my healing process.

Why journaling?

Journaling is therapeutic because it helps you understand your internal experience and allows you to express your thoughts and feelings.

How can meditating on scriptures help?

As you begin to meditate and pray the scriptures, you will begin to hear and see the truth of God's word. Your heart will slowly, but surely, find a transformative healing within the word and the process of journaling.

In the book, I share my own experiences, including a defining moment in my healing journey, becoming a kidney donor for my sister at 30. I share my healing process to encourage the readers to gain control over their emotional and mental health, as it relates to childhood trauma.

I believe there are extreme circumstances in life that time alone cannot heal.

Empowering women to heal!

In honor of the 20th anniversary of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), survivors in the Pee Dee region can receive a free copy of "Rubies."

Sexual assault does not discriminate. It may impact people of all genders, sexual orientations, races, cultures, social statuses and economic backgrounds. It does not matter what form of sexual violence the reader has experienced. This book can be used as a resource in their healing journey. Sometimes life deals us an unfair hand. Your story may not be my story. However, my challenge to you is to extend grace to your family members, friends, colleagues and strangers. You never know what battle someone is fighting. Following are some things to consider:

1. Be kind and gentle in what you say and how you say it.
2. Simple acts of kindness go along way.
3. Everyone deserves to have a bad day. Don't take it

NO LONGER SILENT CONT'D

personal.

McRae, a graduate of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, began volunteering in college and has a passion for helping and uplifting others. She resides in Dillon with her husband, Dr. Michael McRae, and their three children.

Do you know anyone who would benefit from a copy of "Rubies"? Please visit www.latoyajohnsonmcrae.com. Fill out the information form with survivor's name and address. Please allow 14 business days to receive your book.

HELPING OTHERS GROW FROM VICTIM TO SURVIVOR by Ta'Meeka Epps



Pamela Prince

DARLINGTON-

The Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault (PDC) of Darlington County is dedicated to the reduction of sexual assault, family violence and child abuse and to meeting the needs of the victims. At the PDC, workers witness firsthand the hurt, disappointment, fear and frustration

individuals and families face when trying to regain control of their lives after abuse. They strive to do everything within their power to assist during recovery while empowering the individual to become a survivor.

Pamela Prince has been in the employ of the Pee Dee Coalition for 13 1/2 years. She has always served in the capacity of services coordinator for Darlington County and has served as the Department of Social Services liaison and as the Outreach and Training coordinator 4th Judicial Circuit.

Her responsibilities range from victim advocacy; hospital, court and legal accompaniment; referrals to community partners; resource procurement; providing community education and awareness on domestic and sexual violence; in-service trainings to professionals, churches and other groups; and management of the Darlington County team (which includes the trauma counselor and the volunteer coordinator).

During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, the campaign



1 out of every 6

American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime.

aims to increase awareness about the causes and risk factors for sexual assault, in addition to empower individuals to take steps to prevent it in their communities. Education and access to needed resources about sexual assault is pivotal to the work being done at the PDC to eliminate abuse.

Pamela Prince serves because of the example she saw her parents live. She is a preacher's kid, or "PK." Through the lifelong work of Pastor/Elder Nathaniel W. McDonald and Elder Ernestine F. McDonald, her mother and father, Prince saw firsthand the effect of authentic service. "I saw true ministry unfold as they worked and served those in need, often giving of themselves and out of our needs to help God's people. Their examples of ministry/service have been my inspiration and driving force behind my work and my passion. I am, because of who they are," Prince explained.

Prince served many years in the church as associate minister, youth leader/mentor/instructor, Praise and Worship leader and choir member. Her faith helps fuel her work with the vulnerable, those who have been victimized and need to see God in someone willing to help them grow from victim to survivor.

Prince believes the church must take a stronger stand when it comes to education and bringing about awareness to sexual assault and violence. She explained, "For many leaders, the topic of sexual violence is uncomfortable and is often avoided and/or even ignored. If leaders are hesitant and unwilling to address such a serious issue, what hope does that leave for the victims who often suffer in silence because of the 'taboo' associated with sexual violence? The Bible says in Hosea 4:6, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.' Some of the leaders who are reluctant to deal with the issue of sexual assault and abuse do so because they lack the needed training and or understanding of the issue."

Survivors of sexual assault and abuse may face significant challenges on their journey to overcoming the traumas brought on by the abuse. The work of Prince and the volunteers at the Pee Dee Coalition is invaluable to not only bringing about awareness but also prevention. For more information visit www.peedeecoalition.org.



"But she was flirting with him."

"Did you see what she was wearing?"

"Well... she was drunk."

There is no excuse for sexual assault

SUPPORT CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION by Anna Bowman



Teavis V. Young

KINGSTREE- Teavis V. Young is a trauma counselor/advocate with the Pee Dee Coalition, satellite site in Williamsburg County for the past four years, where she works with vulnerable adults and abused children.

As an advocate, Young individually counsels victims of domestic, sexual and child abuse alongside their families as well as in support groups. She conducts the initial intake process with the client and coordinates services as needed. "I provide individual crisis and support group counseling in which I utilize a Trauma-Informed Method," she said. This type of counseling uses evidence-based and best practice treatment models to directly address the impact of trauma on an individual's life and to facilitate trauma recovery. As a follow-up approach, Young contacts the victim and schedules an appointment to collect an updated analysis. "I schedule life and activity skill sessions with students based on their plan of care," she said.

Young is profoundly aware of the negative impact child abuse can have on a child's life. "Children are shaped by their earliest experiences and relationships. They need to be in a safe, stable, nurturing environment with healthy relationships with family members that promote lifelong learning and success." Identifying symptoms of child abuse in its earliest stages is extremely important, and this is the reason why having April designated as Child Abuse Prevention Month is a great opportunity for individuals and community members to learn about signs of child abuse and how to prevent it. Communities can come together to support families and children by making sure children have safe, stable, nurturing relationships because it does not take a person having a degree to help--only the desire to make a positive change in a child's life.

As a trauma counselor, Young works with school-age students from elementary school through high school, alongside with Vocational Rehabilitation, Williamsburg County DSS, mental health, local law enforcement, as well as other local agencies, in a quest to make aware of the plight of child abuse within the community. But she stressed that the entire community could support Child Abuse Prevention Month by attending local child abuse prevention events, joining in and helping with a fundraising campaign, wearing blue to support (victims and survivors), raising awareness on social media and always remembering to donate.

Young is elated with the new Satellite Crisis Center, which was opened in Williamsburg County. "I can conduct personal and intimate sessions without being interrupted," she said. "It is my job to accommodate my clients and ensure that they feel safe because safety is the key to successful counseling."

As a counselor, Young said she is gratified when she guides clients through personal challenges and sees the emotional burdens eradicated. "The strategies that I implement help to ease the emotional burdens, and the clients are empowered to achieve a healthier way of thinking," she said. "I strongly feel that with a new mindset, clients will be much more inclined to make healthier choices and decisions."

A resident of Williamsburg County, Young attended Williamsburg Technical College and earned an associate of arts degree in general studies. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in social work from Limestone College and a Master of Arts in counseling from Webster University. She is also certified as a Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) and a Human Services Board-Certified Practitioner (HS-BCP).



MAKING SURE FAMILIES ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

Submitted by Sarah Sweeney, Outreach Coordinator



Meg Temple, Executive Director

Hearing your child has been abused is something no parent wants to go through, but that's exactly the situation that Emily found herself in when her daughter was physically abused. When she was referred to the CARE House of the Pee Dee, Emily was scared and didn't know what to expect. After their first appointment, all of her reservations disappeared, and she noticed that her daughter's defenses came down as well.

Emily and her daughter began therapy at the CARE House and each week, Emily's daughter would learn coping skills to help her heal from the abuse. "After my daughter would leave the session, I would talk to the counselor about ways I could help her cope," said Emily. "During that time at the CARE House, we learned to thrive with whatever life throws at us."

Emily saw weekly improvements in her daughter, and then in herself, and especially in their relationship. "Even to this day, instead of me asking her how her day at school went and her just saying 'fine,' my daughter opens up and uses words she learned from her counselor at the CARE House," Emily shared.

"I didn't think anything like this could ever happen in my little world, and I completely shut down. I was in a really dark place and never thought I would get

through it. The 'what ifs' were ruling my world," Emily stated. The healing didn't come right away though. "But the CARE House staff really helped me get through that, and I feel I am stronger, and my daughter is stronger because of it."

"I guess the rainbow after the storm is that I became a better mom working through the trauma," Emily said. "I am forever grateful for everything the CARE House did. I hate that we had to go through all of that, but I am better because of it now." Emily is a strong mom who knew that her child needed the help, hope and healing that CARE House offers.

Emily and her daughter are just two



CARE House offers therapy backed by science. The therapies are typically geared towards healing from trauma.

clients whose lives were changed through the CARE House.

CARE House of the Pee Dee is a children's advocacy center (CAC) located in Florence that has helped over 8,500 abused children across the Pee Dee region. CARE House opened in 2005 when local leaders saw a need for a facility to provide help, hope and healing to victims of child abuse and maltreatment. CARE House is a safe place where children and their families can come after a reported allegation of abuse.

Often called "one stop shops" for child abuse, CACs offer investigative services on behalf of law enforcement and DSS. CARE House provides forensic



If you would like to support CARE House of the Pee Dee, go to thecarehouse.com to donate and help child abuse victims.

interviews, medical exams, counseling services and advocacy. A forensic interview is a non-leading conversation between the child and a trained interviewer. It is recorded for court purposes, and involved agencies can watch live. The forensic medical exam is a head-to-toe exam to ensure the wellbeing of the child that is completed by Dr. Foxworth, a pediatrician who specializes in forensic medical exams. Foxworth performs all medical exams and testifies in court. CARE House also provides multiple types of trauma-focused therapies that have solid evidence backing their effectiveness. Advocacy is the final piece of CARE House's services, and it serves to coordinate, monitor and facilitate each step of the process, ensuring each child and family has a support system.

Though the pandemic had reported cases of abuse dropping across the nation, CARE House staff worked to ensure that families like Emily's were not forgotten. CARE House conducted over 640 interviews in 2020 and provided over 1200 counseling sessions, both in person and via tele-health.

CARE House is located at 1920 Second Loop Road in Florence. For more information on CARE House of the Pee Dee, go to thecarehouse.com.



We all play a role in the healthy development of our community's children.



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH



DON'T LET UNDERAGE DRINKING



RUIN YOUR PROM



843-665-9349
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Funded through a Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the DHHS

DON'T LET THIS RUIN YOUR PROM Submitted by Triza Cox, CPS, MFA, Coordinator, Community Services



The spring of 2021 hopefully ushers in brighter days for our community as we slowly begin to return to some sense of normalcy. Many people are venturing out to travel, shop and enjoy available eating out and social activities, albeit with more public health precautions. For high school students the milestone celebrations such as graduation and prom are resuming at many local schools. Like all community members, we share in the exuberance of these events, but we also want to bring awareness to age-old threats to the happiness and wellness of youth. Specifically, underage drinking has been a danger for young people for several generations, but in the aftermath of the social isolation of the pandemic shut down, many young people may be even more vulnerable.

In addition to the loss of life and devastation of COVID-19, the virus also posed an insidious mental health threat. The anxiety and depression due to the pandemic increased substance abuse rates astronomically. Alcohol became a drug of choice for many people who were self-medicating to cope with the crisis. The national data shows an increase in alcohol online sales of 29-291 percent from March 2020 through June 2020. Drug and alcohol agencies across the country began to worry that the large amount of available alcohol would become a risk

for underage drinking. In addition to availability of alcohol, many parents began to allow their adolescents to drink at home during the shutdown, according to a brief presented by The Journal of Adolescent Health. The article discussed how before the pandemic no parents reported allowing adolescent children to consume alcohol, but during the spring of 2020, one in six parents allowed their children to drink.

The trends of increased alcohol availability and parental permission of underage drinking are disturbing when we consider the health risks and consequences with underage drinking as identified by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention:

- School problems, such as higher absence and poor or failing grades
- Social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in youth activities
- Legal problems, such as arrest for driving or physically hurting someone while drunk



DON'T LET THIS CONT'D

- Physical problems, such as hangovers or illnesses
- Unwanted, unplanned and unprotected sexual activity
- Disruption of normal growth and sexual development
- Physical and sexual assault
- Higher risk for suicide and homicide
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional injuries, such as burns, falls and drowning
- Memory problems
- Misuse of other drugs
- Changes in brain development that may have life-long effects
- Death from alcohol poisoning

Upon review of these problems, the short term and long-term risks of underage drinking prove to be not worth the choice of youth consumption.

In order to minimize the potential dangers and consequences involved with underage drinking during the prom season, Circle Park Behavioral Health Services and the Florence County Coalition for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention, along with local law enforcement agencies, have joined forces to support the "Don't Let Underage Drinking Ruin Your Prom" Campaign. This campaign emphasizes that it is illegal if you are under the age of 21 to purchase, possess or consume alcoholic beverages.

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



THROUGH THE EYES OF BAM

by De'Angela Haynes



Tammie Pough

LAKE CITY-Tammie Pough, LMSW, is a new author with her newly released book, "Through the Eyes of BAM." "Through the Eyes of BAM" is a story Pough tells through her son's eyes. She gives reflections on his life from birth until his passing. She reflects on when she was a young, single parent and some of the struggles in which she had to endure. As a clinical social worker, she has been trained in the areas of

individuals, families and groups as it relates to the social environment. She now has a better understanding of the importance of the first connection between a mother and a child.

After she lost her son, Dayshawn Laron Washington, to an

unintentional accidental death of opioids, Pough established the BAM Foundation, LLC. Educational and consulting services are offered for those who are victims of opioid, abuse, alcohol and substance abuse in order to bring awareness. This foundation is all about bringing awareness to individuals, families, schools, churches, local businesses and organizations of all cultural and ethnic groups. The vision for the BAM Foundation, LLC is changing lives by

connecting those that are victims of opioid abuse, alcohol, and other substance-related abuse issues through counseling, educating, consulting and linking to the necessary resources to sustain sobriety. Pough's community involvement includes: BAM Foundation, LLC founder/director; Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.; various ministries at the St. Mark Believers Holiness Church; and board member of the Power Ministries Inc. of Lake City. Her internships are: HopeHealth Behavioral Health Services, McLeod Hospice and Fresenius Medical Care. She is a member of the National Association of Social Work (NASW), and her vision is to own a therapeutic private practice specializing in family therapy. Her "why" is that it was always a dream of hers to become an author, but she had not imagined that through the tragedy of losing her son, it would result in her birthing the gift to write. She would have to give credit to her faith in God and through him being a part of my church community early on was the stepping stone.

Pough started out working in the church in various ministries, and her first writing project was the church newsletter and learning about the Ministry of Helps. She also credits being fortunate to working and serving in the field of social work and gaining the clinical experience to work with many individuals, families that have behavioral and mental health issues. When her son passed away, she wanted to share his story, her story, their story in hopes to help others that were struggling in the areas of single parenting, addictions and family pathologies that may have been passed down from generation to generation. Pough also wanted to bring more awareness to the stigma attached to mental health and getting people more open to seeking out assistance for help. We need to be healed in the mind, body and soul.

Tammie Pough resides in Lake City with her husband Alexander Pough. They have four children: Dayshawn Washington (deceased), Natasia Pough, Najee Pough and Asia Sapp. They also have nine grandchildren. Pough is a behavioral health consultant at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence. She obtained her undergraduate degree from Coker College in Hartsville and her master's of social work from the University of South Carolina in Columbia. She has a certificate in primary care behavioral health from UMASS Medical School in Worcester, Mass. and is also a certified community health care worker and a certificate in mental health first aid. She's the founder and director of BAM Foundation, LLC, which is a community resource organization for drugs and alcohol. The self-published author has 14 years of social work experience and surely believes that "It takes a village!"



Alcohol Awareness Month

CONNECTING THE DOTS ON UNDERAGE DRINKING

Submitted by Brandi Shepherd, Prevention Specialist



HARTSVILLE- Whether we drink, or know someone who does, alcohol is a huge part of the lives of Americans. In fact, most

of us see an average of two to four ads for beer, wine or liquor per day. To an impressionable child or teenager, the role alcohol plays in our culture can change their lives forever.

Alcohol has become the most widely abused drug among America's youth. Underage drinking poses an enormous health and safety risk to everyone. In 2010, underage drinking cost the United States \$24 billion in health care expenses, property damage and criminal justice expenses. Underage drinking is also responsible for more than 3,500 deaths among people under the age of 21 every year. Either directly or indirectly, we all feel the effects of underage drinking.

Underage Drinking is Common

Despite rates of underage drinking being at an all-time low for the United States, alcohol is still the most abused drug among people under the age of 21. Reports from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that one out of four high school students has had at least one alcoholic beverage within the past 30 days. These results also show that one out of six high school students has been binge drinking in the past 30 days.

More than 90 percent of the alcohol that youth drink is being consumed through binge drinking. While binge drinking is extremely dangerous on its own, it can be even more detrimental to an inexperienced, underage drinker. More than 110 teens die every year from alcohol poisoning due to binge drinking.

Underage Drinking is Dangerous

Some parents believe that taking their keys away from their teens when they drink eliminates any problems that could happen when they get drunk. While this may prevent them from getting into a car wreck, it does not eliminate all risks associated with underage drinking.

Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience a variety of school, social, legal and physical problems compared to their peers who do not drink. These problems include a higher rate of school absences, lower grades, being involved in physical or sexual violence, a lack of participation in after-school activities, illness, unprotected sex and unwanted pregnancy. Underage drinking is also associated with a higher risk of suicide, homicide, drowning, falls, burns and other unintentional injuries. Early and prolonged underage drinking can cause changes to an adolescent's developing brain that may have lifelong effects, such as memory problems. In addition, youth who drink alcohol while underage are five times more likely to develop a substance use disorder later in life.

The Role Parents Play

Parents and guardians can play an important role in shaping their children's attitudes towards drinking. Parents can help their children avoid underage drinking and the problems associated with it by serving as a positive role model and drinking responsibly, if they choose to drink. Parents can also talk to their children about underage drinking and set clear rules about alcohol use.

If you are not sure how to start a conversation with your kids about alcohol and other drugs, then please visit SAMHSA's online campaign: "Talk. They Hear You." It provides a variety of helpful tips and information on how parents and caregivers can start talking

to their children early about the dangers of alcohol and drug use. The organization has even released the "Talk. They Hear You." app as an interactive tool for parents and caregivers to help them practice bringing up the topic of substance use, learn the right questions to ask and get ideas to keep the conversation with their kids going.

Warning Signs of Underage Drinking

While behavioral changes are a normal part of growing up, there are certain changes that may indicate that a youth is practicing in underage drinking. Parents, families and teachers should pay close attention to any youth experiencing the following warning signs:

- Sudden and extreme changes in mood, including anger and irritability
- Academic and/or behavioral problems in school
- Rebelliousness
- Sudden changes in their friend groups
- Low energy level
- Less interest in activities and/or care in appearance
- Problems concentrating and/or remembering
- Slurred speech
- Coordination problems

Finding alcohol among a youth's personal belongings and smelling alcohol on their breath are also clear warning signs of underage drinking.

Finding Help

If you are seeking treatment for your child's substance abuse problem, please know that you do not have to do this alone. All of us at Rubicon Family Counseling Services are dedicated to providing quality prevention, intervention and treatment services to your loved ones. Please call us at 843-332-4156, or visit us at 510 East Carolina Avenue in Hartsville.

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GIVING BACK TO THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY by Jennifer Robinson



Casey King was 2019 Professor of the Year

CONWAY - April is Alcohol Awareness Month a public health program organized by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence as a way of increasing outreach and education regarding the dangers of alcoholism and issues related to alcohol. It raises awareness, campaigns for change and more. It helps to spread alcohol awareness and make a difference.

Remember, even when we think we are alone, there is always someone there to help—let's be there to help or get the help we need.

Casey King, professor of physics and natural sciences at Horry-Georgetown Technical College and founder of Addiction and Recovery Lecture Series, is one who is here to help. The series began in 2008, two and a half years into King's personal recovery journey. He created the series as a way to give something back to the recovery community. He realized he was in a position to do more than facilitate meetings, sponsor men or answer phone hotlines. King credits the work he has done in the community with the lecture series with saving his life. He says, "I am not a religious person, but I would definitely credit whatever powers are at work in my own recovery since I have no experience or training in doing this. I teach college physics, math and astronomy. The Lecture Series isn't my job, but it is my passion, and I think that's 95 percent of why it succeeded."

King's lecture series is typically a four-night event. During one night a celebrity speaker who has been through recovery is invited to speak. Past speakers (on campus) include Louis Gossett Jr, Danny Trejo, Meredith Baxter, Mackenzie Phillips, Bob Forrest, William Moyers Jr, Steven Ford, Jeff VanVonderen, Ken Seeley and Candy Finnigan.

On another night of the event, a medical or counseling professional is invited to encourage attendees. There is a night dedicated to the four local sponsors who support the series. Over the last few years, the Lecture Series has gained financial support from Grand Strand Health, Lighthouse Care Center, Faces and Voices of Recovery and Strand and Shoreline Behavioral Health. The last night is set aside to students/faculty/staff who are in recovery from addiction.

King arranges a free catered dinner on campus each night for series attendees. Neither tickets nor registration are required to attend the series. Those attending this event can remain anonymous, but many of the same people have attended the same social affair for the past 13 years.

The goals of the Addiction and Lecture series are:

- 1) Increase public awareness of recovery in our community
- 2) Educate the public on the biology and psychological basis that drives many addictions
- 3) Demonstrate that addiction crosses all social and economic boundaries
- 4) Reduce the stigma our culture assigns to those in recovery
- 5) To demonstrate that recovery from addiction is possible

ADDICTION & RECOVERY HGTC LECTURE SERIES



MEREDITH BAXTER



CANDY FINNIGAN



STEVE FORD



LOUIS GOSSETT JR.



WILLIAM MOYERS



MACKENZIE PHILLIPS



DANNY TREJO



JEFF VANVONDEREN

through a multitude of methods and can be free to those who want it.

To date there are many partnerships that have been established that have used this series. King shared that at one point Horry County Drug Court was including the Lecture Series as a requirement for their participants. Horry-Georgetown Technical College offers continuing education credits for those who enroll and attend all four nights of the series. The importance of this series has become a staple in Horry County and beyond. Its effectiveness has made great strides in the addiction recovery world. The pandemic has not slowed down this necessary work. Moving the series online allows attendees who may be the most in need of the message of recovery to participate without feeling they are not safe. The reach is greater online with people participating from as far as Perth, Australia and 44 other countries this year. Successful recovery is accessible and possible, thanks to people like King and his creative mind.

A poster for Alcohol Awareness Month. At the top, it says "IF YOU CHOOSE TO DRINK, DO SO IN MODERATION". Below this is a caduceus symbol. Underneath the symbol, it reads "NO ONE SHOULD BEGIN DRINKING OR DRINK MORE FREQUENTLY BASED ON POTENTIAL HEALTH BENEFITS". In the center, there are two figures: a woman and a man. Next to the woman is a glass of red wine and the text "UP TO 1 DRINK A DAY FOR WOMEN". Next to the man are two bottles of beer and the text "UP TO 2 DRINKS A DAY FOR MEN". At the bottom, there is a red warning triangle with an exclamation mark. Below the triangle, it says "DON'T DRINK AT ALL IF YOU ARE UNDER AGE 21, PREGNANT OR MAY BE PREGNANT, OR HAVE HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT COULD BE MADE WORSE BY DRINKING".



Alcohol Awareness Month

COMMITTED TO THE SUCCESS OF OTHERS by Adalia Ellis



Ogleretta Davis White

MARION— Ogleretta Davis White's life of volunteerism has one personal singular mission, which is to provide access to vulnerable populations. A resident of Marion, White's involvement in volunteerism is an example of the far-reaching impact that service can have on individuals and society.

White served on the board for the Columbia Classical Ballet Company, where she volunteered to be on the Educational Outreach Committee. "The focus of the subcommittee was to provide access to organizations who served disadvantaged children and youth. The results of our fundraising and partnerships would allow our ballet performances to be seen by more than 3500, 3-5-year-old head start children from as many as four counties. This would not only allow these children to witness a then 12-year-old African American boy named Brooklyn Mack who later became a primer dancer alongside Misty Copeland, but changed the trajectory of the ballet to provide more children based performances."

When considering the impact of volunteerism on the Marion County community, White points out the importance of partnerships to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. "In Marion County, the need for volunteerism has grown to an almost insurmountable level. We have developed in a manner that has placed our organizations in closer proximity to professional operations. Most organizations are unique in their missions, but together, we have supported this county in a manner that could not be accomplished by the government. The passion of helping our fellow man is without dispute. Our fellow organizations aid in supporting the disenfranchised, the very low to low income, aid those with food insecurities as well as assisting in the repair and replacement of homes. Volunteering is never ending and has no business hours. Even in this time of a pandemic, COVID-19 ushered in the need for the seamless commitment of each organization to provide for our most vulnerable population. We partnered to achieve the awesome task of meeting the needs of our citizens. We worked together on government issues such as the Census 2020. Understanding that the vastness of how funding is established and its direct impact on funding streams in which we apply made the Complete Count our assigned goal. We work together to fill the gaps in service and apply for grants accordingly."

White concentrates her volunteer efforts by supporting the Marion County Long-Term Recovery Group where she serves as secretary of the board and as a grant writer. "We are supported by boards with a steady pool of volunteers that are based in local communities. The largest part of this organization is the Case Management and the CARE Centers, which serve more than 19 areas throughout our county. Each site is led by a team leader and is largely faith-based and multi-denominational."

Her drive to be of service to others is rooted in her childhood. She grew up in a home and served in a church in which

volunteering was at the center of her life. "Giving and supporting our community is as natural as breathing. I am of the belief that we cannot be good citizens if we are not serving. Regardless of our station in life, there is always someone that we can aid through our skills or our monetary commitment. Serving is interwoven in every aspect of my life. I provide the same zeal whether I am at my work as I do to those who are in need in my community. It is hard to walk away from a problem without a solution. I am committed to the success of everyone around me and will act with little prompting. I believe that what I do to assist persons will make for a better life for them as well as for me," said White.

The person to whom White gives credit for her service driven life is her mother, Rev. Virginia F. Davis. "She was a teacher in the Marion County School District and would drive to the homes of her students to assist in whatever way that she could. Though this was a solitary movement, she was no less committed to her students. It was a quiet effort, not puffed up nor broadcasted. I learned that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, was deserving of dignity and respect. She would go to the nursing homes to visit and did short Bible studies with the resident, all along interrupting my playing with my friends to accompany her. I learned at an early age to give my gently used clothing to those in need and the importance of providing time to achieve the greater good is a marvelous thing to do. When we commit our children to recognize and empathize with the state of our fellowman, we are committing them to not just observing the problems of humankind, but practice the compassion needed to improve their condition. If we demonstrate and demand that our children learn this, we will have generations of givers, and volunteerism will blossom in them in a way that will provide them with the gratification that a paycheck cannot provide."

For White, there is much to be learned while in service to others. It is in service to the less fortunate that a person can become aware of the everyday life realities of our neighbors. "I listen to people speculate about what people are in broad generalities. They often stigmatize those less fortunate and rely on the media's portrayal of people. I believe that providing a systematic approach to service would provide an opportunity for growth and aid in connectivity and communality with those outside of our comfort zones. There is reciprocity in volunteerism, which allows for those we serve to glean the same type of knowledge of those who give. This is a challenge that will go beyond a couple weeks of volunteerism but one that requires frequent interactions and planning."

When considering life lessons gained from volunteerism, White states, "I think compassion, patience and the love of our fellowman are the strongest assets for volunteering. Compassion and love towards others are the most obvious attributes. However, patience with others and ourselves is what we need as you grow in our command of volunteering. As I mentioned, you are never off the clock. In a small town like Marion, everywhere you go is a potential opportunity to serve, and you must patiently employ your skill to be professional while aiding others in what may be the most important issue in their lives."

GIVING THE GIFT OF YOU Submitted by Staff, United Way of Florence County



SCA Volunteers

When we lend a hand to one, we influence the condition of all. Lending a hand can be as easy as donating your time and knowledge to someone in need. For over 66 years, United Way of Florence County (UWFC) has been giving back to our community in more ways than one. Through partnerships with Volunteer Corps of Florence County and our 22 partner agencies, UWFC has a wide range of opportunities for

all. Whether it is preparing taxes, participating in service projects, delivering meals, building ramps, or responding in times of disaster, there are hundreds of volunteer options available every day.

UWFC recruits volunteers for our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program and Day of Caring. Each year, volunteers dedicate their time and knowledge to help older, disabled, non-English speaking or low-income individuals complete their taxes. Even with the shortening of the program due to the pandemic, UWFC's VITA Program had an economic impact of \$59,466.50 last year. This year, UWFC's goal is to help over 100 individuals file their taxes. Without the gift of volunteers, UWFC would not have the ability to assist individuals struggling with their taxes.

UWFC's annual Day of Caring relies solely on the dedication of hard-working volunteers. Each year hundreds of volunteers come together and give their time to complete service projects ranging from landscaping to painting or repairs for our partner agencies. With a low operating budget, non-profits heavily appreciate the generosity of donated time, which allows for the enhancement of the quality of services they can provide.

Other United Way funded programs seeking volunteers include Lighthouse Ministries Ramp Assistance Medical Program (R.A.M.P), Senior Citizen's Association's Home Delivered Meals Program and the American Red Cross' Disaster Cycle Services Program.

Lighthouse Ministries' R.A.M.P. Program aims to improve the quality of life for low-income, disabled individuals in Florence County by providing ramps, handrails and van lifts for safe mobility in and out of the qualifying participant's home. This program is coordinated with the assistance of two types of volunteers. Lighthouse Ministries' volunteers aid in the documentation process, and skilled volunteers willing to get their hands dirty aid in the construction process. These volunteers must understand the guidelines and codes outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as other considerations to build ramps that assist with safe entry and exit of the home. Most people do not realize that traditional health care coverage plans do not cover the cost of construction for ramps, handrails and van lifts. Therefore, this program and its volunteers, are crucial in providing help for disabled residents of Florence county.

The American Red Cross' Disaster Cycle Services Program is another UWFC funded program that aims to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and donors by providing programs, platforms and resources to individuals recovering from a disaster. This program specifically utilizes a three-prong approach of preparedness, response and recovery. To execute the recovery process, the American Red Cross provides emergency response to local disasters, particularly house fires, to ensure that those affected have the resources for food, temporary lodging, clothing and other essentials. To ensure each



Circle Park Volunteers

by assisting in the intake process during blood drives to make sure there is blood on the shelves for individuals who may need it. DAT members aid in the response aspect by ensuring individuals affected by a disaster have all of the resources they need. Lastly, family follow-up volunteers aid in the recovery process as they check-in with families that have experienced a disaster or a family member deployment.

The Senior Citizens Association (SCA) is proud to serve the elderly population of Florence County by delivering hot, nutritious meals to homebound seniors, 60 years of age and older. Each participant receives at least one meal per day for a minimum of five days a week. Each meal must meet the nutrition requirements in the Older American Act as well as state and local (SCDHHEC) requirements. In order to provide this service to our community, volunteers are utilized to prepare, package and deliver meals.

As displayed above, volunteers are essential to the benefit of our community, and many programs provided by non-profits would not survive without the generosity of individuals willing to give their time. To make a larger impact in our community, organizations need our help to meet the growing needs of our community. If you are considering volunteering, get started today by reaching out to one of these organizations, or by contacting UWFC at uwfloinfo@uwflorence.org or 843-662-2407.

JOIN THE MULLINS LIONS CLUB!

Submitted by Bonnie Stephenson



Bonnie Stephenson

MULLINS- I joined the Mullins Lions Club to make a difference in my community and my country. I can sleep better knowing I helped someone who needed a helping hand, and that is what the lions are all about.

The Lions Club is the largest service organization in the world. All contributions (100 percent) go to people that we serve. What other organization can tell you that? We help get glasses to those who cannot pay for them. We helped with disasters like the flooding in Nichols, Sellers and Marion. That makes you truly happy. We do like two families with meals for holidays, and we have helped: SOS in Conway for autism in young adults, the SC School for the Deaf & Blind, two Boy State young men and one for Girl State, and have given canned goods for the hungry plus two scholarships for \$1000 and many other things to help others.

If this doesn't help make you happy, nothing will.

Help us, and join the Mullins Lions!

- Bennie Johnson: 843-464-0236
- Bonnie Stephenson: 843-464-7254

MCLEOD VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Articles submitted by McLeod Health



Daniel Watford, center was recognized at the Volunteer of the Year for McLeod Regional Medical Center. Pictured from left to right: Sam Turbeville, Linda Boone, Daniel Watford, Nancy Watford and Will McLeod, administrator of McLeod Regional Medical Center

McLeod Regional Medical Center named Daniel Watford as the Volunteer of the Year for 2020. The announcement was made on Jan. 28. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon was held as a drive-through event this year at the Hellenic Center in Florence.

Watford, a Florence resident, joined McLeod Regional Medical Center as a volunteer chaplain in November of 2018. Sam Turbeville, director of Pastoral Services for McLeod, said, "At first, Danny spent most of his time in the Emergency Department, working four consecutive days a week. Having a servant's heart, he always offers to help out anywhere, anytime and anyplace he is needed. He is humble and teachable, always putting the needs of others above his own. In 2019, during the

Christmas holiday when staff chaplains were given time off, and the chaplain scheduled to work unexpectedly became ill, Danny stepped up and covered the entire week. Through the many changes Pastoral Services has gone through, Danny has remained flexible and adaptable. He also assists our department with interviewing and training new chaplains. Danny will be the first to tell you that the Lord has blessed him in so many ways that allow him to give freely of his time and talents. He is truly a valuable member of our Pastoral Services department, and we are honored to have him."

In presenting the award to Watford, Linda Boone, director of Volunteer Services for McLeod, shared, "There is not enough good things you can say about Daniel. He sets his sights on helping others and strives to do more each day. While sitting in my office one day, Daniel and I were talking about possible employment at McLeod. His response to me was, 'There is no amount of money that McLeod could pay me that would replace the blessings I get as a volunteer.' He truly loves what he does here. When I first met Daniel he talked to me about some of the challenges he has been through. He is able to relate to patients in a way that most people cannot. His love for the Lord and his fellow man is evident in everything he does. Daniel truly walks the walk."

In addition to the Volunteer of the Year announcement, Judith Lackey was recognized with the Most Clinical Hours in 2020. Robin Welty received the Most Crafter Hours, and Keith Redden was honored with the Eagle Award as the Outstanding Junior Volunteer.

More than 235 volunteers who contribute outstanding service to McLeod Regional Medical Center were honored for their service during 2020. These dedicated individuals contributed more than 32,000 volunteer hours to the hospital over the past year.

CALLING ON THE YOUTH TO DO WHAT'S PLEASING TO GOD

by Adalia Ellis



Hubert McFadden

Hubert McFadden, Lake City resident, volunteers as a teen advisor with Dramatic Coffee Bean, lead volunteer with Lake City Artfields, member of the Education department at Lake City Elks Lodge and director of the beauty and talent department.

When considering why he chooses to serve the community the way he does, he said, "I think that we all have a responsibility to do our part to help our city grow and shine."

It makes McFadden feel proud to be able to serve others because he says, "I not only represent myself, but I represent everyone who had a part in making me the person that I am."

Young people can play such an important role as examples of servants to the community. During a time when many young people are not yet consumed with careers, running a household or caring for children, it is the perfect time for them to step into the community in service. "I think it's very important for our youth to volunteer," said McFadden. "It gives them pride, teaches responsibility and gives them ownership in knowing they are doing their part to bring positive attention to their city. Not only is it important, it's our duty to pass the knowledge that we have learned over the years and prepare those younger than us to carry the torch. It's also a way to mentor our youth."

When considering the lessons that a person learns and the virtues they get to practice when in service to others, McFadden says, "I think there are many virtues, but the most important one for me is charity. When I go out and do something for someone or my community, I am doing what is required of me and pleasing to God."

MCLEOD TELEHEALTH TEAM HONORED FOR SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM



McLeod TeleHealth Team

During the 2020 Palmetto Care Connections Virtual Summit, the McLeod TeleHealth Team was honored with the Telehealth Innovator Award for the establishment of the School-Based Telehealth Program (SBTP). On Feb. 11, Kathy Rhoad with Palmetto Care Connections personally presented this honor to the McLeod TeleHealth team.

In August of 2019, McLeod Health announced a partnership with Florence 1 Schools and The King's Academy (TKA) to offer the School-Based Telehealth Program. The hospital system recently expanded the program to Florence County School District Two—Hannah-Pamplico Elementary/Middle School and Hannah-Pamplico High School.

SBTP offers an option for non-emergency medical care through McLeod TeleHealth visits with a McLeod Provider. McLeod provided each of the participating schools with telehealth equipment including a computer, monitor, camera

MCLEOD TELEHEALTH CONT'D

and other devices such as a remote stethoscope and otoscope. McLeod Providers working with the School-Based Telehealth Program include Dr. Focell Jackson-Dozier; Lisa Wallace, NP; Allison Slice, FNP; and Brandi Powell Russ, NP.

Established in 2010, Palmetto Care Connections (PCC) is a non-profit organization that brings technology, broadband and telehealth solutions to healthcare providers in rural and underserved areas in South Carolina. PCC hosts the Annual Telehealth Summit of South Carolina, presenting state and national best practices and trends, as well as providing networking connections for health care, technology and broadband professionals.

LETTING HER LIGHT SHINE

by Jennifer Robinson



Laura Preston, Grand Supervising Deputy

Laura Preston said she watched as a child her mother open the doors of their home to help others. She declared with joy that her mother was the neighborhood mother, and now she is the neighborhood mother. What Preston has learned and is now sharing with others is a shining example of serving the community.

Preston stated, “We all have the opportunity to help others. This is often

the most important benefit in ways to improve our communities. When you know that you are a part of helping someone to improve their life and to have the opportunity to work and improve the community, that is not only humbling, but also awesome. Also, community service improves communities because it allows people opportunities to come together, work together and form lasting bonds. There are also ways to develop lasting friendships by working in your community for one common cause and to be able to make a positive impact in the community.” Preston says that she is reminded about the scripture Matthew 5:16, which states: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deed and glorify your Father in heaven. In order to let your ‘light’ shine,” she stated, “we have to serve and help others and to always treat others as we would want to be treated. We serve because we want to be able to help those who may be less fortunate than us. By serving others, we are able to make a difference in the lives of others.”

Preston has found that serving others helps keep her grounded to remind us that things are always subject to change. People should always remember where they have been and where they are presently, but no one knows fully what the future holds. Therefore, we should be thankful for every day, and live each day to the fullest. She expressed herself most in the many organizations in which she participates. She is a member of the Prince Hall Grand Chapter Order of the Eastern Star and Rite of Adoption for the State of South Carolina and Jurisdiction; Top Ladies of Distinction–Area IV Florence Chapter; United

Order of Tents–Southern District Area IV; National Council of Negro Women–Florence Chapter; and pastor assistant – Majority Missionary Baptist Church. Preston is most active as Grand Supervising Deputy for District IX OES. As Grand Supervising Deputy and chairperson of the executive board for District IX Order of the Eastern Star, Preston stated that she is proud to be a member of District IX OES, which includes 23 chapters in Florence County.

These chapters do extraordinary work in the community. They have a great sisterhood/brotherhood where they work together to make a positive impact in our communities. District IX OES continues to accomplish its goals in support of the Grand Worthy Matron’s theme of “Exalting the Star through Community Building, Education and Service to Humanity.” Preston has participated in the following projects in District IX:

1. Yearly Back to School Bookbag Giveaway—where we give school supplies to the school districts in Florence County
2. Adopt-A-Classroom—We provide educational packets or what is needed in the classroom to help enhance the learning of our youth.
3. Breast Cancer Awareness and the McLeod Children’s Network (volunteer)
4. Visit the nursing homes and provide items needed (i.e.: blankets, socks, care packages)
5. Annual Christmas Fellowship for Seniors
6. Community Cookouts
7. Collect toys for Christmas
8. Annual Coat Drive (coats, sweaters, gloves and scarves) for the homeless
9. Care Bags for our youth and seniors for Christmas
10. Help 4 Kids
11. Annual Food Drive to give to the Manna House
12. Soup Kitchen and Clothing Drive
13. First Annual Motorcycle Charity Ride for Kidney Disease
14. District IX Cookbook Charity for Breast Cancer Awareness
15. District IX gives over \$10,000 annually for scholarships to high school seniors locally and to the state who will be attending college.
16. We offer annual support of the UNCF

Preston says that what she does is not about the recognition but about the feeling she receives from helping others. She also wants the next generation of young people to learn and benefit from community service. She stated, “I believe that when our preteens and teens are allowed to do community service work, it builds their character, confidence, self-esteem and satisfaction that they can make a positive impact in the lives of others. It will also show how fortunate you are to have things that you may take for granted, but it means so much to someone else.”

Laura Preston’s example of service is one that should be imitated but can never be duplicated, and we salute her. She is married to Clarence L. Preston, Jr., and they are the proud parents of two children: Brandon D. Williams and Jamecca W. (Jason) English. She also has three adorable grandchildren: Amari, Christian and Zoe’.



ADVOCATING FOR THE UNDERSERVED by Les Echols



Anita Stevenson Magwood

Anita Stevenson Magwood is an experienced project manager and outreach consultant who is dedicated to bridging the gap between the community and health and social service systems. She is currently serving as the executive assistant for the executive director at Pee Dee Community Action Partnership (PDCAP) and the program manager for the Strengthening Families

Program in Marion and Dillon Counties.

As we continue highlighting our community servants, Diversity Works Magazine© caught up with Magwood to talk about her tireless commitment to service.

DW: How did you become involved in community service and how long have you been working in this field?

AM: My family has a long history of public service and politics, so I was practically born into community service. Coming from a family of politicians, civic leaders, and preachers, I live by the edict, "If I can help somebody, then my living shall not be in vain." I love serving and advocating for those who are often underrepresented and underserved. With faith, determination, education, hard work and a little help from others, challenges can become opportunities."

DW: Speaking of challenges, what are some of the biggest challenges you face?

AM: When you serve others, it is so easy to neglect yourself. I must constantly remind myself to exercise self-care. If I am going to be an example leading as I serve others, I must apply that to myself and my family as well.

DW: Tell us a little about yourself.

AM: I am graduate of Southern Wesleyan University. I am married to Reverend Sylvester Burrie Magwood, Jr. Together,

we share four beautiful children and five grandchildren.

After living in the upstate of South Carolina for several years, I returned to the Pee Dee about four years ago and have been busy ever since. My cousin, the Honorable Senator Clementa Carlos Pinckney, encouraged me to move back to this area. He felt that the needs of the people here would complement my zeal for community service and advocacy for those who may be experiencing hard times. Senator Pinckney served as a Democratic member of the South Carolina Senate, representing the 45th District from 2000 until his death in 2015. It is truly an honor to continue his legacy.

DW: Tell us some of the programs/projects you all do and why they are so important to the community.

AM: The establishment of Stevenson Consulting in 2004 was a natural outgrowth of years of community service. As a consultant, I have led teams to create a foundation that promotes health through prevention, awareness and policy development. I was co-facilitator of a statewide smoking, nutrition and exercise program for over 500 church churches in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. I serve as the program manager for the PDCAP Strengthening Families Program. The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is an evidence-based family skills training program for high-risk and general population families that is recognized both nationally and internationally. Research demonstrates a strong link between what parents know about parenting and child development and how they behave with their children. Parents with more knowledge are more likely to engage in positive parenting practices, whereas those with limited knowledge are at greater risk of negative parenting behaviors. This program is so significant because it increases family strengths and resilience and reduces risk factors for problem behaviors in high-risk children, including behavioral, emotional, academic and social problems.

2021 MARION MEDALLION RECIPIENTS Submitted by FMU



(L/R) Carl Humphries and Allie E. Brooks, Jr.

A community leader and a thriving healthcare organization were recognized for their contributions and service to the people of the Pee Dee area at the 2021 Marion Medallion awards ceremony on Feb. 26 at the FMU Performing Arts Center.

Medallions were presented to retired educator Allie Eugene Brooks, Jr. of Florence and the Florence-based nonprofit healthcare provider HopeHealth.

Brooks' venture into education began in 1970 at Moore Middle School in Florence. In 1974, he attained the position of principal at Wilson High School and subsequently remained in the role until his retirement in 2005. Brooks served as superintendent of Florence One Schools from 2010 to June 2014.

His career has been dotted with accolades, including being named the Outstanding Principal of the Year by the S.C.

Association of Secondary School Principals in 1987 as well as receiving an honorary degree from Francis Marion University in December 2006.

HopeHealth was founded in 1991 as Hope for the Pee Dee, a grassroots HIV/AIDS support organization. Its mission changed and expanded over the years. HopeHealth now provides integrated health services for more than 50,000 patients in Aiken, Clarendon, Florence, Orangeburg and Williamsburg counties.

HopeHealth was designated a federally qualified health center in 2007 to expand its services to include primary and pediatric care. The organization has received recognition as a Regional Partner of the Year in 2017 by SC Thrive and a Million Hearts Health System Award, presented by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Marion Medallion celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. The award is sponsored and presented by FMU and the Morning News of Florence. Senior officials of the two organizations work in partnership to select recipients. The medallions are awarded on or about Feb. 27 each year. Feb. 27 has been designated as Francis Marion Day by the state of South Carolina. It recognizes General Francis Marion, the namesake of FMU, a revolutionary war leader who guided the guerrilla forces in the Pee Dee region.

TRANSFORMERS *by De'Angela Haynes*



Charlene McKnight

Remember, in the 1980s, the Transformers follows the battles of sentient, living autonomous robots, often the Autobots and the Decepticons, who can transform into other forms, such as vehicles and animals. The franchise encompasses toys, animation, comic books, video games and films (Transformers - Wikipedia).

Charlene McKnight is a transformer and continues to use education and volunteer services to transform the lives of people.

McKnight is a native of Georgetown who currently resides in Florence. She is a 2004 and 2008 graduate of Francis Marion University and a 2010 graduate of Columbia College. With degrees in mass communication, English-teacher certification and divergent learning, she has been a high school English teacher since 2009 and has worked with various programs to include The Center of Excellence for College and Career Readiness, Upward Bound and the Migrant Education Program. Currently, she is an alternative school English teacher in Sumter.

Outside of work, McKnight continues giving as she is the founder and executive director of Four Giving Hearts (FGH), Incorporated. FGH, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded on June 18, 2018, in the memory of RJ McKnight and Jon Paul McKnight, two of the “four” giving hearts. The logo colors represent the birthstone colors of the four McKnight children. Based out of Georgetown, FGH serves the Pee Dee and Low Country regions

of the state.

Through the organization, McKnight is able to work with members of communities and other organizations to give back. Under her leadership and FGH’s founding board members (Dorothy Nero, Chenella McKnight, Jessie Welch and Nakell Williams), FGH is able to foster “for” giving hearts and responsible citizenship while focusing on four targets: health, family, education and community. FGH has assisted and donated to organizations to include Harvest Hope Food Bank, Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, House of Refuge Outreach Ministry, Pee Dee CAP Emergency Shelter, James R. Clark Memorial Sickle Cell Foundation, American Heart Association-South Carolina, Susan G. Komen-South Carolina, Empowered to Heal, etc. In addition, McKnight, along with Saeuwil, has been able to organize an annual winter coat drive with local businesses to benefit the Pee Dee CAP Emergency Shelter and FGH’s annual holiday card-making drive for distribution to nursing home residents. McKnight organizes many back-to-school and community giveaways and online campaigns to promote giving/awareness for causes such as Go Red for Women, the Little Black Dress Initiative, period poverty, sickle cell, bullying prevention and anti-violence campaigns with Sandy Hook Promise. Additionally, FGH continues to recognize and give to family caregivers in November, Teachers in May via Amazon Wish List, children by way of the FGH Holiday Box and other giveaways and the disadvantaged or homeless population by way of donations and event sponsorships. Because of supporters and donors, FGH continuously provides school supplies, hygiene products, laundry supplies and funds, clothing, random acts of kindness and other essential items to those in need year round.

FULLFILLING THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE *by Ta'Meeka Epps*



Tonya McKenzie

MARION-Mahatma Ghandi stated, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Those who find themselves through service of others deserve to be celebrated for the significant contributions they make to their community through their time, actions and the level of commitment they make when they give of themselves. We take this time to say, “Thank You.”

Thank you to the trustees, fundraisers, mentors, befrienders and those who live to simply bring joy to others. You make the communities happier places to live. Tonya McKenzie, a native of Marion, deserves a celebratory round of applause with an astounding “Thank You!”

“Aunt Boochie,” as she is affectionally called by the admiring little faces of cousins who look up to her, finds herself blessed to be a living testimony of her life’s philosophy, which is, “The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others.”

McKenzie knew at the age of 16, as she stayed with her grandmother during hospital stays and medical procedures, that she would lose herself in the service of other while finding herself along the way. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Clemson University and a master’s degree, emphasis in family nurse practitioner, from University of South Carolina-Columbia.

She completed clinicals with the Department of Mental Health, VA Hospital, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control,

SC Health Departments, Office of Minority Health and Free Medical Clinic. She worked for Coastal Carolina University through December 2020 as nurse practitioner, Infection Control and Safety and Prevention Committee facilitator. McKenzie has been a nurse practitioner for 18+ years with over 10 being in the employ of Coastal Carolina University.

She now works part-time in the home health sector and serves as South Carolina Zetas Helping Other People Excel (Z-HOPE) coordinator and local president of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Mu Kappa Zeta Chapter, and she serves her community. Community to McKenzie is a place, a people, a feeling, a sense of connectivity, which is diverse and ever changing. She believes communities thrive when all within the community thrive.

McKenzie does her part to help the community thrive by giving of her self effortlessly. She volunteers with several organizations. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Helping Hands Free Medical Clinic, Harvest Hope, Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church Nurse and Health Ministry, Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault, The Naomi Project, Meals on Wheels, Mental Illness Recovery Center, Inc. (MIRCI), St. James AME Church Food Bank, Marion County Coordinating Council and many local schools in Marion, Dillon and Horry counties.

She gives of her time and energy to organizations whose actions resemble the message communicated. She knows the importance of having a village to show you that you are capable when others believe you have already failed. Tonya McKenzie lives her life to be impactful within her community and to pay forward what has been given to her: love.

SMALL DONATIONS MAKING BIG IMPACTS by De'Angela Haynes



Santee Electric Cooperative Board Members

KINGSTREE-
 Santee Electric Cooperative, Inc. ("SEC"), a not-for-profit electric utility serving around 44,000 meters in Clarendon, Florence, Georgetown and Williamsburg counties, was one of many cooperatives around the nation to adopt

Operation Round Up decades ago. SEC's participation in the program is not that newsworthy, but it is worthwhile to recognize the tremendous efforts of the volunteers that make Operation Round Up the force for good that it has become within SEC's territory.

"The program was founded on the cooperative principle of 'neighbor-helping-neighbor' and is available in all four of the counties served by SEC. The Trust Board has the discretion to fund anything from donations to regional organizations and educational institutions to home repairs and replacement appliances for people who are in desperate financial need. The grassroots nature of this program and volunteerism demonstrated by those who contribute and by members of the Trust Board is what makes this program so impactful on individuals and organizations within our service territory," said Jay Kirby, SEC vice president of Public Affairs.

The first group of volunteers who should be recognized is of those who finance the program. SEC members may voluntarily round up their monthly electrical bill to the nearest whole dollar with the difference going into the Operation Round Up fund. On

average, a volunteer donor will contribute around six dollars per year to the program. Some members have inquired about doing even more. That capability is now available through Operation Round Up Plus (RU+), which makes it possible for members to contribute any amount above their monthly electrical bill. For example, if a member wanted his or her bill to be rounded up to the nearest \$5 dollar increment versus to the nearest dollar, he or she would be able to contribute an additional \$4 per month to the program. All contributions to Operation Round Up and RU+ are tax deductible, and no funds are ever used to support political candidates or efforts.

The second group of volunteers who deserve recognition are critical to making the program work. These volunteers are where the proverbial rubber meets the road, working tirelessly with individuals, community organizations, and others to identify and provide assistance to those in need. Each trustee of the member-elected SEC Board, the governing body for SEC, may appoint one member to the SEC Trust Board, which independently administers the charitable giving program known as Operation Round Up. Trust Board members meet with applicants to the program to determine eligibility and to provide guidance. To support their efforts, SEC personnel across multiple departments provide oversight and administrative services.

SEC is proud of its members for supporting this effort and hopes that others will join the program in the future. Please contact any of SEC's district offices for more information on how you can contribute to Operation Round Up or RU+. Through this program, anyone can become part of a larger philanthropic effort to positively impact our communities.

Helping your community is a

plus



Santee Electric Cooperative's members have helped the community through Operation Round Up®, donating more than \$5.5 million since 1993. Through this program, members' electric bills are rounded up to the next whole dollar. Money raised help in times of need with food, clothing, shelter, health needs and added support for worthy organizations.

We are now offering, Operation Round Up *PLUS*. Along with Operation Round Up, you can give more to help make a bigger difference in our community. You will be able to choose a one time gift or add a monthly gift in an amount of your choice.

For more information on how you can participate, visit santee.org or call 800-922-1604.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

BRADLEY GIVES BACK, THE HONDA WAY



Brenda Bradley

TIMMONSVILLE -Thanks to our associate Brenda Bradley. Bradley sees Honda as family, and it is one she has been committed to for the last 22 years.

Hired at Honda of South Carolina Mfg. (HSC) in 1998, Bradley worked her way up from Assembly Frame Customer Quality (AFCQ) inspector to plant lead internal auditor and representative for plant Quality Management System (QMS), plant document control and plant confidentiality. She has many responsibilities, and it's something she enjoys about working for Honda.

"I love that there are opportunities for growth and room for improvement," Bradley said. "I love being able to make a difference in the company with the suggestion program and NH Circle. I love my Honda family."

Bradley also likes telling people she has a Honda family across the country and even in Mexico. "I love that we make the best products on Earth," she added.

She enjoys many parts of the Honda culture, including giving back to the community where she lives and works. Through Honda, she has volunteered for many activities, ranging from picking up trash along the highway and raising money for local nonprofits to reading to school children and resume writing through the Intently Working for Change Business Resource Group (BRG). Through a six-week Leadership Networking program in 2019, Bradley also gave back by decorating rooms in a shelter for abused women.

Bradley has volunteered for HSC's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Bradley volunteering for HSC's MLK Day of Service activities.

Day of Service activities and has cleaned local parks, painted the local Girls and Boys Club and much more. "I enjoy participating in the MLK Day of Service, especially when the town of Timmonsville is the location," she said. "I'm a native of Timmonsville, S.C., and it is the hometown of Honda of South Carolina. It is very inspiring to come together in unity and work hand in hand to support the same cause because where there is unity there is strength. The MLK Day of Service allows Honda associates to build teamwork offsite with associates they don't get to encounter with daily. Giving back to our communities as one makes Honda strong."

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is important to Bradley, who said her favorite quote from the leader is "Intelligence plus character—this is the goal of true education. Martin Luther King Jr. was a phenomenal leader, and his legacy lives on," she said. "He was a man of great intelligence, self-confidence and determination. I feel any leader, male or female, should be intelligent, plus able to handle and cope with diversity properly and professionally."

Outside of Honda, Bradley keeps busy with family, especially her son Deon Moses, church and appreciating nature by planting flowers and sight-seeing. She also serves as a caretaker for her 88-year-old mother.

Both inside and outside of Honda, Bradley lives her own quote: "My determination is my destination."



Honda Leadership Advancement Mentoring Program

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A DIFFERENT ASPECT OF LOVE by Anna Bowman



Roosevelt Bryant

LAKE CITY - Roosevelt Bryant's faithful journey to spiritual and physical health has afforded him the remarkable life that he has today. Bryant is a man who was not afraid to change the objectionable aspects of his life that landed him in federal prison, where he could listen to God. Taking full accountability for his life, he emerged from the shadows of his past, forging a new life as a pastor, father, motivational speaker and author.

Like the title of his motivational book, "Supernatural Favor," Bryant discovered his true passions: spiritual growth, which led to him becoming a pastor, and his physical growth, which led him to become a health guru. According to his book, Bryant was keenly aware that the Bible states, "A man without vision shall perish." The problem was he did not have a vision. He wondered if this meant that he was going to perish. During his darkest days of incarceration, something amazing began to evolve. He said, "The call of God was over my life for so long, that I started ministering in federal prison." And he soon discovered a passion for fitness. "I started in prison, and that is where I received my first certification from NFTP (an organization were certified personal trainers work-one-

one or in small group settings)." Ironically, the walls that were supposed to confine him, freed him to explore the gifts that God had ordained for his life.

Bryant utilized his time well during his incarceration, and the man who entered prison without a vision, exited with a well thought-out plan for his future. His ministering eventually led to him becoming the pastor of Holy Ghost Deliverance Temple of Lake City from 2015-2018. He began to utilize his fitness training immediately and formulated a steadfast business plan that has allowed him to become an entrepreneur. "I opened Life Change Fitness in 2008, 2010-2012," he stated, adding, "I worked as an exercise specialist, personal and group trainer for ih3 Wellness Center, 2012 -2016, as the executive director under the management of HopeHealth. And in 2017, I opened Life Change Fitness, a 24-hour gym."

As he began to re-invent himself behind the walls of prison, he learned how interacting within a positive "community" can help change a person's life, entirely. If not for people offering him guidance, regardless of his past indiscretions, Bryant wouldn't be the caring, kind and giving person that he has become.

In his book, "Supernatural Favor," Bryant shares his life experiences as a cautionary tale. The Lake City native has become a pillar of the community through his community involvement and volunteerism. Bryant strongly believes, "It takes everyone to work together for the community to grow. Love covers a multitude of sins. Jesus' command was to love our neighbor, and volunteering is 'definitely' an aspect of love."

In 2020 Bryant received the Appreciation for Community Support Award, and previously, in 2019, he was

awarded the Mayor's Pioneer Award, all attributed to his outstanding commitment and service to his community.

Bryant's commitments to his community have allowed him to participate in such activities as: The Old School Games on the Green; mentoring at Ron McNair Junior High School; Stop the Violence Cookout; feeding the elderly at the Senior Center; and exercise programs in the elementary schools. Even though the country was crippled by the pandemic, Bryant was still proactive with community involvements: "I started the Savvy Saturday Exercise, Feeding the Teachers at Ron McNair and the 2K basketball Tournament for the Ron McNair Junior High Boys and Girls Basketball teams," he said.

Bryant, the father of a son, Roosevelt D. Bryant, and a young daughter, Wynter R. Bryant, is a graduate of Penn Foster Center and attends Post University, majoring in sports management. For additional information about his company, Life Change Fitness Center, 145 E. Main St., Lake City, S.C., call 843-598-8757, and to order his book, "Supernatural Favor," visit the Amazon website. Roosevelt Bryant's life is a true testament that it's never too late to be a positive influence within your community.



Roosevelt working out at Life Change Fitness Center

GOING BACK TO THE VILLAGE by Jennifer Robinson



Kevin McKoy

If you have listened to Glory 98.5 FM anytime in the past decade, then you have heard the voice of Kevin McKoy. He has been a familiar voice and face throughout the Pee Dee with his service to youth and adults. You have seen him at various clothing drives, musical events, parades and presiding as master of ceremonies for various programs. And those are just a few of the places he has volunteered his time. If that doesn't seem like enough, he also sits on the

organization's board of directors and operates as a committee member in the community. He also has a beautiful family and works full time.

"It takes a village" is an African proverb that is often quoted when people talk about bringing communities together to create change. "Villages" are communities or neighborhoods of people with similar interests who help shape the people who were born and raised there by creating families even though they

GOING BACK CONT'D

may or may not be of blood relation. Villages were made of people like McKoy who took an interest in young people's social development. He was head and assistant coach for the Florence City Basketball League and volunteer for many back-to-school giveaways.

McKoy says that to him, "It takes a village," means being like-minded as a community but without having any hidden agendas. "Time is more valuable and precious than money," he says, "and we must offer our time over money when it's appropriate." He says that what has happened in society is that people push money toward issues as an instant fix, trying to make them go away. Offering money has become a hurried process. But what we must do is show the next generation that we value how they feel."

Volunteering is about giving, contributing and helping other individuals and the community at large. It is working with others to make a meaningful contribution to a better community. People volunteer for an endless variety of reasons. Many people want to gain experience, acquire new skills, meet new people or expand their network of contacts as a way to get a new job or start a career. Others just want to give back to their community, help a friend or promote a worthwhile activity (<http://www.energizeinc.com/art/value-volunteering>).

McKoy stated that he wants to make a difference and change lives. People always remember what you do and how you make them feel. His volunteerism just doesn't end with strangers. He makes sure to run errands for his mother or other family members. He washes his mother's car or takes care of other things she may need. Though McKoy volunteers a big portion of his time, he is employed with an organization that assists adult youth and young people. Eckerd Connects is a Christian-based company that helps people find employment and get back to work. Its mission is to provide and share solutions that promote the well-being of children, young adults and families in need. The organization works through the Workforce Innovating and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program, which is designed to develop a skilled workforce that meets the needs of business and industry to compete in a global economy by helping jobseekers access training, education and employment. WIOA is a federal program administered in South Carolina through the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (SCWORKS). McKoy's reach to assisting people is an opportunity that he does not take lightly, and he hopes that the village will continue to grow.

KEEPING HER PROMISE TO GIVE BACK by Anna Bowman



Lenora Caldwell

LAKE CITY - Lenora Caldwell always knew that she wanted to one day become a volunteer in her community. However, the single parent of two children knew that she had to prioritize her time and focus on the well-being of her family first, and always. Throughout the years, however, she would occasionally take time out of her busy schedule to take her children to several community events, and she

thoroughly enjoyed sharing special memories with her children. Caldwell recalled making the decision to put volunteering on her to-do list in the future. "I made the decision that when my children left home to go to college, I would give back to my community, a promise I'm proud that I kept to myself," she said.

Caldwell enthusiastically began volunteering with both the Pee Dee Coalition (a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to the reduction of sexual assault, family violence and child abuse and to the needs of its victims). She is celebrating her eighth year of volunteerism with Artsfield, an annual, nine-day art competition in Lake City for artists from across the country. These two programs are very diverse, but she admires their mission of service to the community.

Volunteering with the Pee Dee Coalition is more challenging, Caldwell admits, because of the nature of the service(s) the agency provides to its clientele. But because of her years of experience working in the school system, she realized how important it is for youth and adults to have a compassionate ally, working on their behalf. "I like being around people," she

stated. "When I volunteer, I get an opportunity to meet a lot of people," and this is one aspect of volunteering that she has always found appealing.

The nine-day Artfield event is always a joy for Caldwell to interact with the community. This year, she not only volunteered for the event, but she was instrumental in recruiting others to volunteer for the event also. "I try to encourage people to volunteer, and I truly enjoy sharing my personal stories of volunteering with the community," she added.

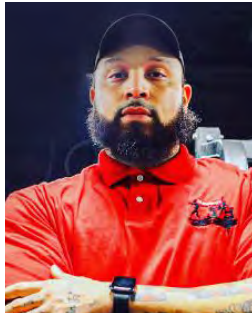
The pandemic caused her to volunteer less in the community, she admitted, but she knew that there were people who needed assistance during these very uncertain times, so she founded alternative ways (via social media, phone, text) to offer her assistance. "I devoted a lot of my time to families who need help in getting their children back in school face to face and help with anything else they may have needed during this time," she said.

Caldwell's passion for helping people stems from her stellar 20-year career in the educational field. Currently, she serves as the Student Services facilitator, District Outreach and job coach for Lake City High School (Florence County School District Three).

The Lake City native (born in Sumter) is a single parent of two adult children. Her son Anthony Caldwell, 31, of Hartsville, is a provider elder in the South Carolina United Methodist Conference for two churches, Kingsville UMC and Centenary UMC. Her daughter Tomika Caldwell resides in Charleston and is a program coordinator at MUSC in Charleston. She is a proud mom of two felines: Teddy and Grady.

A graduate of Coker University in Hartsville with a Bachelor of Social Work degree, Caldwell is active in her home church, Mount Beulah United Methodist Church in Lake City, and she attends both Kingsville and Centenary UMC churches.

AN IMPACT BEYOND BOXING AND FITNESS by Adalia Ellis



Jonathan Strickland

OLANTA—“It’s not just a gym, it’s a movement” reads the motto on the Strickland’s Gym website. A native of Olanta, Jonathan Strickland, opened the Lake City gym in April 2016. They offer a variety of fitness options in addition to boxing. Strickland’s journey from boxer to entrepreneur really is one of stepping into business as a result of his dedication to being of service to others.

Strickland grew up boxing, getting his start at Weed and Seed under the tutelage of Larry James and Joe Parks. He was heavily involved in the sport until a car accident cut his boxing career short. Following this drastic change in his life, Strickland began to think about how boxing was important to him as a young person. “I knew how boxing helped me, so I wanted to return the favor to my local youth. So I started training people in my backyard. Then I rented a small space. It became what we have now at Strickland’s Boxing and Fitness.”

If ever there was an example that demonstrates the impact of volunteerism, Strickland’s life is one of them. When asked why volunteerism is important, he stated, “If everybody takes, and nobody gives, then the world will be all used up, and there will not be anything left for the next generation, and I just like the fact

of helping spread love and kindness in the world.”

Through his gym, Strickland partners with other organizations to alleviate suffering, to bring much-needed support to those in need and to mentor youth. Some examples of what they do include assisting with food and clothing drives, supporting Stop the Violence rallies and hosting events to raise funds for various causes. The mentorship of youth is very important to him because he says, “If we don’t inspire and show them how to give back, we will just be adding to the problems of the world.”

Service to others is at the heart of what Strickland brings to the community. For him, helping people is the best thing in the world. “I think we learn selflessness by helping the world and we learn how to love through helping people. We also learn humility because I know I’m always thinking how glad I am to lend a helping hand. You never know when you will need a helping hand. Through service, you can learn courage, magnanimity, ambition and integrity.”

All of these gifts that service brings to a person’s life are not only applicable in the boxing ring but to living a life that is a gift to others. Strickland’s gym is just that to many people, and whether you are wanting to start a boxing career, get in shape or stay fit, his gym is not only a gym. It is a movement—a movement that brings positivity to the world through service to others.

For more information regarding Strickland’s Gym visit www.stricklandsboxing.com.

FOLLOWING THE PATH TO HIS PURPOSE by Adalia Ellis



Kenneth Smith

DILLON—The Dillon Long Term Recovery Group was established by Kenneth Smith as a result of natural disasters in Dillon and Marion counties. The flooding in 2015 affected residents in profound ways. Through a combination of using his own funds and organizing a benefit concert, Smith was able to bring much needed aid to those most harshly affected. Through his individual initiative to provide much

needed aid, people began to associate his name with service, volunteerism and dedication to helping others. In the wake of Hurricane Matthew in 2016, he was invited to brainstorm with elected officials and other community organizers to respond to the disaster. As a result of that meeting, he was asked to take charge of organizing the relief effort, and The Dillon Long Term Recovery group was born.

Smith acknowledges that there were many obstacles in the beginning with regard to creating a new organization and retaining volunteers. “Meetings were held at the local library. Initially, many people showed up. They thought it would be seasonal, but my vision was much more long term. Eventually the volunteer numbers dwindled.” Through on the ground research, he and a group of seven individuals who would serve on the board were able to get a good read on the reality of what people were experiencing and what was uniquely needed in Dillon. Collaborating with other service-oriented organizations was a significant next step. “Harvest Hope Food Bank was instrumental in the beginning for support efforts for mobile food pantries in Dillon County. I attend meetings of state level organizations such as the South Carolina Disaster Recovery Organization. I have partnered with Samaritan’s Purse, Catholic Charities, Umcors, Harvest Hope Food Bank, Red Cross, Pee Dee Council of Government, The

South Carolina Emergency Management Division, Disaster Recovery 360, Eastern Carolina Community Foundation, Food Lion and Sandhill Telephone Cooperative.” Smith is proud of a most recent endeavor with Habitat for Humanity and the possibilities for the citizens of Dillon County.

By expanding his base of collaboration, Smith, through The Dillon Long Term Recovery Group, is able to offer services to the elderly, renters, businesses denied the SBA loan, low-income families, single-parent households and the disabled. “Recovery is not only about the restoration of structures, systems and services—although they are critical. A successful recovery is also about individuals and families being able to rebound from their losses and sustain their physical, social, economic and spiritual well-being.”

It is very obvious that volunteerism is an important part of Smith’s life. He says, “It is important to me because it is in my DNA, and the principles were embedded years ago through my Christian growth as a child and learning how to be a servant and how to serve. It also brings me real joy to see the appreciation on individuals’ faces and being able to bless without it always being monetary.”

In the same way he grew up learning how to be a servant and how to serve, he feels it is vital for young people to be engaged in service to others. “It will instill some discipline and structure in their life. It also builds self-esteem and confidence. I believe that when I was growing up, and we had to volunteer, it also taught us to respect our elders and understand that there was a structure to follow when we worked with someone, a place of business, church or community.”

Through following the path of service to his fellow man, Kenneth Smith found his purpose, and The Dillon Long Term Recovery Group was formed. Through this organization, so many people’s lives are being positively impacted. If you or someone you know needs assistance or if you want to learn more or want to become involved, visit: www.dilloncountyltrg.org.

BACKPACK BUDDIES PROGRAM FILLS NEED IN MARION

by Ta'Meeka Epps



From the bottom, counter clockwise: Sydney Hooks, Lindsey Morgan (a teacher who also helps), Scott Collins and Maribeth Osborn.

2013-2014 by dedicated and passionate individuals who happen to be teachers.

Backpack Buddies of Marion County is currently headed by three public school teachers – Sydney Hooks (president), Maribeth Osborn (board member) and Scott Collins (founder), all of Marion High School. Hooks is in her 8th year of teaching as a math educator, Osborn her 29th year of teaching as a special needs educator and Collins his 27th year of teaching as an art educator.

While creating a safe space for learning to occur and building rapport with the students, Collins saw a need and made a commitment to deliver a solution. For so many students, school is possibly the only place where they receive a meal, and when the weekend rolls around, that source of food is placed on pause.

Collins sensed the likelihood that some of his students and those of his colleagues may be struggling to obtain sustenance throughout the weekend. Through grassroots efforts and dedication of a small intentional team, they began the journey to fill backpacks

MARION-Educators personify what it means to serve. Their service reaches beyond the four walls of the classroom and beyond the scope of the curriculum. They witness, firsthand, what the effects of going without a basic need, such as food, have on a student's ability to learn and be successful. The Backpack Buddies program was founded during the school year of

and spirits along the way.

Osborn was one of the first to answer the call to serve. She volunteered to spearhead the committee to prepare the weekly bags. In 2016, Hooks stepped into role of president for the program rounding out the core of Backpack Buddies. "Backpack Buddies has been a huge blessing to the children in need of Marion County, and to me personally," Osborn explained. "I am so thankful to the Lord for putting it on Scott Collins' heart to start Backpack Buddies years ago."

The slogan for the program aligns with the reasoning behind its creation: "Because Hunger doesn't take the weekend Off." Distressing, yet true. Backpack Buddies serves all the public schools in Marion County. It reaches children ages four through 19. Currently, approximately 108 children are being fed through the program. Bags are delivered to each of the schools weekly through a great team of support volunteers.

From the first step of the journey, Backpack Buddies has been maned by educators. Those who still find their place in the classrooms and those retired. During the closing of schools due to the COVID-19 virus, Leon Sturkey (director of Operations for Marion County Schools) and Tim Perkins (director of Transportation) stepped in and made sure food was delivered.

Backpack Buddies is supported by local churches, businesses and individuals. Pee Dee Electric Co-Op, Anderson Brothers Bank, Marco Rural Water, EagleWing Tribute Band, the Eastern Carolina Community Foundation, Pee Dee Peanut Farmers and Pee Dee Academy, to name a few. Through their donations of food and financial contributions, the program is able to be a resource to the community in which it stands. As teachers and volunteers, they understand the future relies upon our children– "the least of these" – and that where one has the capacity to meet a need, they must step into the role.

THE HEART OF LAKE CITY

by Les Echols



Reveley Thomy

a young lady who has volunteered a lot of her time and talents to non-profits and service agencies throughout the years.

Thomy began volunteering in 1977 as pianist/organist/cantor at St. Philip Catholic Church in Lake City, where she began the role of volunteer secretary in 2010. Later she became volunteer director of the St. Philip Outreach Center, which gives out food and clothing to those in need in lower Florence County.

A Kingstree native, Thomy is currently a member of Lake City Concert Series Board of Directors, president of Lake City Community Theater, a member of Delta Kappa Gamma-Psi Chapter (educators' organization) and a member of the Florence Regional Arts Alliance grants review panel. "I am a past member of the Board of Directors for Dramatic Coffee Beans, a non-profit in Lake City started by

Carla Angus that allows high schoolers to use drama to educate students and others on different social issues that daily challenge students," she explained.

Thomy also volunteers with Art Fields, a nine-day art competition in Lake City. "ArtFields is another of my favorites," she explained. "To have an event this major in our special town is incredible, so I am thrilled that I have helped a small bit each year since its inception. I love welcoming visitors to Lake City, informing them of activities happening in the area and letting them see what a welcoming town Lake City is. I was spending so much time volunteering during this special week when Lake City is flooded with visitors that, after a few years, the ArtFields' Team made me one of the lead volunteers," said Thomy.

Thomy is a graduate of Coker College with a BA in early childhood and elementary education, earning a Master of Education in early childhood education from the University of South Carolina. She taught kindergarten in Florence School District #3 for 28 years of her 31-year teaching career. She is married to Greg Thomy and has three children and four grandchildren.

"Volunteers are the heart of a community, and volunteering is one of the small ways that we can give back. I encourage others to look for organizations in your own area that might need a helping hand. Without volunteers, many of the activities within a community would not happen at all," concluded Thomy.

ENGAGE IN SELF-CARE FIRST by Les Echols



Dr. Renee Fitch

Renee Fitch is a licensed professional counselor with a Doctor of Education in counseling psychology. She owns and operates Carolina Counseling Connection LLC, a private practice for counseling adults, children and families, since 2005. She specializes in child/family issues, trauma, grief, depression and anxiety. Fitch utilizes a holistic approach to healing including, but not limited to, expressive arts therapies as an avenue to healing through those sessions and community. She also runs a holistic based collective called “The Healing Arts Exchange.”

Fitch loves people and truly views what she does as rewarding job and couldn’t dream of doing anything else. The Healing Arts Exchange is holistic-based wellness center that consists of a collective of practitioners and local artists/artisans. They are located at the historic book exchange on West Palmetto Street and have existed as a collective for three years. The idea for the collective was created when she realized through working with her clients that just counseling sessions were just not enough (even with family support) to completely heal and that they did not have access in this community to some of the resources that were needed. So she began exploring these things her clients were telling her that often were associated with nutrition, self care and expressive outlets such as dance, music, gardening, art, etc. She began collaborating with a dear friend and herbalist, Angelina Shuman with Wild Earth Herbs.

They partnered and began to bring a holistic approach to healing and the community through The Healing Arts Exchange Collective. Shuman provides online health consultations and small batched hand-crafted plant medicine that they carry on site. The collective also has massage therapy, yoga (group and one-on-one sessions) and Reiki sessions by Kimberly McKenzie and recently partnered with Nate Jolley, who runs P.O.E. LLC. Jolley uses profound wisdom, the power of music and other unique methods to heal. He also offers a variety of services including, but not limited to, dream consultation and ancestral healing.

They support local artisans through various art shows and music events held on site and offer holistic based workshops and hold events monthly that are arts related. They have local artisans that house their art here for sale. We have hosted local book signing events as well.

Healing Exchange holds a monthly Singer Song-Writer Circle on the third Thursday of every month and Open Mic Night the third Saturday of every month. They have art shows quarterly and other events as requested. The space in the art gallery is also available to be rented as a venue for events. There is a discount for the event space rental if it is arts related.

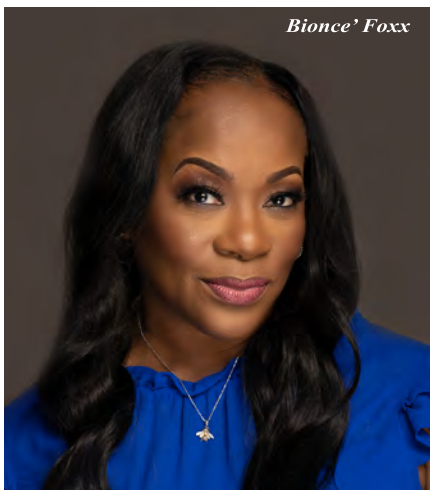
Healing is a lifelong journey and first begins with identifying the source of what is causing the distress and identifying a support system whether it is through family or in the community. It also is identifying what the individual needs to be able to

regulate emotions so he or she can cope and heal. Some of those methods include, but are not limited to, movement/dance, art expression, music, yoga, massage and nutrition/focus on lifestyle habits. Healing is multimodality and takes a holistic approach to healing the whole body. There never is just one way. It’s different for every person. It starts with that person’s story in the therapist’s office-- always. Then the client and the therapist seek to find his or her strengths and what inspires him or her. Sometimes this takes some digging because a lot of people have trouble identifying what they like to do, what inspires them or what brings them joy. These things often include art, music, dance/movement, writing, poetry, connecting with others and with community, sharing experiences etc. Healing is important to be productive in life because even though people may choose to ignore a negative experience no matter how great or small, it is always there. When negative experiences are suppressed, they will eventually resurface. There is a strong connection between body and mind, and if they are not dealt with, they affect people physically, emotionally and socially.

No one can reach his or her full potential and dreams when healing is not sought. The first step to healing from trauma is to be able to “tell your story” and identify your emotions and struggles after your trauma. This seems to be the most powerful when healing from trauma. Then it is important to identify ways to express your struggles with this trauma through various modalities so that you are able to release that experience and process it. Support from others and finding outlets in the community in a way that advocates for healing is also an important step in healing. Healing is a lifelong a process and a journey to finding where a person’s strength lies from within and setting boundaries. It is the ability to engage in more self care and find ways to channel both positive and negative experiences through various modalities--including but not limited to counseling, finding a purpose, healing from past negative experiences by identifying what those are, telling their story and living a more holistic lifestyle physically, socially and emotionally. They believe that often can be achieved through movement; healthier lifestyle choices; and expressive arts such as art, music and dance, yoga and other self-care modalities such as massage and nutrition. Self-care is important because many deserve it. If people do not take care of self, then they cannot be the best self to their families, friends and community. In order to live their best life and give back to others, people must first engage in self-care.

****Follow us on Instagram and Facebook at The Healing Arts Exchange.**





Bionce' Foxx

FOXX SPEAKS ON MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

by Dawn "D.A." Goodwin

Bionce' Foxx is an on-air talent for The Flo 102.9 and has been a radio personality for the past 20 years. While her original plan to be a TV personality came later in her career, she is ecstatic that becoming a radio personality is the path she was given. On this path, she has been able to use her platform as a voice of encouragement to promote mental health awareness as she knows the negative stigma attached to having mental health issues.

As a radio personality and influencer, Foxx decided to bring attention to mental health awareness through her platform as a broadcaster, where she is heard by hundreds of thousands of people from all types of backgrounds. She said, "Mental illnesses affect one in five adults, and the target demo of my listening audience is women ages 25 to 54. I want to let people know that there is nothing wrong with having mental health issues and that there are several resources available for those who need them to help them cope and function. If I have an opportunity to say a positive word or give encouraging and enlightening information to someone who may be listening, I will."

"I have spoken on various panels about mental health issues and have attended workshops to gain more information about the importance of informing people that it is okay to seek professional help, talk to a therapist, take prescribed medications and exercise to help with their mental health. I've also partnered with mental health professionals on ways I can help people who talk to me, or reach out on social media about problems they're having in their lives

whether it's about relationships, issues at work, school or within the family. But because I am not a medical professional, I can only offer resources they can contact to get the professional assistance they need."

Foxx wants women, especially women of color, to realize that they are not alone in having mental health issues: "Professional assistance is available now more than ever because many people have been experiencing mental health issues due to the pandemic, civil unrest and other factors that can affect us mentally. Whether on the air or on social media, or even in person, I remind women that they should not be embarrassed or ashamed of seeking help for their mental issues. They should be proud that they are helping themselves, their loved ones and others by doing so. Also, seeking professional help can be totally confidential, and only those who they want to know should know about it."

"Because people often look up to celebrities and public figures, I think high-profile women like Megan Markle, Tamar Braxton and Taraji P. Henson speaking out on mental health challenges allows women to see that these celebrities go through the same thing that they are experiencing. It helps them to find comfort in knowing that they are not alone and that if it affects someone who is well-known, popular or successful, it can give them hope that they, too, can be treated and possibly overcome their issues," said Foxx.

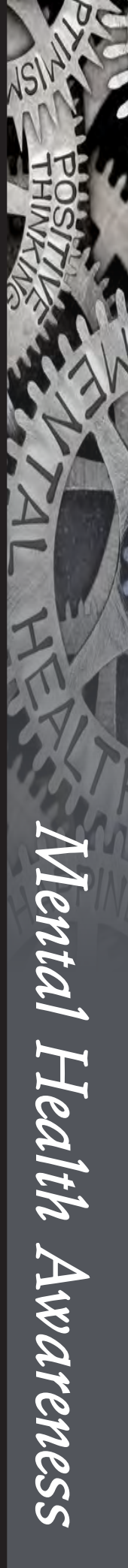
Through the years, Foxx has spoken at town hall meetings and community forums to encourage lawmakers to provide mental health services in those communities that need it most and to reopen many mental health centers that were closed in underserved communities.

In addition, she is a proponent for mental health professionals to partner with law enforcement when dealing with those who have mental health issues who are arrested, detained or interacting with police. She pointed out, "Mental health issues affect so many, whether it be men, women and even children. And since most men feel as though they have to hide their feelings or not admit to or express their mental health issues, they really need to be encouraged to seek professional assistance. Unfortunately, there have been many instances where men have committed very serious crimes of passion or other crimes because they have held in their emotions, didn't take prescribed medication or have not been diagnosed due to not wanting to be labeled as having mental illness."

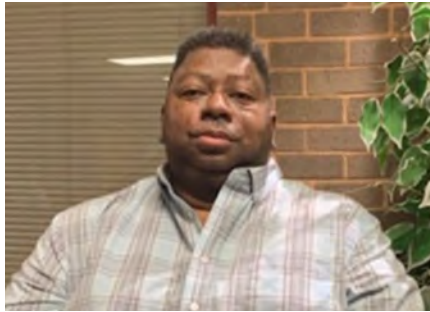
Foxx does not believe there are enough resources currently available to men in underserved communities to seek the help they need. Therefore, she plans to continue to advocate for change for men to receive support, especially in communities where Black men in particular are faced with so many life challenges. Her hope is that anyone living with mental health issues can receive help, regardless of age, gender or socio-economic background. Through her continued encouragement, others will hopefully find comfort in seeking mental health services.

"Assistance is available 24 hours a day," she said. "Do not ever hesitate to seek the help you need or help a family member or friend who may need assistance. Mental health hotlines can point you in the direction of a wealth of resources that can help."

You can catch Foxx on The Flo 102.9 Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET.



OVERCOMING THROUGH ART by Dr. Susan Carter



Elvis Nelson



Doreatha Hickson

Elvis Nelson's artistic talents have helped him to overcome low self-esteem and depression. Although he struggled with "feeling loved and appreciated" for many years, Nelson credits the "push" from his mental health counselors Joanne Reaves and Doreatha Hickson with helping him out of a depression two years ago. Acting on their advice to develop his innate talents, Nelson committed himself to gardening, drawing and solving complex math problems to stave off negative feelings and self-doubt. For example, he invested in two oak trees that the salesperson warned him would be so slow-growing that wouldn't "live long enough to get any shade." Today those trees tower over his yard, testifying to his belief in himself and his gardening skills. Nelson visits his garden several times a day, carefully tending to the vegetables that he shares with friends. Helping people by giving them the vegetables he's grown and the artwork he's made "is like medicine to me," he says with a proud smile.

Although she grew up in the mountain west region of the United States in Ogden, Utah, Sara Stoddard's interests in the



Sara Stoddard with copies of her artwork

natural world and arts and crafts helped her transition to South Carolina. She moved here to join her parents as a young adult after completing an associate of arts degree in illustration and zoology in Utah. As a child, Stoddard struggled with mental health issues and lamented that she "couldn't control how my mind works." Diagnosed with schizophrenia at age nine, she learned ways to cope with the illness by "developing a list of what is real and what is not real" and checking the lists to discourage paranoid thoughts. Stoddard's artistic talents have helped her cope with her symptoms as well. She delves into fantasy and mythology to create drawings that express her unique, creative style. She is talented in the arts of origami and quilling, using paper to create flowers and Christmas scenes for others to enjoy. Her art is appreciated by others who purchase it, as well as her hand-crafted earrings. She has also created unique gifts, such as a dragon made out of pipe cleaners (pictured). Stoddard credits her therapeutic use of art and her involvement in animal advocacy for her mental health recovery.

Veronica Pinkston's turbulent history includes motherhood, domestic abuse and



Veronica Pinkston holding up her birdcage

years of depression and anxiety after she lost custody of her four children. She first became aware of the power of art to heal when she was given a 1000-word puzzle during a psychiatric hospitalization. Pinkston still remembers that it was a picture of a birdcage that she painted purple, her favorite color, after she completed putting it together. After receiving help and support from a peer support group and counselor at Pee Dee Mental Health, Pinkston gained the strength to work toward goals again. She now has a healthy relationship and a supportive social network. She enjoys baking cakes, pies, brownies and cheesecakes to serve her neighbors and friends. She is planning to collaborate with a food truck owner to



Hezekiah William's artwork

provide desserts for her business this year. Pinkston stresses that her peer group coordinator, Brenda Cooper, was instrumental in her recovery. She looks forward to "something new every day" and is motivated by the recovery stories her peers' tell in their support group.

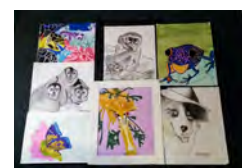
Aisha Hawkins is a bubbly 20-year-old with a talent for drawing and music. Her specialty is drawing panda bears, which are so attractive that people ask to use her drawings as the template for tattoos. She has drawn two panda bear tattoos, and several others have requested one. Hawkins says that her drawings come from her emotions, and she is most proud of a unique butterfly drawing that "contains all the emotions," in one image. She also draws to clarify personal boundaries with people in her social network. For example, she depicts the emotional closeness of family members through a family tree arranged by how much she interacts with each member, not their biological relationship. Hawkins hopes to study art in college and move into her own apartment in the next year so that she can continue to use her art to support her mental health.



McCown holds up her birdcage



Keith Skinner's artwork



Chantell B. Beaufort's artwork



The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the importance of good mental health to everyone's attention. An unfortunate side effect of the measures we need to take to remain physically safe, such as social distancing and avoiding face-to-face contact with others, is increased loneliness, anxiety and depression for many. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), "Elevated levels of adverse mental health conditions, substance use, and suicidal ideation were reported by adults in the United States in June 2020. The prevalence of symptoms of anxiety disorder was approximately three times those reported in the second quarter of 2019 (25.5 percent versus 8.1 percent), and prevalence of depressive disorder was approximately four times that reported in the second quarter of 2019 (24.3 percent versus 6.5 percent)" (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm>).

Although concern and dissatisfaction are to be expected during a worldwide health crisis, excessive worry and isolation can lead to mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. This is especially true for those who were experiencing high levels of stress before the pandemic struck last March. Financial, relationship and health problems prior to the pandemic ratchet up one's response to the new stressor, resulting in more severe sleep and eating dysfunction. Changes such as insomnia and weight gain or loss of more than 10 pounds signal that an individual may be struggling with his or her mental health. Feeling irritable or not getting along with others at home or work is another sign of internal distress.

Fortunately, these problems often can be alleviated with good self-care. The best way to withstand stress, whether from the pandemic or other personal problems, is by developing and nurturing positive relationships with others. Being on friendly terms with people who are important to you and with those you see frequently provides a sense of calmness and security that helps you weather temporary upsets. Being able to express your feelings and receive support and understanding stimulates your brain to release the "feel good hormones" – dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins" (<https://www.healthline.com/health/happy-hormone>). While close bonds with family members and long-term friends are ideal, positive connections with co-workers and acquaintances that you see regularly provide these same mental health benefits. So, even if close family and friends are not available to you, developing a friendly relationship with a grocery store cashier or mail carrier is also good for your mental health. Emotional connection is the primary way to maintain good mental health.

Other measures that reduce our levels of depression and anxiety include self-care and exercise. Eat regular, healthy meals and get at least seven hours of sleep for maximum functioning.

Don't postpone routine appointments and screenings as cancer and other illness don't care that we are in a pandemic and will continue to occur whether they are diagnosed early or not. Breast cancer and colon cancer are now being detected at later stages of disease due to postponed screenings." According to EPIC, a popular electronic health record system, there has been a drop of between 86 and 94 percent in preventive cancer screenings in 2020 for cervical, colon and breast cancer across the United States, presumably due to access (<https://ehrn.org/articles/delays-in-preventive-cancer-screenings-during-covid-19-pandemic/>). The more severe disease requires more complex surgeries and raises the risk of death, creating increased stress and likelihood of mental health challenges for the individual and the family.

One of the most potent stress relievers is exercise. Even mild activity such as walking for 30 minutes a day, broken up into 10-minute segments if necessary, can reduce stress levels and improve health. Walking with a friend combines two mental health boosts: emotional connection and physical activity. Make plans to exercise with a friend several times a week, and you will experience increased life satisfaction that will help you become more resilient to life challenges (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/exercise-and-stress/art-20044469>).

Although the above suggestions appear simple and are known to be effective in combatting mild stressors, they are difficult to implement once depression or anxiety has significantly impacted the individual. Symptoms of depression and anxiety make it likely that the individual will withdraw from others, sleep and/or eat too much or too little and develop a hopeless outlook. Individuals experiencing high levels of COVID stress may express extreme fear of leaving the safety of their home and/or think that it is likely that life will never return to normal. This is because their depression, combined with overly negative news stories, has distorted their thought process. With high levels of stress, the risk of suicidal thinking and even attempts becomes possible. If you or someone you know is suffering because of depression or anxiety, reach out to a mental health professional. Counselors can help you determine what is bothering you and, together, you can develop a plan for recovery. Recovery is the return to the effective way you were functioning before the symptoms affected your home and work life.

Community mental health centers have counselors, nurses and physicians who work with you to develop a treatment plan to suit your needs. Often, this will include learning about how to relax through mindfulness, changing negative thought patterns, becoming appropriately assertive and learning to accept what you cannot change. It is important to care for our mental health the same way that we do our physical health. By becoming aware of the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety in ourselves and others and reaching out to community resources for help when needed, we can reduce our levels of stress and achieve greater satisfaction with our lives.

Community Resources for Mental Health and Substance Use Concerns:

- Pee Dee Mental Health <https://www.peedeementalhealth.org/>
- South Carolina Department of Mental Health <https://scdmh.net/>
- Office of Suicide Prevention <http://osp.scdmh.org/>
- SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services <https://www.daodas.sc.gov/>

THOMPSON NAMED DCSD 2020-21 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Articles submitted by Christopher McKagen, Communications Specialist



Elizabeth Thompson

DARLINGTON-Elizabeth Thompson, an English teacher at Mayo High School for Math, Science and Technology, will represent Darlington County School District (DCSD) as District Teacher of the Year for 2020-21.

Superintendent Dr. Tim Newman made the announcement during the district's annual convocation. The district held its convocation digitally this year and streamed the announcement to employees across the county.

Thompson is English Department chair at Mayo High, and she teaches English and Literature there. Thompson's selection as District Teacher of the Year comes after a thorough and intensive judging process that included an extensive application and a panel interview.

"Mrs. Thompson brings a fierce dedication for her students every day," said Newman. "She embraces the challenges of emerging technologies and approaches, and she cares for the success of each of her students. We are proud to have her represent the Darlington County School District, and I congratulate her selection as District Teacher of the Year."

Thompson has taught at Mayo High since 2002, and she taught English and social studies at Lamar High School for three years in two stints prior. She has a total of 25 years teaching experience.

She is National Board certified in English language arts/adolescence and young adulthood, and she holds a Master of Arts in secondary English education from Converse College. Thompson also holds a Bachelor of Arts in history from Converse and is certified in advanced placement for English language and composition, English literature and U.S. history.

"I am honored and humbled to be chosen as the 2020-2021 DCSD District Teacher of the Year," Thompson said. "Many teachers and colleagues who are my role models are former school or district teachers of the year, so I definitely have some big shoes to fill. I am looking forward to working with Dr. Newman, the district personnel, the Darlington County Board of Education and, of course, our talented, dedicated Teacher Forum. It's going to be a great year!"

Judges, which included former Teachers of the Year and district administrators, selected Thompson from five finalists. The four remaining finalists will serve as the district's 2020-21

Honor Roll Teachers of the Year. They are:

- Jennifer Cooper, Darlington High School
- Jeffery Tadlock, Hartsville Middle School
- Michelle Turner, North Hartsville Elementary School
- Colleen Sullivan, West Hartsville Elementary School/ Bay Road Elementary

Judges selected the five finalists from the pool of 2020-21 School Teachers of the Year. These peer-selected teachers will serve on the district's Teacher Forum and Leadership Council, acting as teacher leaders and advisers for the district.

All 23 School Teachers of the Year are:

- Nateka Cole, Brockington Elementary Magnet School
- Jhemar Sabido, Brunson-Dargan Elementary School/

- J.L. Cain Elementary
- Kendal Edwards, Cain Elementary School/ J.L. Cain Elementary
- Mary Lesley, Carolina Elementary School
- Latrica Jackson, Darlington County Institute of Technology
- Susan Tomlinson, Darlington County Intervention School
- Jennifer Cooper, Darlington High School
- Jennifer Middaugh, Darlington Middle School
- Jennifer McGraw, Hartsville High School
- Jeffery Tadlock, Hartsville Middle School
- Pam Braddock, Lamar Elementary School/ Lamar-Spaulling Elementary
- Joshua Pierce, Lamar High School
- Elizabeth Thompson, Mayo High School for Math, Science & Technology
- Michelle Turner, North Hartsville Elementary School
- Lacy Jackson, Pate Elementary School
- Desiray Rushing, Rosenwald Elementary/Middle School
- Beth Hall Caulder, Southside Early Childhood Center
- Dee Driggers, Spaulling Elementary School/ Lamar-Spaulling Elementary
- McKenzie Pierce, Spaulling Middle School
- Jason Earle, St. John's Elementary School
- Kathryn Charleston, Thornwell School for the Arts
- Ashlynnne Charlton, Washington Street Elementary School/ Bay Road Elementary
- Colleen Sullivan, West Hartsville Elementary School/ Bay Road Elementary

HARTSVILLE MIDDLE'S TADLOCK AWARDED SCHOLARSHIP



Jeffery Tadlock

HARTSVILLE- Hartsville Middle School's (HMS) Jeffery Tadlock is one of 10 winners of the 2021 Dr. Elizabeth Gressette Professional Development Scholarship. The \$1,500 scholarship is sponsored by the Palmetto State Teachers Association's (PSTA) Foundation for Professional Development and is awarded annually to encourage and support PSTA members in pursuing

advanced degrees.

Tadlock currently serves as a sixth grade science teacher at HMS, and he is pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in organizational leadership at Columbia International University.

Applicants for the scholarship must be a PSTA member for at least three years and be currently enrolled in a higher education program. The scholarship winners will be recognized at the PSTA Annual Business Meeting on May 1.

PSTA is the largest professional education association for teachers in South Carolina. Dr. Elizabeth Gressette, a former public school kindergarten teacher, was the founding member of PSTA in 1976. PSTA provides professional benefits to support its members throughout their careers in education. More information can be found at www.palmettoteachers.org.

TEACHERS ARE VALUABLE: #TEACHERAPPRECIATION by De'Angela Haynes



Sherry Harrison Jackson

COLUMBIA-Oftentimes, when we hear the word “appreciation,” we may think of terms of endearment, saying thanks to someone or because of something’s that happen to us, but appreciation is also a financial term. Per investopedia.com, “**Appreciation**, or capital appreciation, is an increase in the price or value of an asset. **Appreciation** occurs when the market value of an asset is higher than the price an investor paid for that asset. It can refer to an increase in value of real

estate, stocks, bonds, or any other class of investable asset.” There are times, when the profession of teaching is not valued as an important or top profession, but this is not so and Sherry Harrison Jackson is certainly valuable as a teacher.

After working for Blue Cross and Blue Shield for several years, Jackson began doing some self-work to discover her purpose in that particular season of her life. A friend suggested that she consider what she may have to offer to young people. Jackson decided to enter education and quickly realized this is what she is supposed to be doing. She has now been teaching for 15 years.

She became an educator through PACE, an alternative certification program. She is certified to teach any high school science course. Since beginning this career, she has taught all levels of learners in classes such as chemistry, advanced placement chemistry, physical science and forensic science. She has taught science in a traditional classroom setting as well as through project-based learning pedagogy. She enjoys creating lessons that allow students to make a connection to science in their everyday lives. Students learn the most when they are “doing” science instead of just hearing or reading about it.

Jackson believes that we are all life-long learners. It is important to her to create a student centered learning environment so that students know their role in the learning process, and they can grow academically and develop skills that are transferable beyond high school. Her classroom environment is welcoming and inclusive of all students, regardless of their background or learning abilities. She takes time during each semester to get to know each student and to incorporate his or her cultures and interests into the learning experience. Jackson thoroughly enjoys being with her students. They make each day exciting and fun, and she learns as much from them as they learn from her.

Preferred Classroom Solutions, LLC is a consulting business that Jackson established in 2017. The goal was to use her knowledge and skill set to improve the learning and teaching process for students and teachers. The services that she has provided include training on project-based learning implementation, one-on-one instructional coaching for teachers, curriculum development for business owners and tutorial sessions for high school and first-year college students.

A classroom can be defined as a learning environment. It is not specific to a school building. Jackson aids in creating the

optimal learning experience for all learners.

Jackson is originally from Florence but now resides in Columbia. She is a wife, mother and dog lover/owner. She graduated from Francis Marion University with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology with a minor in chemistry. She holds a Master of Science degree in curriculum, instruction and assessment from Walden University and a School Administration license from Gardner Webb University. She is currently a doctoral student at Walden University with a specialization in curriculum, instruction and assessment.

She loves science and helping students make a real world connection to what they are learning. In addition to teaching, she serves as the Science Department chair at Brookland Cayce High School.

Teaching is one of Jackson’s passions. In the evenings, she tutors high school and first-year college chemistry students through her business. In addition to teaching, she is a consultant to educators and business owners for curriculum development and organization of content created specifically for their audience.

Jackson’s hobbies include reading, traveling and gardening. She loves spending time with family and friends and believes in becoming the best version of herself so that she can empower those around her. This teacher certainly deserves appreciation because of the impact she has and is making.



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Appreciation



ANDERSON EARNS DISTRICT TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD *Submitted by LCSD*



Anderson in the kitchen

BISHOPVILLE-Lee County School District (LCSD) named Octavia Anderson the District Teacher of the Year for the 2020-2021 school year. Anderson joined the district during the 2016 school year. She currently serves as the Family and Consumer Science instructor at the Lee County Career and Technology Center.

Anderson's education, experience and knowledge enable her to use quality teaching practices and provide an exceptional learning environment for her students.

Anderson received her Bachelor of Science degree in family and consumer science from Winthrop University and her Master of Education in educational leadership from Texas State University. She is currently enrolled at Liberty University pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership.

While pursuing her degrees, Anderson continues to attend professional development workshops and conferences. The professional development sessions consist of tons of information about building classroom culture, teaching culinary online, life skills for high school students, personal finance, networking connections for emotional and social development, building relationships through leadership and many other quality sessions.

Anderson is no stranger to receiving accolades. A couple of years ago, she received the Outstanding Teacher of the Quarter Recognition at Lee Central High School. Then, she also received the Vocational Testing Assessment 100% Achievement Award from Ware County School District a few years ago.

When asked what attributes make you a good teacher Anderson replied, "I am patient, compassionate and strive to build caring relationships with my students. It has often been said that students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Throughout my 15 years of teaching, I have found that statement to be true, which is why I like to spend the first week of class building

relationships with my students and also building a positive learning community within my classroom."

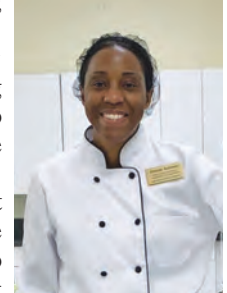
Anderson proudly and intentionally contributes to maintaining a professional school climate and positive learning environment at her school. She is a positive team leader who is willing to provide a helping hand to her colleagues and usually can be found encouraging and sharing positivity with her colleagues.

Anderson acknowledges that many of her professional development sessions have been very impactful on her professional growth and her student achievement. The sessions provided her with guidance, support and resources to assist her students. She received valuable information, ideas about instructional games and project-based learning activities that are both beneficial and enjoyable for her students.

Anderson shared her thoughts as it relates to encouraging students and building their confidence level. She mentioned that it is vital to help students gain confidence to help them succeed. She states, "For the students who are interested in education, the learning community should assist with keeping them on track. And for the students who have lost interest in education, the learning community has the responsibility to do what is needed to get them back on track." Anderson believes that working together we can make great strides towards accomplishing our goals of helping all students succeed.

She enjoys traveling, visiting history museums, doing adult coloring books, reading inspirational/motivational books, listening to music and shopping. Her favorite foods are salmon, broccoli and anything sweet.

Anderson also participates in different community service projects. Many of these community service projects are designed to assist community members who need clothing and food.



Chef Anderson



Florence 1 Schools' 2020-2021 Teacher of the Year

Lisa Raison

West Florence High School

When Lisa Raison saw her little brother struggling in school, she did not understand why, but she saw that he needed teachers to teach him the way he could learn. It was her first experience in seeing that not all students learn the same way, and this is what guided her to become a special education teacher.

Raison who has served as a special education teacher for well over the past two decades, teaches at West Florence High School. She is an active member of the Transition Alliance Committee which brings together the Vocational Rehabilitation Department, the Department of Social Services, and other community organizations to discuss ways to better prepare special education students to transition into life after high school.

Raison also connects her profession as a special education teacher to a community event, the Annual Future Success College and Career Day. She said that special education

students are the highest group of high school drop-outs, and she wants them thinking about their future so they are not thinking about dropping out of high school."

"I have several goals that I want to accomplish by hoisting this annual event," said Raison, the first one is to link the local community with my students in hopes of their seeing what is available to them. Secondly, I want them to become excited for their future and see the importance of having a transition plan when they leave high school. The annual event is successful as evidenced by the 100% graduation rate of seniors for 2020."

Raison, who serves as a member of the Florence 1 School's Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) program, provides trainings throughout the year for teachers and staff to teach them about autism characteristics and to give them tools that could be used to help these students flourish in their classrooms.

"Students with learning disabilities have normal intelligence," said Raison. "They just have a learning difference. They do not learn the same way as other students. It could be that they need it presented in a different way or taught using different vocabulary. They sometimes need it several times. However they learn, it is our job as educators to build that relationship with these students so that they, too, can reach their maximum potential in school."

Raison has worked to ensure that her students are participating in clubs, sports teams, and other extracurricular activities. "It is a win-win for all involved, and I couldn't be prouder of this program and happy for my students who are reaching their full potential," said Raison.

When Raison is not teaching, she serves as a passionate supporter of local animal

shelters and volunteers for them. She created and hosts a 5K race annually to raise money and awareness to the plight of homeless cats and dogs in the area. She also belongs to a local bike club that supports staying active and racial diversity.

Raison, who is a National Board-Certified Teacher, is a graduate of Rivier College in Nashua, New Hampshire with a double major in elementary and special education; and Lesley University in Cambridge Massachusetts, where she received a Masters of Integrating Technology in Education/Curriculum (Florence Cohort).

Raison was chosen as school teacher of the year last spring at West Florence High. The Florence 1 Schools teacher of the year application process required all school teacher of the year to complete an application packet earlier this school year. Teachers whose application packets received the highest scores became honor roll teachers. Raison, along with three other Florence 1 honor roll teachers---Jacob Gilliard, Savannah Grove Elementary; Lynn Howard, Sneed Middle; Frankie Sullivan, Southside Middle; all underwent classroom personal interviews by an outside panel of four teacher of the year selection committee members.



MARION COUNTY 2020 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Submitted by Deborah D. Wimberly, Office of Public Relations and Special Projects



Rhonda Shelley

MARION—One of Marion County’s own received the school district’s highest honor. Rhonda Shelley, a 1990 graduate of Marion High School and currently a kindergarten teacher at Easterling Primary School was recently named Marion County School District’s 2020 Teacher of the Year.

Upon graduating from Francis Marion University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in early childhood education, Shelley returned to Marion in the fall of 1996 and immediately went to work. Starting as a long-term substitute at Easterling Primary School, Shelley soon found herself signing a contract to teach 3rd grade at Marion Intermediate. The following year she returned to Easterling to teach 1st grade for a year before landing in kindergarten where she has been for the last 22 years.

Shelley can trace her interest in teaching back to her mother. “My mother, Francis Flowers, was one of the most loving and caring women I have ever known,” claimed Shelley. The owner of a private daycare, Francis Flowers had an assistant in her daughter, who would help read to the daycare babies, supervise outdoor playtime, assist with lunch and oversee naptime. She also helped her mother teach letters, numbers and shapes and sing nursery rhymes to their young charges.

Shelley also credits a former elementary teacher, Gwen Gore, for her decision to enter the teaching field. Gore was a science teacher at Marion Elementary who apparently didn’t use a traditional model of teaching in her classroom. She was, instead, very engaged with her students, showing excitement to see them with high-fives and hugs. Gore tossed candy to students who answered questions correctly, and she was always very visible. She created a classroom that was fun and safe and made every student feel smart. “It was then that I knew my calling,” stated Shelley. “I wanted to be that kind of teacher for future students.” And that is just what she is doing with her kindergarten students.

The positive impact on her students lasts for years as evidenced by the many notes she receives, messages she gets on Facebook and the number of high school seniors who are in the Teacher Cadet program who beg to do their internship in her classroom. She knows that she has become that teacher that has a lasting impact on her students.

But the classroom isn’t the only place you will see Shelley. Community involvement has always been very important to her. Over the years, she has volunteered with multiple organizations, keeping the community clean, working with the elderly, coaching cheerleaders, organizing equipment for ball teams, working the concession stands, being a scout leader and volunteering for Relay for Life. Within her school Shelley continues to work extra hours to mentor new teachers, take student teachers under her wing, organize community readers and facilitate a new program where kindergarten teacher mentor second grade students and give them jobs as a reward for making good choices.

What it all boils down to for Shelley is how the child feels

about his or her teacher. “Being a great teacher does not mean you’re the smartest, most creative or most well-known teacher in your school or community,” she said. “All of these things mean nothing if you do not have the relationships with your students.” Shelley believes that how a child feels about the teacher is key to a child who will do everything to behave and learn in the classroom. She learned this important lesson firsthand when she taught third grade. By creating a special relationship with a troubled student, she was able to provide the basic needs and guidance that eased the anger in his life. That special bond remained for many years, even when she transferred to another school. She believes that you teach with love. Every student has a story, and teachers cannot assume that just because a child is acting out that they are trying to be mean. Instead, they need to try to understand the why.

Shelley sees troubled students on the rise in classrooms due to a plethora of problems, including poverty, abusive home situations and a lack of strong positive role models. But she also sees students rising above their problems and developing a bright future for themselves that will lead to a better life for them and their families, which is why all students deserve an equal and safe education in Marion County.

“You could not find a more child centered educator as Mrs. Shelley,” commented Easterling Primary School Principal Mykea Jordan. “Her walk matches her talk.” Jordan expounded on the relationships Shelley builds with her students that lasts for years as evident by the number of students who return to see her. Jordan went on to say the relationship building isn’t with just students. “She is always willing to do what it takes to help our school and our students succeed.”

“We are honored to have such a compassionate and dedicated teacher to serve as our ambassador to promote teaching in Marion County. Mrs. Shelley’s love for her students and the teaching profession is evident from the moment that you enter her classroom!” stated superintendent, Dr. Kandace Bethea.



Teaching kids about money and finances is **DOG-GONE** important!

PALMETTO FIRST
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION



FINANCIAL

GIVING YOUNG MEMBERS A FIRM FINANCIAL START Submitted by Palmetto First Federal Credit Union

Every April, National Credit Union Youth Month serves to encourage kids to develop healthy saving habits by making savings fun and exciting. This campaign gives us the opportunity to engage with young members and show them that our credit union is there to help them throughout their financial journey.

A firm financial future starts with saving money for a rainy day. You don't have to save much, but it never hurts to have some cash set aside for life's little unexpected emergencies. Whether you've already started a savings account, need help planning for retirement or just choosing the right checking account, Palmetto First has what you need.



Dollar Dog (0-12 yrs)

Teach your kids how to save, spend and earn from a young age. Basic financial education isn't something typically being taught in schools, so we're giving our Palmetto First parents the resources to teach your kids the basics of money. You can open a Dollar Dog Kids Club Savings Account for each child in your family.

There will be special events and contests at the credit union, and Dollar Dog's Clubhouse is always open for learning, fun and games. A child must join the credit union to become a member of the Dollar Dog Kids Club. All accounts for members under age 18 must have a parent or guardian co-owner. Dollar Dog is for kids up to age 12.



MyLife Checking (13-18 yrs)

You're gaining more independence. You have more freedom and more responsibility. You're ready to start taking care of some things on your own... why not your money?

MyLife Checking is for teens like you who are ready to take their freedom to the next level. Save and spend your money when you want for the things you want. You can plan big—your first car, college, your own iPad—or small, having your own debit card when things come up. Either way, you decide.

It's your life, your responsibility and your plans. Make it happen!

CELEBRATE CREDIT UNION YOUTH MONTH

Open a **Dollar Dog Youth Account** for your child today!



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WHAT DO LOW INTEREST RATES MEAN FOR RETIREMENT?

When interest rates are low, you may question how this affects your financial strategy. Low rates can make investors worry about lagging returns. Investors can consider adding income annuities to retirement portfolios.

How to compare income-generating solutions when interest rates are low.

When looking to achieve financial security in retirement, individuals need to compare a range of available income-generating options. Creating retirement income from bonds or CDs may produce less income than annuities due to unknown lifespan.

With income annuities, longevity risk is transferred to insurance companies, to create higher levels of safe retirement income. Investors need not time the market when buying income annuities. Not only are income annuities less sensitive to interest rates, their payouts are not tied to the market. Some mutual companies like New York Life Insurance Company offer income annuities with increased income via non-guaranteed dividends.

Income annuities have limited withdrawal features, and investors should read the policies for details. Bonds and shorter term CDs are more liquid. At maturity, the CD or bond purchaser recovers the full principal. These products have differing insurance protections.

Even when interest rates fluctuate, income annuities make good sense.

Income annuities are less sensitive to interest rates than other fixed income instruments like bonds or CDs because part of an income annuity payout is in the form of “mortality credits.” These mortality credits do not fluctuate with interest rates and are only available via the mortality pool of an annuity. In low interest rate environments generating income from bonds or CDs is expensive, especially when planning for living longer. Academics support income annuities over bonds or CDs in generating retirement income, because they provide mortality credits that result in an

income stream one cannot outlive.

What you need to know about mortality credits.

Income annuities can create “pension-like” income for life. Because annuity premiums are based on mortality tables that estimate life expectancy at every age, premiums paid by those who die earlier than expected contribute to the overall pool. This can provide a higher yield to survivors than could be achieved via individual investments. Mortality credits are a hedge against longevity risk, often creating an income stream that would be difficult to match in the broader financial markets.

Fluctuations in monetary policy will not have a great impact on income annuities. Income annuity payouts are not particularly sensitive to changes in interest rates or other economic debt instruments. Income annuities provide a base of guaranteed income allowing the purchaser to take more risk with the rest of a portfolio. Pre-retirees and retirees seeking solutions to address retirement risks such as longevity, inflation, or sequence of return risks, can create a stable, guaranteed income for life through income annuities.

Mutual Income Annuity products are issued by New York Life Insurance Company, 51 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010. All guarantees are dependent on the claims-paying ability of the issuer. Available in jurisdictions where approved.

The policy form number for the New York Lifetime Mutual Income Annuity is 214-P200. The policy form number for the New York Future Mutual Income Annuity is 215-P200. State variations may apply. This educational third-party article is provided as a courtesy by Julie A Cord, Agent, New York Life Insurance Company and a Registered Representative of NYLIFE Securities LLC (member FINRA, SIPC), a Licensed Insurance Agency and New York Life Company, 200 Meeting St., Ste. 401, Charleston, SC 29401. To learn more about the information or topics discussed, please contact Julie A Cord at 317.289.3010.

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TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE



A year into the pandemic, many people have experienced changes in how they manage their money. With different spending needs and, in some cases, changes in income, the ways we balance budgets, save and monitor credit have become top of mind.

No matter where you are financially, budgeting and saving are two key habits that

can help all of us bounce back from life's unexpected moments. Another important habit is understanding how credit works and what goes into a score.

To help people manage their changing needs and stay financially healthy now and into the future, we share some smart tips and simple strategies that anyone can adopt:

Build a budget to meet your needs

Three in four people have concerns about creating a budget that's flexible and realistic for how they live. It's a good practice to update your budget frequently to gain a clear understanding of where and how you can make adjustments.

Use traditional budgeting tools to help keep an eye on your expenses and income as well as find gaps or ways to save.

Use technology to help keep you on track

While algorithms can vary, depending on the credit bureau, an estimated third or more of your credit score is tied to on-time payments. Financial technology can help you with managing your bills and how

you get paid so you never miss a payment. Automate all you can, and set up transaction alerts for deposits and withdrawals so you stay on top of money movement.

Monitor and protect your credit

Some actions can impact your credit more than others, and having a clear picture of your credit score is critical. Sign up for free to check your score, receive alerts about changes to your report and get insights on building good credit. This is important if you are considering applying for a loan or a credit card or refinancing debt or your home loan.

Set aside savings

Having money set aside in an emergency fund can help provide peace of mind. Also, by saving regularly, you'll have the financial flexibility to help you reach future goals. Use an online calculator to see how your savings are tracking. Keep in mind, even setting aside a few dollars a week can help you prepare for the unexpected and save for short- and long-term plans.

Stay alert to scams

Financial scams are prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic. To stay up to date, visit the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov. Remember, it's smart to triple-check any social message, email or solicitation you get from someone claiming to be from a financial institution. Most banks won't ask for confidential information like your name, password or PIN when reaching out to you.

Look into payment programs if you need help

If you are worried about making payments, contact your home loan, car or credit card company, and ask if they have any payment relief programs. You can also reach out to community organizations and city and state resources that can help connect you to aid if you need it.



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AS MORTGAGE RELIEF PLANS END, WHAT COMES NEXT FOR HOMEOWNERS?

Millions of U.S. homeowners facing financial hardship related to the COVID-19 pandemic have sought mortgage payment relief, or forbearance, allowing them to temporarily pause or reduce their monthly mortgage payments. According to the mortgage data firm Black Knight, as of March, approximately 2.6 million U.S. homeowners remain in an active forbearance plan. It's important they know their options for what happens next.

Early in the pandemic, Fannie Mae, a leading provider of home loan and rental housing financing in the U.S., launched an online portal at KnowYourOptions.com with interactive resources to help homeowners and renters, including clear explanations of mortgage forbearance, when it may be an option and steps to get started.

For those who are still feeling the financial impact of COVID-19 or those newly impacted by the economic fallout, it's not too late to get help.

We encourage homeowners and renters facing financial hardship to contact their mortgage servicer or landlord to make a plan or someone that could help.

Steps for extending or existing mortgage forbearance

More than 800,000 homeowners who opted for forbearance will reach the end of their 12-month plan this spring. Those who are still facing financial hardship may be eligible to extend for up to six additional months. Homeowners interested in seeking an extension should contact their mortgage servicer (the company they send their monthly payment to).

Those homeowners who are ready to begin making their monthly mortgage payments again have access to a number of options such as:

* Reinstatement allows homeowners to pay any missed amounts all

at once, if they are financially able to do so.

* A repayment plan enables homeowners to resume making their regular monthly mortgage payment, plus an additional portion of the missed amount each month, until the missed amount is paid off, if they are able to do so.

* Payment deferral might be a good option for those who are unable to reinstate or afford a repayment plan but can resume their monthly mortgage payments. This defers any missed payments to the end of the loan term when it is paid off. Interest is not charged on the deferred amounts. The deferred amounts are due earlier upon the sale or transfer of the property, refinance or payoff of the loan.

* Loan modification is another option where the original loan terms, such as the interest rate or term of the loan, could be permanently changed to make a homeowner's monthly mortgage payment more manageable moving forward.

Financial consultants can provide homeowners with an informed recommendation for their financial situation, which they can discuss with their mortgage servicer. Servicers will also contact homeowners approximately 30 days before their forbearance plan is scheduled to end to discuss extension and exit options.



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Financial Knowledge is Financial Power!

ANAYA JOINS ABB AS LOAN OFFICER



Marcos Anaya

MYRTLE BEACH-Anderson Brothers Bank announces the addition of Marcos Anaya as loan officer. He will be based in the bank's Market Common Office located at 2711 Agnes Lane, Myrtle Beach.

In his role, Anaya will assist customers with the various financial services offered by the bank including consumer and personal loans. Anaya has an extensive background in the finance industry bringing with him over 15 years of experience assisting customers with their financial needs by building true and lasting relationships.

Originally from Yonkers, New York, Anaya resides in Myrtle Beach with his wife Liz and his three daughters. He is a past board director, youth leader and men's leader for Grace Outreach Church in New Mexico and is currently the secretary/treasurer of the Forestbrook Board of Directors for POA. He attended Central New Mexico Community College where he received his degree in applied science in integrated studies along with certificates in health, wellness and public safety as well as general business.

"Marc will be a valuable asset to our bank and our customers and we are confident in his abilities to further enhance our continued growth in Horry County," said Bryan Lenertz, Vice President Horry County Executive with Anderson Brothers Bank. "He has a proven ability to assist clients in financing arrangements and will make a significant impact in the Myrtle Beach area."

About Anderson Brothers Bank

Anderson Brothers Bank is a full service community bank offering a complete range of competitive loan services and deposit products. Founded in 1933, this family-owned bank blends the elements of traditional personal service, local market awareness and advanced technology to meet the financial needs of its customers.

Anderson Brothers Bank offers 25 branches conveniently located in 17 communities throughout the Pee Dee, Coastal and Low Country regions of South Carolina. The bank's main office is located at 101 North Main Street, P.O. Box 310 in Mullins, S.C. For additional information about Anderson Brothers Bank, call 843-464-6271 or visit ABBank.com or contact: Susan Grant, VP Marketing Director, 843-464-3551 or SusanG@abbank.com



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HEALTH DISPARITIES RELATED TO COVID-19 by Dr. Susan Carter



Dr. Susan Carter

Experts agree that older Black, Indigenous, and people of color and other members of other minority groups in America are more likely to die of COVID-19 than white Americans, yet they are not receiving their share of the vaccine. The reasons for this health disparity are complex and are rooted in socio-economic factors and a history of negative experiences with the healthcare system.

In order to address the problem, we need accurate and comprehensive demographic information about who is receiving the vaccine. However, this data is extremely limited, although South Carolina is doing a better job than most states in reporting race and ethnicity information. Of the vaccines where race is known, whites account for nearly two-thirds of vaccine administration (65 percent) while African Americans have taken seven percent of doses nationwide (www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/). In South Carolina, African Americans account for seven percent of the vaccinations, 26 percent of the cases, and 32 percent of the deaths. As these numbers clearly indicate, white people are receiving the vaccine at much higher numbers than African Americans, and more Black Americans are dying from the coronavirus than white Americans.

African Americans are more likely to have poor outcomes from COVID-19, yet many express hesitancy to receive a vaccination. Barriers to getting vaccinated include lack of access, poor communication from the government, a lack of trust of medical professionals and perceived discriminatory treatment by healthcare professionals.

Many lower socioeconomic status individuals are un- or under-insured and fear that they will not qualify for a vaccine. The message that the COVID-19 vaccines are free to all has not been clearly communicated, and this ambiguity is intensified by the requirement to provide evidence of any insurance during the CDC registration process. Further, lack of computer and/or Internet access makes the process of signing up much more challenging. Without these tools, individuals face hours, days or even weeks of calling “vaccine information lines,” only to receive busy signals or to be informed that the number is no longer working. The other option, to show up early and wait in a long line, is not feasible for older individuals who lack transportation and/or the stamina to stand in line for hours and to complete forms that many find hard to understand or read.

Some African Americans distrust medical professionals because of past mistreatment by healthcare researchers. The infamous Tuskegee experiment, which began in 1932, deceived 600 African American men who were told they would receive free medical care for “bad blood.” Instead, they were tested for Syphilis and given only placebo treatment so the researchers could monitor the progression of the disease. This continued even after penicillin became the recommended treatment for the disease in 1947 (Elizabeth Nix, “Tuskegee Experiment” Dec. 15, 2020 history.com).

In addition to withholding treatment, medical professionals have also dismissed African Americans’ contributions and rights to control their personal health information, even when their lab tests led to significant advances in scientific knowledge. For

example, in 1951, a woman named Henrietta Lacks unknowingly donated her cells to Johns Hopkins Hospital when she sought treatment for a medical condition. This led to the discovery of the first, and for many years, the only human cell line able to reproduce indefinitely. Her cells (known as HeLa cells for Henrietta lacks) are used widely in research even today.

This large-scale historical discrimination is reflected in African Americans’ interactions with individual providers today. According to survey data collected by the Kaiser Family Foundation, many African Americans experience race-based discrimination (KFF, “The Undeclared Survey,” quoted in “KFF Analyzes Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Covid-19 Vaccinations,” DTCPerspectives.com, Feb. 25, 2021). Seven out of 10 African Americans in the survey agreed with the statement that “discrimination in healthcare happens very or somewhat often.” Black adults are more likely than white adults to report negative experiences with healthcare, including feeling that a provider didn’t believe that they were telling the truth or being refused a test or pain medication.

Other reasons African Americans state for vaccine hesitancy include a distrust of vaccines in general, a fear of side effects, and a worry that the vaccine will give them COVID-19 (O’neal, “More African Americans say they’ll take the coronavirus vaccine,” Theundefeated.com). Some are incredulous about how quickly the vaccine was developed and others are suspicious about the money pharmaceutical companies are making from the vaccine.

Fortunately, more African Americans are taking the vaccine than early reports forecast, perhaps because of the expanded availability. It is important that we do everything we can to encourage and increase COVID-19 vaccination in the Black community. Reed Tuckerson, co-founder of the Black Coalition Against COVID, asserts that it is important that “trusted intermediaries” carry the message of vaccine safety to the Black community. Black health professionals are urged to communicate directly with their patients and on TV, radio and social media to provide assurance that the vaccine is safe and strongly recommended (Lonnal O’Neal, “More African Americans say They’ll Take the Vaccine,” TheUndeclared.com Dec. 15, 2020). Media coverage of local people of color administering the vaccine will demonstrate its safety (C. Daniel Mullins, U of Maryland School of Pharmacy, quoted in TheUndeclared.com). Local leaders and health care providers must have the information they need to recommend the vaccine, so reaching out to them is the first step in creating a clear line of communication that will increase vaccination rates.

In addition to having Black health professionals serve as role models and champions for the vaccine in their communities, more needs to be done on the state and national levels to confront the long history of medical racism in America. The mistrust garnered by past mistakes will require more than data to change the minds of African Americans. Public health leaders must continue explaining the necessity of the worldwide vaccine effort. Pharmaceutical companies need to partner with Black community-based organizations to demonstrate the importance of working together for a common cause. Most importantly, health policy leaders must listen to and learn from Black health service organizations to learn how to break down the wall of mistrust of the health system by the African American community. As Reed Tuckerson warns, doing nothing to alleviate this healthcare barrier will have devastating results: “If we keep looking to the past, we will die in the future” (quoted in O’Neal, [The Undeclared.com](http://TheUndeclared.com), Dec. 15, 2020).

CARDIOVASCULAR RISK FACTORS & THE VACCINE Submitted by Abdallah Kamouh, M.D.



Dr. Abdallah Kamouh

Over the last year, more than 110 million people were infected by the COVID-19 virus. More than 28 million of these infections took place in the United States, responsible for more than 480 thousand deaths. Although death related to COVID-19 infection spans all ages, patients with cardiovascular risk factors, with heart disease and stroke, are more susceptible to die than the general population.

COVID-19 can directly affect the heart.

Patients infected with the virus can have high-grade fever, fluctuation in blood pressure, low oxygen levels and clotting of the blood. All these factors can lead to an increased risk of heart failure decompensation, heart attacks, abnormal heart rhythm and cardiac death more so in patients with underlying heart disease.

Given the threat of COVID-19 infection for patients with heart disease, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Heart Association (AHA) and many other national heart organizations encourage patients with heart diseases and stroke to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

Some people have expressed concerns about taking the vaccine. Science and medical experts and national medical associations are confident that the benefit of vaccination far exceeds the very small, rare risks. Trusted scientists and medical experts have worked tirelessly to develop and test these vaccines using the highest standards, and every step of each trial was carefully reviewed by independent experts at a common safety monitoring board and by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Both US FDA-authorized vaccines (from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) have shown to be very safe and demonstrated 95 percent effectiveness. In the initial studies before the approval, there was no apparent cardiac side effects in thousands of studied subjects. There was no difference in side effects from the vaccines between young patients and patients 65 years and older, or those with heart diseases.

Since the approval of two COVID-19 vaccines weeks ago, more than 45 million Americans have received the vaccine. Many of these patients are above the age of 70, and many with heart disease. Observations have shown no new cardiac or severe side effects in those who received the vaccine. Other than the vaccine's common side effects, similar to those seen with flu vaccinations (headaches, joint and muscle pains, pain at the injection site, fever and chills), few and rare cases of severe allergic reactions were reported and were treated rapidly.

If you have heart disease and are scheduled for a vaccine, it's essential to continue to take your medications as usual before and after the vaccine is given. This includes patients taking blood thinners. It is recommended that you let the person giving the vaccine know that you are taking blood thinners so they can add a minute or two of pressure on the injection site to prevent excess bleeding. You will be asked to wait for 10-15 minutes in a waiting area after vaccination, according to the protocol, to recognize any immediate side effects.

As a general rule, if you are concerned about getting the vaccine because you have cardiovascular risk factors, you should make sure to discuss your concerns with your heart doctor.

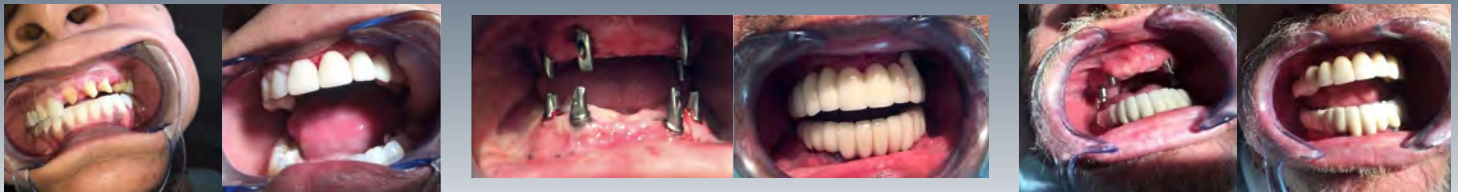
Dr. Abdallah Kamouh is an interventional cardiologist at MUSC Health - Cardiology. For more information or to seek cardiac care, call 843-674-4787, or visit muschealth.org/Florence.



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In times of crisis, people often turn to the McLeod Emergency Department team of critical care professionals for urgent medical needs. A hospital emergency department is designed to care for people who are very seriously or critically ill or are having medical emergencies or

symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, fainting or having chest pain or pressure.

A person should also go to the emergency department if experiencing uncontrolled bleeding, coughing, vomiting blood, or sudden or severe pain, high fevers, blurry vision, seizures, or any major illnesses or injuries, such as broken bones, deep cuts or burns.

Whether it is a toddler with a high fever in the middle of the night, a person suffering chest pains or those involved in a multi-car accident, the McLeod Emergency Department staff stands ready to provide life-saving care.

As the region's Level II Trauma Center, we care for patients of all ages who are our neighbors and friends. We are also here when those who travel through our area have emergent needs.

Meeting the needs of emergency and trauma patients who seek life-saving care at McLeod is the goal behind construction of the new 44,316 square-foot McLeod Emergency Department in Florence. The current Emergency Department was designed to serve 50,000 patients and has experienced rapid growth in the number of patients cared for annually. Last year, the McLeod Regional Medical Center Emergency Department served more than 80,000 patients.

The new McLeod Emergency Department is designed to care for more than 109,500 patients a year and includes 81 patient rooms; triage rooms for immediate patient evaluation; designated trauma rooms; a covered drop-off area for patients at the front entrance; larger patient rooms to accommodate family members; pharmacy, lab and radiology located in the department for quick access; a new helipad adjacent to the ambulance entrance; and five ambulance bays at a dedicated entrance. The waiting area is spacious and provides families with a warm and comforting environment. There is also a private consultation room for our providers to meet with family members.

While the McLeod Emergency Department is the physical space where medical teams perform their work, it is the people who make that work life-saving. The hearts and souls of our medical teams are in everything they do. Each and every patient who enters the doors at McLeod is a valuable life, and many of these patients have life-threatening conditions. With our well-trained and experienced team of emergency medicine physicians and nurses, trauma surgeons, general surgeons, neurosurgeons, neurologists, orthopedic trauma surgeons, pediatric intensivists, oral and maxillofacial surgeons and plastic and reconstructive surgeons, McLeod is able to meet emergent needs both quickly and efficiently.

In its new location, the McLeod Emergency Department will occupy the first floor of the newly constructed four-story building. With the future opening of the McLeod Emergency Department also comes an advanced Endoscopy and Recovery area, a new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and expansion of McLeod Women's Services with new Postpartum suites.

The new Emergency Department is located on the McLeod Regional Medical Center campus between the McLeod Pavilion Tower and McLeod Medical Park East at 851 East Cheves Street in Florence, S.C. We are looking forward to the opening and caring for patients.

MCLEOD HEALTH AND EX PROGRAM JOIN FORCES

McLeod Health has joined with the EX Program from Truth Initiative® to help its employees live free from smoking, vaping and nicotine.

The EX Program is available to the nearly 8,900 employees working for the McLeod Health system of hospitals and physician practices in northeastern South Carolina. The McLeod Healthier You Program will integrate the EX Program into its overall wellness package for employees. With the EX Program, McLeod Health now provides all employees who use tobacco—including smokers with chronic conditions such as diabetes or heart disease—tailored support to quit.

As part of its McLeod Lung Cancer Screening Program outreach, McLeod will also offer the EX Program to deliver even more resources to support lung cancer patients and those people looking to quit tobacco use.

The latest CDC National Health Interview Survey shows more than 50 million U.S. adults used some form of tobacco in 2019—and almost one in five current tobacco users used two or more tobacco products. According to research from 2015, nearly 70 percent of smokers said they wanted to quit, and providing support to quit is especially critical now. A national survey in 2018 also found that over half of adult cigarette smokers reported trying to quit in the previous year.

With increased anxiety, disrupted routines and social isolation from COVID-19, many people are struggling with addiction. On top of that, the stresses of economic uncertainty and unemployment across the country have translated into more smoking.

"Digital interventions are particularly powerful in addressing the unique needs of tobacco users in today's environment," says Jenn

Gendron, head of Development, Innovations at Truth Initiative. "Here at the EX Program, our proven digital approach is making a difference every day in helping hundreds of thousands of people break free from tobacco addiction. We are very pleased to welcome McLeod Health to our program. We look forward to helping them bring evidenced-based support and tools to more people looking to quit smoking, vaping and chew tobacco for good."

Developed in collaboration with Mayo Clinic, the EX Program is an enterprise-level, digital health program for tobacco addiction for employers and health plans. The EX Program grew out of Truth Initiative's field-leading research and long history of building engaging digital interventions. To date, more than 910,000 participants have enrolled in EX, developing the skills and confidence that are critical for quitting tobacco successfully. Research has shown that individuals who use all components of the EX quit plan are four times more likely to quit than others. In response to the e-cigarette epidemic, in 2019, the EX Program grew to include cessation support for e-cigarettes, as well as resources for parents who want to help their child quit vaping.

For more information on the EX Program, please visit theexprogram.com. For more information about Truth Initiative, please visit truthinitiative.org. For more information on McLeod Health, please visit mcleodhealth.org.

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CSC OFFERING MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY IV THERAPY

Submitted by Andrew Boardwine, Communication Specialist



CareSouth Carolina Health Provider Jennifer Lynch, FNP-C, with patient.

HARTSVILLE - CareSouth Carolina is now offering Monoclonal Antibody IV Therapy for qualifying patients at the CSC Hartsville office, located at 1268 S. Fourth Street.

Patients who started showing symptoms from COVID-19 within the last 10 days who are ages 12 or older, at least 88 pounds and have mild to moderate symptoms may qualify.

The goal of this therapy is to decrease hospitalizations and emergency room visits due to symptoms of COVID-19 and to prevent the patient from progressing to severe disease. This treatment is also used to prevent potential long-term damage from COVID-19.

CareSouth Carolina Hartsville Provider Jennifer Lynch, FNP-C, said the treatment can be a helpful tool in fighting the progression of mild to moderate symptoms that those with a

positive COVID-19 test might experience. “It’s important to remember that this is a new virus,” Lynch said. “If there’s a way to help prevent you from hospitalization and potentially on a vent, there’s no reason not to try. This gives us hope in the outpatient setting that we can treat the symptoms and prevent them from getting too far along.”

The therapy is an hour-long IV infusion that has been developed for the treatment and prophylaxis of viral infections, like COVID-19. **What is a Monoclonal antibody?**

Your body naturally makes antibodies to fight infection. However, your body may not have antibodies designed to recognize a novel (or new) virus like SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Monoclonal antibodies, or mAbs, are made in a laboratory to fight a particular infection—in this case, SARS-CoV-2—and are given to patients directly with an infusion. That’s why mAb treatment may help patients who are at high risk for severe symptoms or having to be hospitalized.

The mAb treatment for COVID-19 is different from a COVID-19 vaccine. A vaccine triggers your body’s natural immune response, but can take weeks to develop enough antibodies and prevent some kinds of infection.

Some vaccines for COVID-19 require two shots, so your body can develop its own immune response to the disease. But if you already have the virus, mAb treatment gives your body the antibodies it needs to protect itself.

Those who are not a patient of CareSouth Carolina just need a referral from their doctor’s office.

For more information and to see if you qualify, please contact our Hartsville IV Therapy Department at 843-758-0044.

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.

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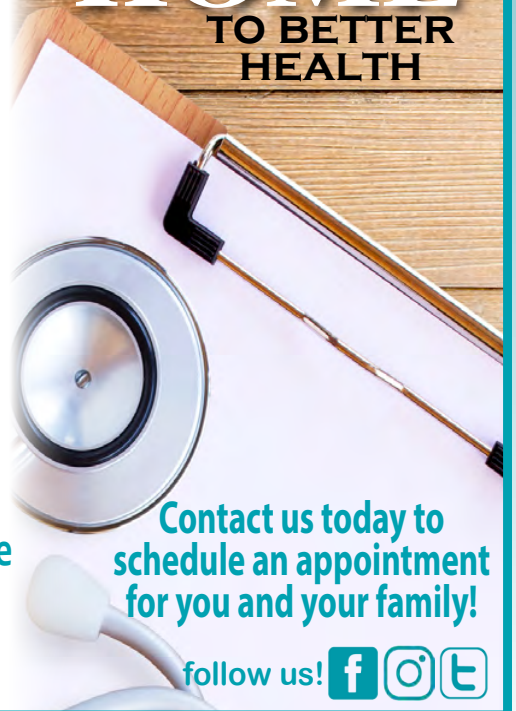
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HOPEHEALTH RIBBON CUTTING FOR FMU EXPANSION

Submitted by Donna Tracy, Communications Coordinator



Francis Marion University president Dr. Fred Carter, center left, and Carl M. Humphries, HopeHealth CEO, cut the ribbon celebrating the completion of HopeHealth at Francis Marion University renovations, the expansion of services and 10 years of serving the community.

HopeHealth at Francis Marion University celebrated a newly remodeled facility, expansion of services, and 10 years at 121 South Evander Drive with a ribbon cutting Feb. 25.

“Our practice is a unique partnership between two of the most innovative institutions in the Pee Dee, HopeHealth and Francis Marion University,” said Dr. Paul DeMarco, HopeHealth physician. “Our location on FMU’s campus allows us to both care for our patients and educate a new generation of health care professionals.”

The 10-year relationship between HopeHealth and Francis Marion University began to fulfill a need in the community, and Dr. Fred Carter, president of Francis Marion University, said “HopeHealth has such a similar mission and vision as the university that they “are as closely aligned with those of FMU that we might as well be siblings.”

“FMU and HopeHealth were created for

exactly the same reasons: to enhance one of the most impoverished areas, not just in the state, but in the entire south east. We’ve been able to do that,” said Carter. “We’ve been driven by common philosophies: to make education and health care accessible, affordable, and qualitative.”

DeMarco has practiced at the FMU location since its opening and was excited to mark the 10th anniversary and celebrate the recent renovations. He noted that just as the two organizations build bonds, so too do patients and their providers.

“Out of those regular, ordinary visits come extraordinary fruit sometimes,” said DeMarco, referring to the successes he has seen with patients. “We learn about our patients as people. We learn about their families, their jobs, their joys, their griefs.”

“I know I speak for our entire team when I say we look forward to many more years of

serving our community,” he said.

The team has grown from the original four-member team to a 14-member staff including DeMarco, family nurse practitioners Meagan Bennett and Regina Stanley, and Sharon Walters, DNP, and behavioral health consultant Kelsi Harper Camak.

Renovations:

- Doubled available office and clinical space
 - Remodeled facilities
 - Provided space for additional providers and behavioral health services
- Services at HopeHealth at FMU include:
- Primary medical care
 - Immunizations and vaccinations
 - Minor illness treatment
 - Health screenings
 - Laboratory services/blood tests
 - Annual health checkups
 - Health risk assessments
 - Care of chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension
 - Preventive health care
 - Sick visits
 - Internal medicine
 - Behavioral health services
 - Referrals to specialty care

The event was streamed on Facebook Live. Check it out at [Facebook.com/hopehealthinc/](https://www.facebook.com/hopehealthinc/) videos.



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4 Locations

For more information or to make an appointment, call

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Walk-in testing hours

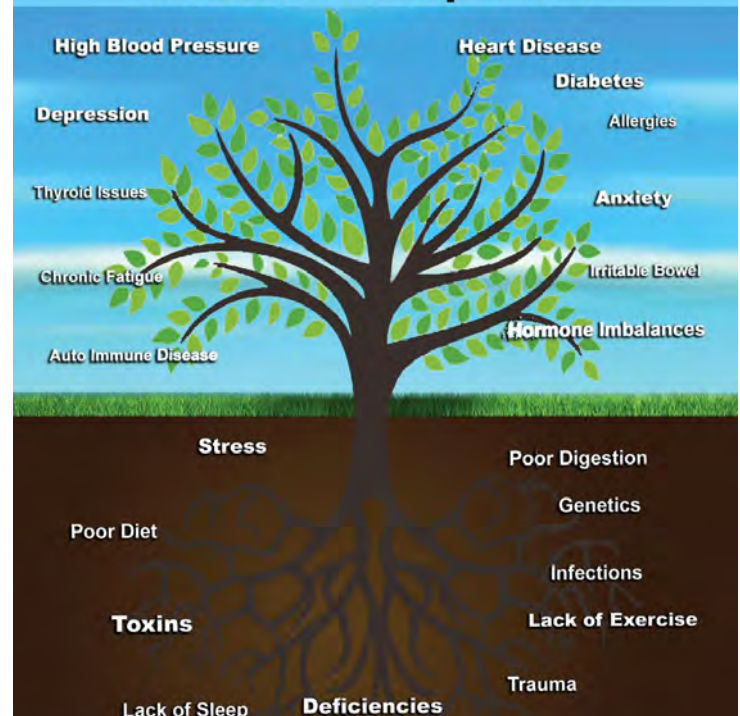
HopeHealth Medical Plaza
360 North Irby Street, Florence
Mon – Thurs: 8:30 am – 4 pm
Fri: 8:30 am – 12 pm
Evening testing hours by appointment from 4 - 8 pm

HopeHealth in Manning
12 West South Street, Manning
Mon – Fri: 10 am – 4 pm

HopeHealth in Aiken
150 University Parkway, Aiken
By appointment only

HopeHealth in Orangeburg
1857 Joe S. Jeffords Hwy, Orangeburg
By appointment only

Stop Chasing Symptoms and Get to the Root of the problem





Pee Dee Medical Professionals Association, Inc. (PDMPA)

“WALK TO HEALTH!”

2021

COVID-19 updates | Let's Walk, Let's Move segments
obesity | diabetes | heart disease | hypertension
nutrition & labels | walk/run safety | emotional/mental
health | scholarship recipient appearances

A Virtual Experience

SATURDAY - APRIL 17th | 9:00AM - 10:30AM

Facebook PDMPA Providers for event access & updates

PDMPA | 1937 W Palmetto Street, #342 | Florence, South Carolina 29501
pdmpainthecommunity@gmail.com | www.pdmpa.org | Facebook PDMPA Providers

WELLNESS: HEALING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATION

Submitted by Patricia E. Lewis, MBA, Owner, Projects & Plans, LLC.



Although not traditionally looked upon as the most revered profession, teaching is one of the most powerful professions there is, seeing that its impact spans from generation to generation. The teaching profession is the means by which all other professions develop, thrive and exist. National Teacher Appreciation Day takes place on the Tuesday of the first full week in May--this year on May 4. The entire week is used to recognize and appreciate the importance of educators both in and outside of the classroom. The same is true of healthcare related educators like the Pee Dee Medical Professionals Association, Inc. (PDMPA).

PDMPA includes minority healthcare providers consisting of graduates of approved professional schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, mid-level and allied health providers who have passed the qualifying professional examination and possess a license to practice in the state of South Carolina. The organization, enriched with a talented pool of Black healthcare professionals from across the globe, seeks to decrease health disparities in the surrounding underserved communities by increasing health literacy and improving access to quality medical care.

Since its inception in 2012, the organization addresses the needs of the community by offering expertise on the culturally specific healthcare needs of Blacks and other minorities. Experienced providers are available to provide talks and professional consultations to bridge the gaps between demand, access and positive outcomes in the community.



Rodney K. Alan, MD,
President

PDMPA recently welcomed its new leadership, Rodney K. Alan, MD as president and Tyrone Wallace, DC as vice president. Both leaders have been members of the organization for several years and desire to continue carrying out the organization's vision to educate and enrich the surrounding communities regarding health and healthcare-related issues through education, service activities, outreach projects and regular giving.

Alan is an orthopedic surgeon with McLeod orthopedics. He received his undergraduate education from Morehouse College where he played football from 1992-1996 and graduated summa cum laude with a degree in biology. Alan

received his doctorate degree in medicine from Duke Medical School and began his orthopedic practice in the state of South Carolina in 2006. He specializes in hip and knee replacement and adult reconstruction. He is actively involved in the community through mentorship and service projects with PDMPA. Alan is married to his wife of 20 years, Dr. Carol Alan, and is the proud father of three beautiful girls: Rita, Ella and Anna. He enjoys his time with family, playing tennis and college football.



Tyrone Wallace, DC,
Vice President

Wallace is a native of Lake City and a 1987 graduate of Lake City High School. He received his doctorate of chiropractic degree from Sherman College of Chiropractic, Spartanburg, in 1994 after completing his pre-studies at the University of South Carolina, Columbia. Wallace holds certifications in therapeutic modalities from New York Chiropractic College and in alcohol and drug testing and is a medical examiner for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. He is co-owner of PrimeCare of the Lower Pee Dee, LLC, located in Lake City and Kingstree. His mission is to help as many people as he can regain and maintain good health through wellness and spinal care. His holistic practice offers non-invasive pain management, chiropractic, mental and physical wellness care. He has delivered much needed service to residents of Florence and Williamsburg counties for over 27 years.

Wallace also serves as the District Five director of the South Carolina Chiropractic Association, sits on The Board of Regents at Sherman College of Chiropractic in Spartanburg, serves as president of the Lake City Community Museum Society and serves as member of the Delta Kappa Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and the Will Do Lodge 322 Pee Dee Royal Ark and McDonald Consistory No. 226. Wallace resides in Florence with his wife of 17 years, Dr. Donya Wallace, and four children: Jasmin, T.J., Jalen and Cameron.

Both Alan and Wallace believe in holding true to the organization's motto of "Placing the hands of concern back into the healthcare of our communities." In February this year, the new PDMPA leadership launched its first Candid Conversation via Facebook Live with local health care providers to address the growing concerns over the COVID-19 vaccination process and its phases of implementation. The organization addressed the impact of COVID-19 in the state of South Carolina and the Pee Dee region, its vaccination rates in communities of color, the

historical significance of vaccination rates within communities of color, vaccination phases and processes, myths and misconceptions and recommendations regarding the importance and validity of the COVID-19 vaccination. PDMPA'S COVID-19 Candid Conversation expanded in the community through educational partnerships with local agencies, the Omega Psi Phi fraternity and the 100 Black Men of America Charleston Chapter. To view the conversation, visit Facebook at PDMPA Providers.

PDMPA's signature event, "Walk to Health!" 2021: A Virtual Experience will be held on April 17 at 9 a.m. The event will focus on COVID-19 updates, Let's Walk, Let's Move segments (intermittent at home exercise) and preventative measures related to diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart disease, nutrition, regular exercise, healthy living, mental health and access to community resources. The annual event is an educational reminder to the community that "better health is attainable through small, simple everyday life habits such as walking." For more information or to become a vendor/sponsor, please contact PDMPA via email at pdmpa2012@gmail.com.

Proceeds from "Walk to Health!" provide scholarship opportunities for local students. PDMPA takes the importance of education to another level by empowering the educational goals and professional aspirations of minority students residing in the Pee Dee region. Since 2019, PDMPA has awarded four scholarships annually to deserving high school juniors and seniors who have excelled academically and have expressed an interest in entering the healthcare field. Previous scholarship recipients will check in with the community during the upcoming "Walk to Health!" event.

The deadline for this year's scholarship entry is April 16. For more information or to apply, contact PDMPA's Scholarship Committee at pdmpascholarship@gmail.com. Scholarship information can also be obtained from a student's High School.

Educators of all types are invaluable to the world we live in. The organization is grateful to each sponsor and community partner for their collaboration efforts in keeping the PDMPA mission for health literacy and education ongoing for years to come.

The organization may be contacted for general inquiries at pdmpa2012@gmail.com, event requests at pdmpainthecommunity@gmail.com, via website at www.pdmpa.org or Facebook PDMPA Providers for upcoming event news.

To support annual scholarships or "Walk to Health!" make checks payable to: PDMPA, 1937 W Palmetto Street, #342, Florence, SC 29501 or via PayPal at [Paypal.me/PDMPA](https://www.paypal.com/US/merchorder/pdmpa) with your allocation in the subject section.

We are a federally qualified health center.



HopeHealth's primary care providers meet the needs of individuals across rural and urban areas of Florence, Williamsburg, and Clarendon Counties.

Because You Deserve to Get Back to Being You Again.

As a nonprofit, federally qualified health center, HopeHealth is committed to excellent health care and service that exemplifies our love for people and passion for their well-being.

Our health care providers offer access to both primary and specialty health care services and integrate a range of health resources to provide the very best in patient care,

prevention, and support services.

HopeHealth educates patients on the importance of having a health care home. As a primary care facility, HopeHealth's medical team works to prevent and detect illness and the early onset of disease, provide routine physical examinations, and promote overall healthy lifestyles.

Florence • Timmons ville • Lake City • Kingstree • Greeleyville • Manning

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After Hours/Access Hope
Behavioral Health Services
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Dental Health
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Family Medicine
Hepatitis Services
HIV/AIDS Services
Infectious Diseases
Internal Medicine

Lab Services
Latino Health Services
Pain Management
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Senior Health
Substance Use Treatment
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HOPEHEALTH NEW PROVIDERS

Submitted by Donna Tracy, Communications Coordinator, HopeHealth

Brittany Hanes is a nurse practitioner serving patients at HopeHealth in Orangeburg. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, American Nurses Credentialing Center, South Carolina Nurses Association and the American Nurse Practitioner Association. She speaks English and Spanish.



Brittany E. Hanes, MSN, APRN, FNP-C

Anna Taylor Livingston is a nutritionist serving patients at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza Diabetes & Nutrition Institute. Originally from Tuscaloosa, Ala., she is a member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.



Anna Taylor Livingston, RDN, LD

Sydney Murphy is a physician assistant serving patients at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza. From Darlington, she is a member of the American Association of Physician Assistants and the South Carolina Association of Physician Assistants.



Sydney Murphy, PA-C

Pansi Patel is a family nurse practitioner serving rheumatology patients at HopeHealth on Palmetto Street. From Florence, Patel is a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and the Association of Rheumatology Professionals.



Pansi A. Patel, FNP

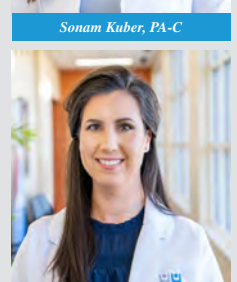
Sonam Kuber is a PA-C, physician assistant at HopeHealth in Manning. She earned a Master of Science in physician assistant studies from the Medical University of South Carolina Charleston and a Bachelor of Science in exercise science from the University of South Carolina in Columbia.



Sonam Kuber, PA-C

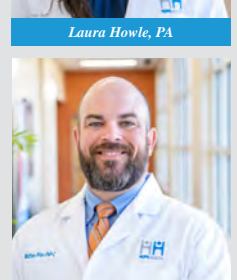
From Summerton, Kuber is an AHEC (Area Health Education Center) scholar, a fellow for Institute for Primary Care and a member of the South Carolina Association of Physician Assistants and American Academy of Physician Assistants.

Laura Howle is a physician assistant to Behavioral Health services at the Medical Plaza in Florence. Howle completed her student rotation with HopeHealth and has more than 20 years of experience in mental health services. She earned a Master of Science in physician assistant studies from Francis Marion University, a Master of Arts in art history from the University of South Carolina and a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from West Virginia University.



Laura Howle, PA

Matt Wise is a family nurse practitioner at the HopeHealth in Kingstree. Wise earned a Master of Science in nursing-FNP from South University, a Bachelor of Science in nursing from University of South Carolina Upstate and an associate in nursing from Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College in Orangeburg.



Matt Wise, FNP

From Kingstree, Wise is a member of Kingstree Presbyterian Church and coaches softball and baseball at Kingstree Recreation Center.

HopeHealth is a nonprofit leader in providing affordable, expert health care and infectious diseases services for all ages in Aiken, Florence, Clarendon, Orangeburg and Williamsburg Counties. Our federally qualified health centers are the primary care providers of choice for more than 50,000 patients. To become a patient, call 843-667-9414, or visit hope-health.org.



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URGING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR TO GET VACCINATED



Mileka Gilbert, M.D., Ph.D., at MUSC took the COVID-19 vaccine to protect herself, as well as her patients, family and community.

CHARLESTON—Given the devastating impact of the COVID-19 virus on communities of color, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Black Faculty Group (BFG) and the MUSC Hispanic/Latino faculty encourage Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos in South Carolina and across the nation to take the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they can.

“Our lives depend on it,” said Marvella E. Ford, Ph.D., professor

in the Department of Public Health Sciences, and director, Population Sciences and Cancer Disparities at the MUSC Hollings Cancer Center. Ford explains, “The vaccine is needed in these communities for three reasons. First, COVID-19 has caused more deaths in the U.S. than in any other country. Second, infection rates are much higher among Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos than whites. Third, COVID-19 death rates among Blacks are double compared to whites.”

Systemic stressors such as employment issues, lack of health insurance, racism and discrimination, as well as chronic health conditions, like diabetes and heart disease, place Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos at greater risk of experiencing more severe COVID-19 symptoms once infected.

“The vaccine gives us a measure of hope,” said James H. Tolley, M.D., MUSC Assistant Professor Emeritus, Emergency Medicine. “This hope translates into children being raised by their parents instead of other family members or the foster care system.” Tolley has been part of the MUSC community for more than 30 years.

The vaccines now available were developed with thousands of clinical trials participants. Many participants were racially and ethnically diverse, and the trials used the most scientifically rigorous methodologies. The vaccines are safe and highly effective at protecting against the most severe consequences of the virus.

COVID-19 vaccines, like all vaccines, undergo very rigorous testing and safety assessments before the federal Food and Drug Administration approves their use. Close safety monitoring continues even after a vaccine obtains FDA approval.

Ford adds, “If there is not significant uptake of the vaccine in our communities, members of these communities will continue to die in large numbers from this deadly disease.”

Top 10 Reasons People of Color Should Vaccinate

1. They are at higher risk of getting COVID-19, going to the hospital and dying from COVID-19.
2. In clinical trials, COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of getting COVID-19 and reduced getting a severe case of it.
3. The vaccines have been proven to be up to 95 percent effective against the virus.
4. COVID-19 vaccines are safe for people of color.
5. Many measures are in place to make sure the COVID-19 vaccines continue to be safe for people of color.
6. Doctors and nurses of color at MUSC Health and across the U.S. believe the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective.
7. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccines.
8. Side effects can occur after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. These side effects are often mild. They often go away in a few days.
9. Getting a vaccine will help you to protect yourself, your family, and your community from the effects of COVID-19.
10. MUSC Health and other health systems have pledged to give out the vaccine fairly and equitably.

Bringing our world to yours.

We are now offering online virtual care screening as well as fixed and mobile testing sites for **COVID-19** throughout South Carolina.



Virtual Care

Make an appointment at [musccare](https://musccare.com)

Virtual COVID-19 screenings are free. Just use the code COVID19 when you log in.



Fixed and Mobile Testing Sites

Find our locations at [musccare/testing](https://musccare.com/testing)



MUSC Health
Medical University of South Carolina

ADDRESS HEALTH LIKE AN ADULT: GET A PCP Submitted by Deana Freeman, ANP, HopeHealth



Deana Freeman, ANP

Having a primary care provider, or PCP, is one of the most important things you can do as an adult. No, the emergency department doctor cannot be your PCP. They don't know your health history and they don't have access to your health records. They will address your immediate needs and send you on your way – often telling you to follow up with your PCP.

Why is a PCP such an important “thing?”

As primary care providers, we focus on holistic care. We bring all the bits and pieces of your medical history and overall health together and keep it all in one place. Unless you need a specialist, but, even then, your PCP can help facilitate and coordinate those appointments.

Primary care providers schedule regular appointments and routine testing that help manage your chronic disease, identify problems early, and address any health concerns that may pop up such as seasonal colds, flu, infections, and more.

We perform routine screenings, many of which can be lifesaving in the early detection of cancer. Screenings include:

- blood pressure checks
- cholesterol
- mammograms
- pap smears
- colorectal cancer screening

We make sure you are up to date on your immunizations.

We refill your medications, but we don't JUST refill your medications.

We try to help you understand the root cause of chronic illness and how, together, we can help you become the healthiest version of yourself without adding one more pill to the mix.

We educate. We communicate. We advocate. We listen.

We build relationships.

We learn about you, your health history, your family.

As primary care providers, we value who you are as a person, not just a patient.

So, address your health as an adult today. If you have a PCP, schedule your annual checkup. And if you don't? Find a primary care provider today, and take charge of your health.

Deana Freeman is an adult nurse practitioner with a clinical focus on treating people from adolescents through adult ages and into advanced age. She provides care to the residents of Florence county and the surrounding areas at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence.

HELP FIGHT THE OPIOID CRISIS Submitted by Triza Cox, CPS, MFA, Coordinator, Community Services and Megan Adkins, Prevention Specialist



Triza Cox

In the late 1990s, opioid medications were described as being non-addictive. However, in the following years it became alarmingly evident that opioids were, in fact, highly addictive. The over prescription of these drugs led to a variety of devastating consequences, including massive misuse, increased overdoses and an increase in newborns born with withdrawal syndrome related to opioid use during pregnancy. Opioid misuse has become such a widespread problem that in 2017 the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services declared the

opioid crisis a public health emergency.

In the years following this declaration, the nation made great advances in assuaging the damage and loss from this problem. However, the COVID-19 pandemic proved to be formidable in undermining that progress. Dr. Michael Barnett of the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health states that 2020 is likely to be the “deadliest year on record for opioid overdoses.” The joblessness, limited social and family interactions and increased anxiety of the pandemic created a “perfect storm” for people struggling with substance use disorder. The increased stress of the pandemic triggered relapses from people with previous substance use disorder or triggered first use for those people grappling with ways to cope with these new pressures.

The data released from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention affirm Dr. Barnett's assessment. The CDC reports that over 81,000 overdoses occurred in the 12-month period ending in May 2020. This proves to be the highest overdose deaths EVER recorded in a 12-month period. Synthetic opioids evinced to be the primary driver of the increase in overdose rates. While cocaine-involved overdoses increased 26.5 percent in the aforementioned period, the CDC reports that research shows that those deaths are related to co-use or contamination of cocaine with illicitly manufactured fentanyl or heroin.

Despite these alarming statistics, everyday citizens can be proactive and effective in ameliorating this drug crisis. Major community events

such as Drug Take Back Days are a key component to addressing these problems. Drug Take Back Day is facilitated by the DEA twice a year and first began in 2010. A few days after their first event, legislation was passed to allow the DEA to develop a continuing process for Americans to safely dispose of their medications. Their mission is to provide an opportunity for Americans to prevent drug addiction and overdose deaths. According to the DEA's website, a 2018 national survey on drug use & health reported that 9.9 million Americans misused controlled prescription drugs, most of which came from the home medicine cabinets of family and friends. This demonstrates the importance of reducing the amount of available drugs in the community and participating in events such as this one. For several years Florence County has actively participated in Drug Take Back Days bi-annually. This spring April 24 marks the first Drug Take Back Day of 2021. Several locations will be designated for law enforcement to assist in obtaining unused medications.

In addition to community members availing themselves of drug disposal events like Drug Take Back Days, residents can also help the crisis through consistent and proper disposal of unused prescription pills. Circle Park Behavioral Health Services offers the easy to use Deterra Drug Deactivation System pouches free of charge to individuals and households. These pouches deactivate prescription drugs, pills, patches, liquids and creams through a simple and quick three step process. Once the substances are deactivated the pouches can be disposed of like regular trash.

Much like the pandemic, the opioid crisis mandates community cooperation to mitigate its impact and effect. Circle Park Behavioral Health Services remains committed to supporting Florence County through treatment, prevention services, and education. For information on obtaining Deterra Bags or on these services, contact Circle Park at 843-665-9349, or visit our office located at 238 S. Coit Street in Florence or our website at www.circlepark.com.



THE AGE OF ROBOTIC SURGERY

Submitted by Hatem Abdallah, M.D., MUSC Health – Floyd Medical Group



Hatem Abdallah, MD

As a general surgeon, robotic minimally invasive surgery has become a powerful tool in treatment options for my patients. With 3D visualization, enhanced imaging technology, improved ergonomics and greater precision in movement, robotic surgery is a major advance from traditional laparoscopic surgery. The surgeon is always in control of the robotic instruments, which are designed to mimic and enhance the surgeon's hands. With robotic hernia

surgery, patients will often describe less pain with less need for narcotic medications and a faster return to regular activities compared to traditional open or laparoscopic hernia repair. It is not uncommon for a hernia operation to require an open incision and a four-day stay in the hospital. The same surgery using robotics can be performed with several small incisions with the patient going home the day after surgery with minimal pain.

Another example is with gallbladder removal surgery or (cholecystectomy). Using fluorescent dye given before surgery in combination with the 3D visualization technology of the robot, we are able to see critical bile duct structures. With traditional laparoscopic surgery, these structures can be more challenging to see. This technology is also used in robotic colon cancer surgery when a connection between different parts of the intestines are created. As part of the surgery it is crucial to make sure the blood supply is adequate for that connection to heal. Robotic surgery allows us to, in real time, access the viability of that connection and decrease the risk of potential complications.

Robotic surgery was first introduced more than 20 years ago. Since then, and with several iterations later, more and more procedures are now being performed safely using robotic surgery. As with anything in medicine, patient selection is key. Not every patient is an appropriate candidate for this approach, and they may be better served with traditional surgical techniques. With patients who are appropriate candidates, robotic surgery has broadened the possibilities in terms of what we are able to offer our patients, all while getting them back to their lives safely, quickly and with less pain.

For more information contact General Surgeon Dr. Hatem Abdallah at MUSC Health-Floyd Medical Group in Florence at 843-669-1220.

MUSC WELCOMES THESELON MONDERSON, M.D.



Dr. Thesselon Monderson

MARION-MUSC Health – Marion Medical Center is pleased to welcome Orthopaedic Surgeon Dr. Thesselon Monderson. He is a general orthopaedic surgeon who graduated from St. John's University in NYC where he grew up. He completed his medical education at Howard University in Washington D.C. and graduated with honors. He subsequently completed his orthopaedic surgery residency at Howard University Hospital in Washington

D.C. He completed a fellowship in Hand and Upper Extremity Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas.

Dr. Monderson manages all aspects of orthopedic care and conditions. He is a general orthopedic surgeon and has added interest in upper extremity surgery and joint replacements. He specializes in restoring patients back to their optimal function and strongly believes in treatments utilizing the body's natural healing powers with a combination of less invasive surgical procedures.

Dr. Monderson is accepting patients. To schedule and appointment please call 843-431-2280, or go to

MAKING ADVANCED STROKE CARE A REALITY FOR RESIDENTS

Submitted by Kat Hendrix, PhD

This week, MUSC Health's Florence Medical Center continues to provide emergency thrombectomy—a brain-saving procedure to re-open blocked blood vessels after a stroke. "I got the tele-stroke request for an acute consult about 5:45 a.m., and by 6:30 they'd already done the imaging and were taking the patient into the angio-suite to open the blocked blood vessels. It was really impressive how quickly it went," says Christine Holmstedt, MD, medical director of Clinical Stroke Services and co-director of the Comprehensive Stroke and Cerebrovascular Center at MUSC Health. Andrew Nicholson, MD, the neurointerventional radiologist performing the thrombectomy explains why speed is so critical: "Strokes like this one, with a blockage in a main blood vessel, can be very devastating or even fatal. One statistic is that the patient loses 1-2 million brain cells every minute a large vessel stays blocked. The longer it takes to restore that blood flow, the more brain damage is done."

The ability to do this advanced procedure locally in the Pee Dee region is the result of a year of planning and training. Previously, patients lost valuable time being transported to distant healthcare centers where high-level stroke care was available. By the time they arrived, many were no longer eligible for a thrombectomy. "This is the absolute best treatment as long as the brain tissue is still salvageable," says Nicholson. "But if too much time has passed, re-opening the vessel can trigger a significant bleed. The ability to provide this service here is a game-changer for people in the Pee Dee who have these types of strokes."

It took many months of training to develop this team of skilled healthcare providers who work in close coordination to assess and treat stroke patients while moving at top speed. "By far, the biggest investment we made was in the people and training. They need to be really comfortable with what's happening when they get these cases, and this one could not have gone more smoothly," says Holmstedt. Outreach and training also included first responders to ensure they were aware that advanced stroke treatment is now locally available. "Everyone, starting with the EMTs, did a fantastic job. They identified her stroke symptoms quickly and took the patient to the right place. With a stroke, it really does matter where you get taken. There's only one chance to get a stroke response right," says Holmstedt.

Nicholson is optimistic about the patient's recovery and outcomes for those who will follow. "The patient is stable in the ICU, and we're hopeful. Being able to treat this type of stroke here gives these patients their best chance possible and vastly increases their odds of a good recovery."

About MUSC

The MUSC Health Florence Division consists of MUSC Health – Florence and Marion Medical Centers and the employed physicians 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 325 telehealth locations, MUSC Health owns and operates eight hospitals situated in Charleston, Chester, Florence, Lancaster and Marion counties. In 2020, for the sixth 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.

MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets of \$3.2 billion. 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.

SHOULD I GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

Submitted by Meshellia D. Hayward, FNP-BC, HopeHealth



Meshellia D. Hayward, FNP-BC

“Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?” is a question I am asked frequently by the patients I serve at HopeHealth, especially by senior adults. Many are unsure about the vaccine out of fear—fear because they do not know enough about the vaccine, misinformation about the effects of the vaccine, or mistrust of the medical community.

The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) granted emergency use authorization for COVID-19 vaccines, which have been shown to meet the rigorous safety criteria. Although the vaccine has been proven safe by the FDA and is 94-95 percent effective, many seniors have not yet received the vaccine despite older adults being at greater risk of requiring hospitalization or dying if diagnosed with COVID-19. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), eight out of 10 COVID-19 deaths reported in the U.S. have been in adults 65 years and older.

Everyone, especially seniors need to take precautions to protect themselves from getting COVID-19. These precautions include:

- Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine
- Wearing a mask (covering nose and mouth)
- Keep at least six feet distance between yourself and others
- Wash hands often (if soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover cough and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect surfaces

Vaccination hesitancy is a real concern. As a healthcare provider, I realize it is important to listen to those I serve in the health care community.

It is also important to help patients debunk the myths about the vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccine does not cause COVID-19 nor does the speed in which the vaccine was developed devalue its effectiveness. Reassuring seniors and answering concerns are key in dispelling myths regarding the vaccine.

I completed both doses of the vaccine. I made the decision to receive the vaccine for several reasons, including:

- Being a healthcare provider increases my risk for COVID-19 exposure
- The protection the vaccine offers against COVID-19
- Protecting my family
- Being a role model for my patients and others in the community

I hope the fact I received the vaccine will help decrease the hesitancy my patients and others may have. Please contact your healthcare provider with questions about COVID-19 or COVID-19 vaccines.

Meshellia Hayward is a board-certified nurse practitioner at HopeHealth in Greeleyville. She provides primary care to children and adults and emphasizes the importance of disease prevention, management of acute and chronic diseases and patient education.

HOPEHEALTH HOLDS RIBBON CUTTING

Submitted by Donna Tracy, Communications Coordinator



Martina Love, chair of the HopeHealth Board of Directors, cuts the ribbon officially opening HopeHealth Pediatrics in Florence at their new location, 1920 2nd Loop Rd.

HopeHealth Pediatrics in Florence and CARE House of the Pee Dee held a ribbon cutting Jan. 21 for their new location at 1920 2nd Loop Road and streamed the event on Facebook Live.

The new facility significantly increases access to care for pediatric care in a child, teen, and family-friendly environment.

“There was a significant need for more access and space for our pediatric patients,” said Dr. Edward Behling, chief medical officer. “The new multidisciplinary pediatric facility expands our services as well as our capacity to accept more pediatric patients. The relocation of this specialty also creates available space to provide additional services at our Medical Plaza location.”

HopeHealth’s board-certified pediatricians, Dr. Michael K. Foxworth II and Dr. Camille Montes-Ramos, provide services at the new office. As part of an integrated care model, HopeHealth Pediatrics in Florence also includes an on-site behavioral health consultant, Toni Marie Wilson.

A lactation room and other services, such as therapy, and resources are planned for the near future.

HOPEHEALTH QUALITY AWARD RECIPIENT



Lakyn Bendle, left, a behavioral health consultant at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence, receives the Yvonne Van Camp Quality Improvement Award from Mark Warrin, director of physician services.

Lakyn Bendle was named the 2020 recipient of the HopeHealth Yvonne Van Camp Quality Improvement Award in recognition of her work in pain management.

Each year, HopeHealth recognizes a provider who demonstrates dedication to a program and goes above job requirements to help the organization achieve excellence through quality improvement efforts.

Bendle was the first behavioral health consultant in the comprehensive pain management program in Florence and pioneered the processes for integrating mental health into pain management.

“She developed the visit algorithm, including the intake screening and frequency of visits, set up the pain skills classes and worked with the team to format the curriculum for the sessions,” said Dr. Edward Behling, chief medical officer. “Lakyn worked closely with the counselors in the substance use disorder program to establish processes to transition care for those patients needing these services. In her quarterly provider meetings, she often focuses the conversation on the global program, offering ideas to benefit the patients and HopeHealth as a whole.”

Sallie Bachman, chief of special programs, praised the award selection, saying Bendle’s advocacy on behalf of the patient has been paramount to improved processes between specialty and primary care departments.

“She is able to alternate between micro and macro discussions to ensure patients receive a continuum of care that isn’t limited to just a pain management focus,” said Bachman. “She advocates for clarity and unconditional positive regard in processes for pain management patients that allows for individualized approaches that still meet our ethical, quality, and legal guidelines.”

The award is named for Yvonne Van Camp who worked at HopeHealth in multiple capacities for 15 years and retired in December 2019. She served as director of quality and had passion for continuous quality improvement.

HopeHealth is a community leader in providing affordable, expert health care and infectious diseases services for all ages in Aiken, Florence, Clarendon, Orangeburg and Williamsburg Counties. Our federally qualified health centers are the primary care providers of choice for more than 50,000 patients. To become a patient, call 843-667-9414, or visit hope-health.org.

LEARN MORE ABOUT NEW VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS



It's not news that the COVID-19 pandemic has put a damper on learning opportunities for high school and college students. Unfortunately, that's been especially true for underrepresented students, who often face roadblocks in accessing professional opportunities.

One glaring issue is that the in-person internships so crucial to on-the-job experience have been largely unavailable in this time of remote learning. As a result, students are missing out on the chance to participate in real-world work settings, gaining practical new skills, networking with other professionals and growing further in their careers.

That's a big deal, given the importance of that experience to both employers, who are seeking to hire future leaders, and job applicants. Prior to the pandemic, a 2019 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that 58 percent of graduating college seniors who received full-time job offers had completed internships, and notably, they received 16 percent more job offers than those not privy to internships.

The good news? Nonprofit organization The Center for Excellence in Life (TCEL) has stepped up to launch the first-ever paid virtual internship program geared specifically toward underrepresented students and uniquely focused on nurturing students beyond job skills in a specific field. This program already has served more than 80 Black, Latinx and Asian students in the U.S. in 2020. And with help from new supporters, its founders hope to provide many more with valuable work experiences throughout 2021 and beyond.

"Today's students are our future workforce and leaders, but even with hope on the horizon for COVID-19, the negative consequences for underrepresented students can be long-lasting," notes TCEL founder Mary Stutts. "At TCEL, we seek to help students understand what is possible and achieve their goals, by providing access, connections, exposure and development of the 'whole person.'"

Here's what you should know about the program, whether you're a prospective intern, a company wishing to participate or a donor interested in providing financial support for underrepresented students:

Internships are available in multiple fields. TCEL arranges remote learning opportunities in disciplines ranging from STEM fields to communications, finance, life sciences, fashion, digital entertainment and more. The internships are structured so company mentors regularly work online with participants to help them experience practical, real-life settings and situations as they develop the multifaceted skillsets and perspectives the future workforce needs.

And the program is intended to be accessible to all. For example, in 2020, 13 percent of the TCEL interns without access to a computer completed the program using only their phones.

Supporting the "whole person" is key. For TCEL interns, education goes beyond specific career tracks, with every intern participating in the "Whole Person" track. Access to this unique training teaches interns how to define a personal brand, build a career while balancing multiple interests, better understand personal finances and care for their mental health.

"The TCEL interns I spoke with wanted to better understand financial topics," notes John Clay, a vice president at Morgan Stanley and TCEL mentor. "As a result, I joined forces with TCEL to continue providing financial mentoring sessions for all cohorts to build foundations for future interns' personal and professional successes."

Mental health struggles are at a dangerous high for young people. More than 90 percent of TCEL's 2020 interns wrote in their application essays about experiences with anxiety and depression, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, racial and social unrest and a lack of opportunity. That's why Kaiser Permanente became a TCEL sponsor. Its mental health professionals will provide mental health-focused mentoring sessions so that participants are more equipped to help themselves and others.

Would-be interns should apply now. Because the goal is to impact students early in their education, interns can apply as high school juniors and seniors or college freshmen and sophomores. In 2021, internships will be available in the spring, summer and fall. Throughout the program, students receive stipends to help cover expenses as they work since unpaid internships present a barrier for some students.

"My goal is to serve as an ambassador for the United Nations, and I know that there's a great need for more women and people of color in ambassadorship roles," notes TCEL intern Kaylyn Goode, a George Washington University sophomore studying international affairs. "The TCEL internship provided me with important connections and knowledge as I work to achieve great things."

Donors and supporters are needed. To thrive, TCEL needs more financial support from individual and corporate donors who believe in the importance of supporting underrepresented young people and helping to build paths to success. Additionally, TCEL is actively searching for industry leaders and companies willing to share their expertise.

Recently, TCEL was one of the first nonprofits to receive a contribution from Life Science Cares, a newly formed consortium of Bay Area life science companies leveraging employee expertise and corporate profits to tackle society's greatest social issues, including pervasive racial and socioeconomic inequalities.

The program arose from humble beginnings. Stutts, a foster child from a young age, credits her foster mother (a special education teacher) with teaching her that all people are valuable regardless of their labels. While achieving a successful career in the biotech industry, Stutts developed a passion for nurturing underrepresented youth and founded TCEL to cultivate creative, academic, professional, entrepreneurial and life skills. She and her daughter Loren created the TCEL internship program to address disadvantages from the combined forces of the pandemic and racial injustice.

Supported by major corporations such as Blue Shield, W2O Group and others, the virtual internship program has been enormously uplifting. Donors and supporters can visit TheExcellentLifeCenter.org for more information.

TCEL's overall mission is to mentor, inspire and empower youth and adult professionals in the pursuit of excellence. Potential participants in the TCEL Virtual Internship Program are encouraged to apply at TheExcellentLifeCenter.org.



HOW TO CHOOSE A SAFE, HEALTHY SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY



It's understandable for anyone seeking a retirement community to have concerns about health and safety right now. Today's unprecedented situation leaves many wondering, "Is it safe to live in a retirement community during a pandemic?"

The good news is, many Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) are taking extraordinary precautions to keep residents healthy, following up-to-date recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) plus local and state authorities.

Recently retired couple Stuart and Anita Smith examined the measures being taken at The Spires at Berry College, a Continuing Care Retirement Community in Rome, Ga., before making their decision to move in. Because Stuart is a retired physician, he looked closely at their health and safety protocols. He was happy to learn that they followed recommended CDC

guidelines stringently, prioritizing the well-being of their residents.

"The community was up front with us about how they were handling it--using masks, a lot of cleaning, safe dining procedures," explained Stuart. "I think they've done everything really well, including daily temperature checks and not letting people bring guests or family members to visit now. I'm very confident in their health and safety protocols."

If you or a loved one is considering a senior living community, here are important safeguards to look for:

* Mandatory social distancing in public areas - CDC officials and public health experts agree: Keeping people a minimum of six feet apart helps prevent the spread of COVID-19.

* Mandatory facial coverings required in public areas - Face masks have been shown to reduce the spread of the virus, protecting both mask-wearer and anyone near that person from excessive exposure to airborne particles.

* Mandatory regular COVID-19 testing for all team members and testing for residents - Testing ensures that any infections are quickly identified so staff or residents who test positive can quarantine.

* Required temperature and oxygen level checks for all residents, team members and guests -

Elevated temperatures and decreased oxygen levels have been identified as common COVID-19 symptoms.

* Proper hand washing encouraged throughout the day for residents, team members and guests - As with many viruses, including colds and flu, frequent, thorough hand washing can reduce the spread of disease.

* Frequent sanitizing of common areas throughout the day - The presence of the virus on surfaces can be reduced by regular disinfecting.

* Social and emotional well-being - One of the greatest challenges to retirement communities during this difficult time is the emotional and social isolation many residents are feeling. Look for locations that have amenities such as outdoor areas with walking trails, and have access to digital devices like tablets to stay in touch with friends and family.

The Smiths agree that while they've had to remain apart from family right now, they're still able to socialize to some degree. "We are so comfortable and enjoying the relationships we're forming," said Anita. "Two couples can do 'socially distanced' dining together, calling back and forth across the dining room. People are finding safe ways to communicate and socialize."



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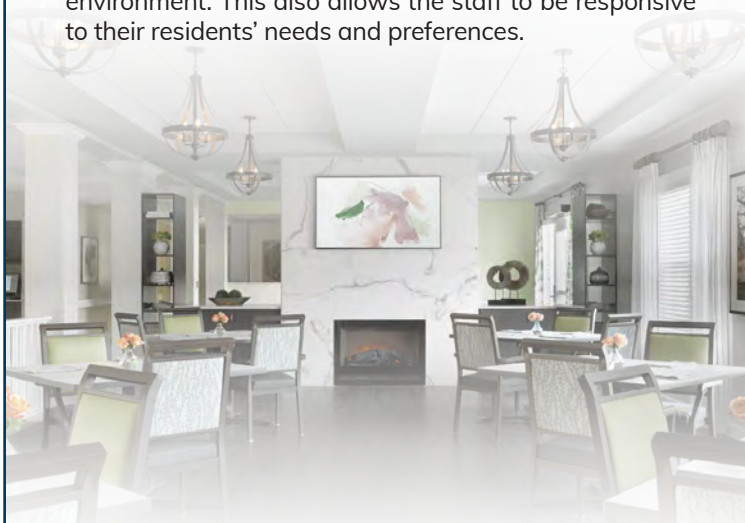
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Bethea Retirement Community's New Skilled Nursing & Rehab Center Open Now

SCBMA is revolutionizing senior care in the Pee Dee by implementing the new to the area household model. Living at Bethea Retirement Community's new healthcare and rehab center is like living at home, but better. The household model features four distinct households that prioritize residents' privacy and the feel of being at home with well-appointed and comfortably sized living spaces, private bedrooms or suites with private bathrooms, and spa/amenities of personal choice.

The same caregivers work with the same residents each day which affords the residents and staff alike the opportunity to truly know one another in a nurturing family environment. This also allows the staff to be responsive to their residents' needs and preferences.



Residents choose how to spend their time. They get up as they wish, eat when and what they want, bathe when and how they prefer, participate in activities as they choose, host their family and friends as they desire and go outdoors as they please on grounds designed with their safety in mind. It is just like living at home, but with more supportive care so family can enjoy being family again without the added responsibility of serving as full-time caregivers.

This expansion, the first in over 20 years for SCBMA, includes the latest technology. All residents have a wireless call system, electronic medical records, internet access, and smart televisions in each bedroom and common area. Bethea has also installed a UV/ionization system for all HVAC system air.

Bethea has a long history in the Darlington community. This new facility, made possible because of the faithful stewardship of SCBMA and because of SC Baptists' faithful support of the ministry, comes after much prayer and preparation from SCBMA's Board of Trustees and



ministry leadership. "Bethea's heritage is rooted in its involvement in the local community and this new skilled nursing option continues our commitment to serve elders so all those we serve may thrive", according to Tom Turner, SCBMA's President & CEO.

Paying homage to their Darlington heritage, the 2200+ square foot therapy gym has a Darlington Raceway theme. The decor motivates rehab guests to continue the race. Therapy helps rehab guests get back to their daily lives and normal routines. Bethea's rehabilitation gym features an outdoor therapy garden a therapy car for rehab guests to practice entry and exit, and a therapy laundry and kitchen to practice daily household tasks.

Bethea's new Skilled Nursing and Rehab Center opened in January 2021 and is now accepting resident applications.

For additional information, please contact Jenny Doll, Director of Marketing, 843-395-4402 or visit our website bethearetirement.com



Visit BetheaRetirement.com or contact Jenny Doll, Director of Marketing, 843-395-4402 for more information or to schedule a tour.

157 Home Avenue Darlington, SC 29532

SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG SENIORS



Because of the pandemic, we've all experienced social isolation--the loss of close contact with family and friends. We're feeling that isolation even more acutely when we typically get together with those we love.

For older adults who have had to take extra isolating precautions against exposure

to COVID-19, these losses have been magnified, and in many cases, they're layered on top of longstanding disconnections.

With 36 percent of adults in America age 50 or older and 17 percent over 65, it's reasonable to assume that social isolation is widespread. A recent survey of U.S. adults conducted by AARP Foundation and the United Health Foundation confirms it. The study found that two-thirds of respondents are experiencing social isolation, with nearly that number feeling more anxiety because of the pandemic. The consequences are disturbing.

Social isolation has reached epidemic proportions during the pandemic. Decades of research on prolonged social isolation and loneliness show that it's worse for health than obesity and as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

The survey also reveals that most isolated older adults are not asking others for assistance, perhaps because they don't realize help is available.

If you or a loved one experiences social isolation, whether it's

COVID-related or a daily reality that was already present, here are some important facts:

Few have sought help about their feelings. Of those reporting social isolation during the pandemic, 50 percent say it has affected their motivation, 41 percent report greater anxiety and 37 percent have experienced feelings of depression. Yet, only 11 percent have turned to medical professionals to help address these concerns, and nearly a third hasn't sought help from anyone.

Women are more susceptible than men. Women 50 and older are more than twice as likely as men to feel overwhelmed as a result of the pandemic. Forty-six percent of women in that age bracket have felt anxious (compared to 36 percent of men), and 50 percent have felt stressed (compared to 40 percent of men). Twenty-nine percent of women 50 or older have gone for as long as three months without interacting with others outside their homes or workplaces.

Low-income adults have seen greater impact. People 50 and older in income brackets of lower than \$40,000 a year have been more affected by isolation than those with incomes of \$75,000 or more. Forty percent of lower-income respondents report having trouble accessing various resources. Twenty percent point to problems getting food, and about 20 percent have struggled to secure health care services.

Steps you can take. AARP Foundation launched Connect2Affect to address the growing problem of social isolation. Connect2Affect offers helpful tools and resources.

More medical professionals are now attuned to the physical and emotional toll social isolation can take. Discuss with your primary care doctor how you're feeling and that it might be related to social isolation.

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Stay Connected:



APPLYING GOD AND THE GOLDEN RULE by Les Echols



Robert Wilson

Originally from Charleston, Robert Wilson moved to Florence in 2007 and has been with Raldex Hospitality for over 10 years as front office manager at the Hilton Garden Inn. He holds a business management/marketing degree from South Carolina State University. Tanysha, his wife of 23 years, is a speech therapist, and the couple has two sons.

Diversity Works interviewed Wilson about his role with Raldex Hospitality, how COVID-19 changed how they do business and their commitment to diversity.

DW: Tell us about your duties with Hilton Garden Inn.

RW: As the front office manager for Hilton Garden Inn, I coordinate front office activities of the hotel. This includes everything from interviewing and hiring applicants to ensuring that we adhere to hotel policies and established operating procedures. I consistently answer inquiries pertaining to hotel policies and services.

DW: The impact of COVID-19 was prevalent and even debilitating for some businesses. Tell us about the impact of the pandemic and solutions you used for getting back to business.

RW: COVID-19 hit our business hard, as it did other hotels. We immediately scaled down operations due to the lack of travel, all while remodeling our guest rooms in the hotel. During the pandemic, Hilton established a Lysol clean program, in which each room is deep cleaned, inspected and sealed by our housekeeping staff. This pandemic not only changed the day-to-day operations of our hotel, it altered the everyday functions of the world. Mask mandates, social distancing,

vaccines and using maximum precautions have become a part of our everyday life.

DW: With this being the 10-year anniversary of Diversity Works, tell us your thoughts on diversity.

RW: First, congratulations to Diversity Works Magazine© on your 10-year anniversary. It is an honor to be selected as a candidate for an interview during this grand milestone. Working in hospitality has taught me more about diversity in several ways. The most important is to live by the Golden Rule, which is to treat others the way you would like to be treated. Also, in hospitality, customer service is apex, and one key to great customer service is catering to a diverse and inclusive customer base.

DW: Anything else you would like to add, Robert?

RW: My philosophy is that God is the guiding force in everything I do--God first and then family. Everything else falls in place when you keep these things in perspective. Being flexible and diverse in your life will allow all things to happen "decent and in order."



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CHARISMA IN THE COMMUNITY *by De'Angela Haynes*



Sharon Renee Blakney

HARTSVILLE- Based upon various resources, "charisma" has a lot of definitions. However, there are three that I would like to use: 1) compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others. 2) a divinely conferred power or talent. 3) a special power that makes them able to influence other people and attract their attention and admiration (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/charisma>). All three are certainly a reflection and depiction of Sharon Renee Blakney.

Blakney is a sergeant with Darlington Police Department. She has been in law enforcement for 19 years. She started her career at Darlington County Sheriff's Office and transferred to Darlington Police Department in 2016. While at Darlington Police Department, she has been fondly referred to as "the one with the teacup." In 2011, she and her husband were preparing to become empty nesters with their youngest of two sons graduating from high school en route to the U.S. Army, when they discovered they were expecting. With our daughter on the way, there was a need to supplement her income and that is where it all began. Although she did not start Charisma Events & Catering immediately, God directed her where she needed to be.

Blakney's love for fine china, proper table settings and everything tea is a complete contrast to her upbringing. She can recall her aunt asking, "Where did you get that tea set from?" as she set it out one morning for breakfast. She also recalls her mother telling people that she was from another time due to her need for proper etiquette and loving all things related to good food and tea. As she matured, Blakney continued her need to teach everyone how to eat, which is the foundation of Charisma Events & Catering. In 2016, they had a tea party for her daughter's birthday, and things continued to grow from there. In 2017, they received the Certificate of Existence and have been planning events, catering and having tea parties ever since.

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The spring of 2016, afforded the police department to sponsor an event with the Council on Aging and believe it or not, Blakney was allowed to do what she loves the most: have a tea party. The



senior ladies of Darlington County enjoyed the tea party, and she was truly blessed to serve such beautiful women. Also, while at Darlington Police Department, she was afforded the opportunity to work

with the youth within our community.

One of the first things Blakney noticed was that many African-American and other minority children did not know how to carry themselves in public, especially when nervous about how to eat in the presence of others. By the time Darlington Police Department

CHARISMA CONT'D



Blakney with young leaders in training etiquette class.

began the Leaders In Training (LIT) summer program for youth, she had taught numerous etiquette classes and was more than happy to teach the classes to the youth of LIT. Although COVID-19 put a damper on things for the time being she still helped individuals with etiquette. To date they have assisted with employment, mealtime and social etiquette for black and brown children growing into adulthood.

They are a family-run business that consists of her husband, her daughter and herself, most of the time. They are located at 514 Clyburn Ave., Hartsville, which is used mostly for storage at this time. Although they have the ability to do small events at that location, they are mobile and will come to you, providing all rules related to COVID-19 are followed. Their website is acharismaticevent.com, and the email is acharismaticevent@hotmail.com. What Blakney has to offer and the difference she is making in her community, is not just about doing events, but bringing hope to many. She demonstrates "Charisma in the Community!"





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ON BECOMING THE DRINK DOCTOR

by Mallory Brayboy



LaQuantia Goodman

Rooted out of necessity and withstood through adversity, the concierge bartending company PharmD is a refreshing and unique addition to the Florence area. The company was started in 2017 by LaQuantia Goodman.

Prior to starting her entrepreneurial journey, Goodman worked full-time as an infectious disease professional at HopeHealth while serving part-time as a bartender at The Library restaurant. After the restaurant went under new ownership, her part-time gig was soon nixed. Instead of sulking, Goodman saw

this as the perfect time to begin her very own venture. From there, the idea for PharmD emerged and came into fruition.

Goodman began offering private bartending services for a multitude of functions including parties, weddings and anniversaries and even serving non-alcoholic drinks at Sweet 16 parties. The name PharmD came to her one day as she went to pick up a prescription for a patient. She realized that though she didn't provide medicine, she too provided something that made people feel better. From here, she coined herself the "Drink Doctor."

Goodman earned a B.S. in math from Francis Marion University as well as a master's degree in finance from Grand Canyon University to propel her corporate career. However, there was no formal schooling



Goodman working her magic!

needed for her career as the Drink Doctor. While earning her undergraduate degree, she served as a waiter at Percy & Willie's. During her time there, she noticed a complete lack of diversity in the bar area and volunteered to work as a bartender. It was there that she learned the tricks of the trade and discovered her love for

mixology. Goodman says her favorite part of the job is "seeing people happy."

In 2020, the global coronavirus pandemic brought about a sudden halt to most of the world, including PharmD. But as one who had bounced back seamlessly after losing her part-time job, Goodman was no stranger to overcoming obstacles and was able to conquer it undoubtedly. It didn't take long for an innovative idea to spark in her mind. She began offering virtual classes to teach attendees how to craft their very own flavorful mixed drinks. She will soon begin offering these virtual classes on a monthly basis.

One of her favorite mixed drinks is the Dirty Martini, which she makes using a delicious blend of Kettle One vodka and olive juice, garnished with an olive. Her drink of choice for the spring and summer seasons is one she crafted called the "Hot Quke." The drink is a combination of the Brazilian liquor Cachaca, cucumber, simple syrup and a little jalapeño.

In the future, Goodman plans to own a physical location that offers drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, as well as food. The location will serve as a place for Goodman to host her classes and for customers to enjoy themselves. In addition to offering monthly virtual classes, PharmD will also have a membership program that will include a monthly drink recipe.

Stay in the know about PharmD and all of its events and offerings online at www.PharmDDrinkDoctor.com and at www.facebook.com/DrinkDoctor.



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Kendra Moore Robinson

For centuries there have been numerous political and social debates about the health care systems in the United States. Within the past year there have been greater discussions about the effectiveness of systems in emergency cases. Should the government be responsible for people's health or should individuals be more vocal about their individual rights. There are several healthcare services, many that are income based, but many still do not offer assistance for specified cases. How is the lack of certain medical services to be

addressed? Due to the recent pandemic, hospital care has been focused more on COVID-19 patient care. People with non life-threatening issues are not receiving care at high rates because many of them are sent home for self-care. Lack of care can lead to certain frustrations that often do not get talked about within certain cultures or groups.

Keondra Robinson, nurse practitioner, is the founder of One Moore Step. Robinson was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. but was raised in Florence. She is newly married to William Robinson. She obtained her ADN at Florence Darlington Technical College, her bachelor's in nursing from South University and her master's in nursing of science, nurse practitioner, from South University. She is currently a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and American Nurses Association. Robinson has worked as a registered nurse for several hospitals in the community as well as worked as a travel nurse for four years prior to the pandemic.

It was during her stint as a travel nurse that Robinson was able to evaluate most health issues directly related to poor mental health even within herself. This led her into creating awareness and upliftment of her community as a whole by establishing "One Moore Step INC." One Moore Step INC functions as a non-profit organization providing health promotion through various resources within the community with a focus on helping individuals decrease stress with a goal of decreasing chronic health conditions.

Robinson has a commitment to caring for those who are less informed about health and wellness options. She helps people get one step closer to better living by creating education programs to address chronic health conditions. In 2019 and pre-pandemic 2020, One Moore Step hosted women's empowerment events that educated registrants on stress management within women's communities. Many of the topics focused on mental and emotional health that stem from financial bondage. The organization provides health promotion activities and homeless outreach. Underserved communities lack resources to health care education, and with the help of organizations like One Moore Step, people can get the resources to obtain and maintain healthy lifestyles. Education and events to share health information help to keep people aware of wellness options to assist them with reaching their goals.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a program Healthy People 2020 with four overarching goals that align with the goals of One Moore Step:

- Attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury and premature death
- Achieve health equity, eliminate disparities and improve the health of all groups
- Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all



- Promote quality of life, healthy development and healthy behaviors across all life stages

The vision for One Moore Step is to go into homes to educate families

about healthy living. The organization wants to change mindsets, help people to not make excuses and help them learn to prioritize their health. Robinson said that most people do not understand the importance of getting lab work completed and not missing their doctor's appointments. People are also often misinformed about living with chronic conditions. Robinson stated that living with or having a chronic condition does not mean a person is unhealthy. It means he or she has to do things in moderation but can lead normal lives. Robinson wants to influence people to operate in their purpose. Her impact in the community has led to writing newspaper articles about health, doing online health blogs, teaching in-person and virtual seminars as well as creating and hosting "One Moore Step Women Empowerment" events over the last three years.

Community outreach for Robinson, outside of One Moore Step, has been with the Florence Darlington Technical College RUSH program seminars and The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc Delta Kappa Lambda Chapter Project Alpha program and president of Ladies Divine to Shine. Robinson is the author of "Married to Self Love... Keeping the Balance," which focuses on the importance of maintaining balance spiritually, mentally, and physically...designed to help individuals live in purpose on purpose.

THE 55TH DEBUTANTE COTILLION

Submitted by Earline McClary, (AKA) Ivy Leaf Reporter

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Epsilon Chi Omega Chapter of Florence South Carolina and The Palmetto Pearls Foundation presented its 55th Debutante Cotillion virtually on Nov. 14. This signature scholarship program recognizes young women in surrounding communities who exemplify impeccable character, have high moral standards and have outstanding educational achievement. The theme was "Elegant Pearls: Extraordinary and Enlightened." Miss Kierra Carter served as Mistress of Ceremonies.

Miss Marjorie Jalene Kennedy was crowned Miss Debutante 2020-2022. Marjorie is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joe (Ruthene) Kennedy. Marjorie, a junior at Wilson High School, was presented by her father. Her escort Mr. Joshua Williams, son of Mr. and Mrs. William (Shateisha) Williams, is a junior at Wilson High School.



Miss Marjorie Jalene Kennedy

Miss Morgan Davis was recognized as First Attendant to Miss Debutante. Morgan is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Creighton (Adria) Davis of Florence. Morgan, a junior at Wilson High School, was presented by her father. Her escort, Mr. D'Angelo Eaddy, son of Mr. and Mrs. Tamais (Deneda) Hines, is a senior at Timmonsville High School.

Miss Samaria Ellerbe was recognized as Second Attendant to Miss Debutante. Samaria is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Shawn (Michelle) Ellerbe. Samaria, a

THE 55TH CONT'D



Miss Morgan Davis



Miss Samaria Ellerbe

junior at Wilson High School, was presented by her father. Her escort, Mr. Andriq Williams, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Andre (Itisa) Williams, is a junior at Wilson High School.

Other Debutantes participating in the cotillion included the following young ladies:

Miss Jalyse Harrell is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James (Vermonica) Harrell. She is a senior at Darlington High School and was presented by her father. Her escort, Mr. Toby Rush, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Toby (Alesha) Rush, is a senior at Darlington High School.

Miss Ryein Bennett is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Doron (Anica) Bennett. Ryein is a senior at the Wilson High School. Ryein was presented by her father. Her escort, Mr. Thomas Spears, the son of Mr. and Mrs. William (Lisa) Spears, is a senior at Wilson High School.

Miss Amaya Lewis is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Chris (Chrystal) Lewis. Amaya is a junior at Wilson High School and was presented by her father. Her escort, Mr. Travis Merritts Jr., the son of Mr. and Mrs.

Travis (Kimberly) Merritts Sr., is a senior at The King's Academy.

Miss Rae' Ayanna Scott is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Baretta (Shelia) Scott. Rae' Ayanna is a junior at Darlington High School and was presented by her father. Her escort, Mr. Harrison Muldrow, the son of Ms. Tanisha Harrison and Mr. Harry Muldrow, is a senior at Wilson High School.

Miss Octavia Edwards is the daughter of Ms. Grace Montford. Octavia is a junior at Wilson High School. She was presented by her family. Her escort, Mr. Kanye Dixon, the son of Ms. Kia Douglas, is a junior at Wilson High School.

Miss Brianna Scott is the daughter of Ms. Lavera Thomas. Brianna is a senior at Darlington High School. Brianna was presented by her cousin Mr. Johnathan Evans.

Miss Kennedy Montgomery is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bobby (Argaria) Young. Kennedy is a senior at Wilson High School.

Debutantes also received awards for their talent presentations competition. The first-place talent winner Miss Marjorie Jalene Kennedy, the second-place winner Miss Jalyse Harrell, and the third-place winner Miss Octavia Edwards.

Winners of the Electronic Portfolios were Miss Ryein Bennett, first place winner; Miss Morgan Davis, second place; and Miss Jalyse Harrell, third place.

All Debutantes will receive scholarships of varying amounts.



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A portrait of Dr. Thesselon Monderson, a Black man with a grey beard and mustache, smiling. He is wearing a white lab coat over a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a solid blue color.

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