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DIVERSITY WORKS

JANUARY 2022 VOLUME 12 ISSUE 1

"For All of Us"

★ McCall Farms Family Of Brands ★



COVER STORY: PG. 38 MCCALL FARMS
Jackie Causey, Angel Wingate & Sue M. Courtney
(Cover photo by William "Cash" Stukes, At Your Service Media)


HOW A SMALL NON-PROFIT TEAMED UP WITH A GLOBAL MANUFACTURER TO BRING THEIR ALS DRUG TO CLINICAL TRIALS

Before she lost her own battle to ALS in 2003, Jenifer Estes started Project ALS, raising over \$17 million dollars for the non-profit in hopes of a breakthrough in the fight against Lou Gehrig's disease. As her family continued the quest, in 2019, they got a hit with a new compound that seemed to stop or even reverse motor nerve damage. The promising new drug would need to begin trials immediately, but as a non-profit, all they had was a half gram of material and a journal article, and the deadline was approaching quickly. That's when Chris and his team at Thermo Fisher Scientific sprang into action. They worked around the clock to come up with an ingenious solution to scale a half gram of material into a kilo of purified product suitable for clinical trials. Now, with more than enough material in clinical trials to potentially treat or cure one of humanity's most pernicious diseases, there's hope for ALS patients.

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Chris Goss
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MISSION AND VISION

OUR MISSION

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

OUR VISION

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

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

NUESTRA MISIÓN

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

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

NUESTRA VISIÓN

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

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FROM THE EDITOR'S HEART



Glceria Brown Mason
Editor

Greetings and Happy New Year!

To the loyal Diversity Works readers and residents of the Pee Dee, I am excited to join the Diversity Works Team as we embark on the next 10-year milestone! I applaud the vision and commitment from its leadership, and I am humbled to step into the shoes of those who have served before me. While new to the Pee Dee, I have solid roots here and I am grateful for the warm welcome and courtesies extended to me. I look forward to continuing to establish relationships as we highlight the great work and news of diversity, equity and inclusion. I share a knowledge and perspective from a 38-year federal career in communications and marketing, federal contracting and community service. As Editor, I am committed to bringing you the most relevant, timely and newsworthy information of the Pee Dee, with DEI in mind.

The 2020 issue is full of interesting and informative articles on business, diversity in spirituality, education, articles derived from the themes of our special section, our financial, health and lifestyle sections. As you read, and I hope you will, look for articles with valuable information, community programs, people and more. Staying informed about the community broadens our personal and professional outlook. If we fail to embrace our differences, we deny ourselves the opportunity to grow. Diversity works for all of us!

Learn about the City of Florence's core values of collaboration, professionalism and ownership. Sign up for their E-Newsletter at www.cityofflorence.com, to stay abreast of what's happening in the community. Look for articles on the challenges for women entrepreneurs and how to overcome them and technology trends for small business in 2022. For resources to help entrepreneurs, check out the Florence Downtown Development Office's article entitled, 'New Year, New You, New Business.' Already in business? Learn about the SC Small Business Development Center's collaboration on the BRIDGE initiative, to uplift African American business owner's access to capital. Love to see growth in the area, welcome

Innovative Construction Group as they establish operations in Florence. Diversity Works applauds MPD for its acquisition and the appointment of Kullen Boling as vice president of rates and contracts. Congratulations to Sarah Sweeney as she joins the team at the United Way. Our business section also includes Dr. Nika White's article on ego as a superpower for Black, Indigenous, People of Color. Lastly, applause to organizations who understand that their giving helps communities flourish. Read the stories and thank Spherion Staffing Solutions, SC Ports and the Eastern Carolina Foundation, WIP for their generous support.

It is important to have a strong faith and foundation. We get a faith check in our spirituality section. Read about casting your vision and breaking through in 2022! A strong foundation is also important in academics. Malcolm X said, "education is the passport to the future." Read about DIY activities to excite youth in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Cheers to Delmae Elementary for being named a Blue-Ribbon School of Excellence and learn as MCS D Superintendent Dr. Kandace Bethea walks us through the district's innovative programs for eager young learners. Our education section includes articles of philanthropy as Advantage Academy is flying high with a grant from the FAA and students at SC State University receives scholarships from Duke Energy. We also shine a light on the recent fellows of the James E. Clyburn Political Fellowship Program, specifically for SC residents with a desire for politics. The section also highlights articles on new leadership roles at FMU, the FDTC Pathways Program and the Claffin University Alumni.

Our special section features our cover story on the area's oldest business, McCall Farms. With its diverse workforce, this 139-year business is still thriving and grows, cans and distributes tasty fresh food. Read their story and learn more about McCall Farms, where their slogan is, Come Grow with Us.

In addition, we recognize and commemorate nationally celebrated observances. Fifty-seven years ago, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his dedication to nonviolence for the civil rights of African American people. Today, the U.S. celebrates his life and legacy annually. Often referred to as a day of service, the holiday is celebrated by people coming together in service for justice and equality. Diversity Works shares stories of how Wilhelmina P. Johnson bridged the gap; how Representative Roger Kirby is fighting for our community and how Robert Skelton encourages winning. It is so fitting that the 2022 King holiday theme calls each of us to the realization that, It Starts with Me. So, how will you shift your priorities on the King holiday in a day of service?

Black History month embraces the theme, Black Health and Wellness. The nationwide pandemic has increased our respect for those in

the health field. Learn about health and health care disparities of African Americans from HopeHealth professionals. Find stories that inform and encourage a healthy lifestyle from nurse, James Rand, Dr. Emrys Hamidi, fitness expert Reginald Sanders and more.

March recognizes National Women's History and National Social Work month, the time to commemorate the contributions of women as well as people in the challenging but rewarding field of social work. Included among them, locals making an impact. You will find local Pee Dee women, sharing stories of Providing Healing, Providing Hope. With over 8,000 social workers in the state of South Carolina, the national theme, The Time is Right for Social Work, spotlights the contributions of social workers and how they aid families. Take in the stories of three local social workers from MUSC and McLeod Health, doing their part for our community. To all the beautifully diverse women in the Pee Dee, may healing, hope, wellness and self-care be yours. Thank you for rising to the occasion. May the words of our first National Youth Poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman, inspire you, "... even as we grieved, we grew."

In our financial section, we congratulate Tripp Satterwhite on joining the team at ABB. Also find tips to benefit your financial health and wellness. In our health section, find stories from HopeHealth, Genesis, MUSC, Circle Park and more. Join SC-DHEC in congratulating CareSouth Carolinas on its Community Hero Award. Read and welcome the new medical personnel at HopeHealth while recognizing MUSC for the national distinction of an 'A' Leapfrog hospital safety grade. Inform yourselves on what Dr. Greg May shares about diabetes and your heart and take note of Circle Park's story on the misuse of alcohol. We congratulate HopeHealth on its national recognition by the AHA on improving blood pressure control rates. As growth continues as MUSC announces a new lung cancer screening program, be informed that HopeHealth has opened a new community health center in Hemingway with Dr. Steve Reeves and, Genesis Health Care breaks ground for a new Federally Qualified Health Center in Darlington. Diversity Works congratulates them all.

As we conclude this issue, our lifestyle section informs us of the skills needed to continue advancing. Read about the five ways to celebrate diverse arts and culture, the reasons millennials need life insurance and how Pee Dee Equality supports LGBTQ+ individuals.

Excited for what's in store? I invite you to explore the sections and get to know and support the Pee Dee advertisers found within. We would like to hear from you, send us your feedback at dmmadworks@aol.com. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter and visit us online where you will find 10 years of past issues at www.diversityworkssc.com. Happy reading.....

Be well and be safe,
Glceria Brown Mason, Editor

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EGO - A HIDDEN SUPERPOWER IN THE WORKPLACE

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



Dr. Nika White

GREENVILLE - Ego is considered a negative quality in a coworker, manager or person in leadership. In the business world, ego has allowed people with power to manipulate and undermine those with less power. However, the true, unbiased definition of ego is, a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance, and that's how we should approach it. Particularly for Black Indigenous People of Color, ego isn't a bad thing. Rather, it's an untapped superpower. In this article, I'll

show you how ego can be used as a tool of empowerment for marginalized groups instead of a weapon for power and control.

The Harm in Weaponizing Ego

For years, we've weaponized the definition of ego and allowed it to put underrepresented groups at a disadvantage in the workplace. Ego has been predominantly used as a tool of power and control by those in more privileged positions. It typically sends a clear message that someone has more power than someone else. In practice, it's been used as a covert tool for those in positions of power to keep certain groups in their place.

We often hear the phrase, "you need to quiet your ego," to encourage someone to listen, understand and gain more perspective. But maybe we shouldn't quiet our egos. Instead, we should use ego to boost the self-esteem of certain groups. It's time we de-weaponize ego and start using it as a strategic tool for historically marginalized groups to gain confidence, agency and self-worth. There's value in allowing underrepresented groups to use ego as a superpower to increase diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.

Ego is the Birthplace of Confidence

For years, plenty of groups have felt underestimated, divested in, and psychologically unsafe at work. BIPOC are still battling microaggressions, feeling unacknowledged and having their contributions devalued. The weight of adversity in the workplace can break anyone's self-esteem and motivation.

Ego can be a superpower that builds confidence from within for groups that are often overlooked. Ego can look like:

- walking into a room with one's chest held high
- wearing one's natural hair at work
- speaking with a confident tone
- feeling comfortable expressing one's cultural traditions
- publicly taking credit for an idea

Ego can play a role in building the vibrato in someone's voice and encouraging them to be brave and move with more certainty. It takes confidence to move forward in one's career and for some, developing a healthy ego can be the first step towards upward mobility.

Ego Builds Agency and Action

The workplace can feel hostile for BIPOC and can stifle many in their pursuit towards agency and action. It's not uncommon for marginalized people to have their contributions diminished or have other people take their ideas and run with them. When we weaponize ego, it makes people play small. It causes some to feel that they shouldn't take up space or time advocating for their ideas and contributions.

Ego and self-agency are the keys to upward mobility for BIPOC in the workplace. Folks can use ego as a tool for self-empowerment to build the fire in their bellies to act on ideas and projects that excite them. Without ego or the encouragement of their fellow colleagues in the workplace, many BIPOC can feel deflated and demotivated when it comes to proposing new ideas and speaking their minds.

Sometimes, we must inflate our own egos and build agency from the inside out. Ego can be the wind to our backs when things must get done, but there's no one in the company cheering for us. Ego is the superpower BIPOC can tap into when they need an extra push towards action.

Ego Pushes BIPOC to Know Our Worth

There's a big movement now for BIPOC to know and lean into their worth even if others don't recognize it. This allows us to know when we should stop tolerating harmful people, behaviors and spaces that don't serve our upward trajectory.

Developing a healthy inner ego can push BIPOC to know they can accomplish hard things. Self-awareness, reflection and confidence are all essential in reaching big, lofty goals enhanced by ego.

Ego and knowing one's worth involve risk-taking. It's risky to ask for more money during a job interview or walk away from projects that push our personal boundaries. When BIPOC tap into their egos, we can begin centering our voices and needs, even when it's uncomfortable.

Ego gives us pride in who we are and where we came from. When we think about how many communities of BIPOC had their history and contributions diminished, we can understand why some groups still struggle with self-worth today. Tapping into a healthy ego can help many BIPOC transcend the harsh realities of the past and actualize a future that's bright and optimistic.

Ego Allows BIPOC to See Themselves in a Positive Light

In a world that sees BIPOC as less than or inferior, it's important for us to see the best in ourselves. Ego is the aspect of self that wants to be seen in a positive light. When we gravitate towards the stigmatized definition of ego, it doesn't lend itself to the main intent which is to witness our higher selves.

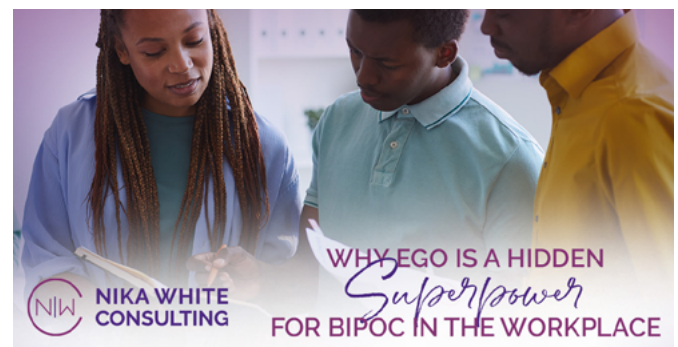
When we reimagine the idea of ego and take away the stigma, we start seeing the best versions of ourselves, our key qualities, and traits without the fear of looking egotistical.

Redefining Ego as a Tool for Empowerment

It's time we break down and redefine ego. It's not always wrong to operate out of a place of ego. We can now understand how ego and its benefits can work to raise the position of BIPOC and minority groups in organizations.

For non-minority individuals, when they think of ego, it can be perceived as a turn off or poor human quality. What they don't realize is that feeling confident and self-actualized can be a result of being in a privileged position. For people who were never given positive affirmations for their ideas, skills, abilities or self, ego is a way of survival. It's important that BIPOC start to see how ego can be used as a catalyst to face and deal with the trauma of being a minority in the workplace.

Ego is already being utilized as a superpower, but we call it self-care or boundaries. It's time we embrace all three terms, self-care, boundaries and ego, as tools for BIPOC and marginalized groups to use and build confidence, agency and self-worth in the workplace.



SC PORTS AWARDS \$205,000 TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS



Funding from SC Ports' Community Giving Program will support Camp Rise Above's mission of providing fun, life-changing camp experiences to children with serious illnesses, life challenges and disabilities. (Photo/Provided by Camp Rise Above)

CHARLESTON- South Carolina Ports has awarded \$205,000 in grants to 111 community organizations and nonprofits throughout South Carolina as part of its fiscal year 2022, Community Giving Program.

SC Ports dedicates a portion of its revenues each year to support charitable organizations in the communities in which the port operates. Programs with measurable, sustained impacts receive priority during the selection process.

"The SC Ports team believes strongly in supporting the great organizations in South Carolina that work tirelessly to make a meaningful and measurable difference in people's lives," SC Ports CEO Jim Newsome said. "At a time of economic hardship for many, SC Ports is proud to play a small role in supporting the important work done by the Community Giving Program grant recipients."

Many of this year's grant recipients are dedicated to improving children's lives through supportive mentoring programs, outdoor and enrichment activities and confidence-building curricula.

Grant funding will support more than 135,000 children throughout

South Carolina with programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Lowcountry, Healing Farms, Orangeburg County Community of Character, The Green Heart Project and Wings for Kids, to name a few.

Grants will also support literacy programs — such as Begin with Books and Reading Partners of South Carolina — benefiting nearly 7,000 students.

SC Ports continues to support organizations dedicated to addressing food insecurity and improving access to healthy foods. Programs such as East Cooper Meals on Wheels, Fresh Future Farm, Greer Community Ministries, Help 4 Kids Florence and Love Feeds will use grant funding to help serve more than 7,000 individuals around the state. SC Ports also recently donated \$24,000 to the Lowcountry Food Bank.

Several grant recipients received funds for workforce development initiatives. Greenville Technical College will use the funding to create nine scholarships for its Truck Driver Training Program. Programs such as this create a career path and provide vital job skills for the logistics and maritime industry, which are crucial to the success of port operations.

This year's grant funding will also support 17 health and wellness programs around the state, impacting more than 10,000 children and adults. Beyond Basic Life Skills, Children's Cancer Partners of the Carolinas, Greenville Area Parkinson Society, Girls on the Run Charleston, Going Places, Good Neighbor Medical Clinic and Mercy Medicine Free Clinic are among the grant recipients working to improve people's lives by providing access to health care and wellness programs. "SC Ports strives to have a positive impact in our communities, as do these 111 incredible grant award recipients," said Jordi Yarborough, SC Ports' senior vice president of community engagement. "It is through partnerships with organizations like these that we achieve our shared goal of making a difference in South Carolina."



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INNOVATIVE CONSTRUCTION GROUP ESTABLISHES OPERATIONS IN FLORENCE COUNTY

Submitted by Innovative Construction Group



COLUMBIA— Innovative Construction Group, a subsidiary of PulteGroup, Inc., has announced plans to establish operations in Florence County. The \$35.6 million investment will create 179 new jobs and is part of PulteGroup, Inc.’s ongoing expansion of its ICG platform.

ICG is an off-site construction company that offers framing solutions, design services, wall panels and other products with on-site installation to provide a full-frame shell construction process. Located at 2570 Florence Harlee Blvd. in Florence, ICG’s new facility will increase the company’s production and distribution capabilities to meet growing demand. The new facility is expected to be operational in the first half of 2022. Individuals interested in joining the ICG team should visit the company’s careers webpage.

The Coordinating Council for Economic Development has approved job development credits related to the project. Florence County was also awarded a \$1 million set-aside grant to assist with costs related to this project.

Announcement Quotes

“Florence County and the entire state of South Carolina have been extremely supportive of our new operations. We have already begun hiring and look forward to moving into production early next

year.” ICG President Ryan Melin

“The 179 new jobs that ICG is bringing to Florence County will have an immediate impact on the region. We wish them the best of luck here in the Palmetto State and look forward to seeing them grow and succeed here for a long time.” Governor Henry McMaster

“We’re excited to welcome ICG to the South Carolina family. The company’s decision to invest \$35.6 million and create 179 new jobs in Florence County is great news for our state and is a testament to our tremendous workforce and positive business environment.” Secretary of Commerce Harry M. Lightsey III

“It was a great day as we announce the establishment of ICG in Florence County. We are delighted ICG chose Florence County to locate, and we know that this move will not only help them to push the industry forward, but their capital investment and job creation will enhance our local economy. We look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with ICG.” Florence County Council Chairman Willard Dorriety Jr.



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CHANGES! CHANGES! AND MORE CHANGES!

Submitted by Dr. Constance Vicki Dixon, CEO



Dr. Constance Vicki Dixon

It's here again! Another tax season with new changes. The Covid-relief bills signed into law last December and March coupled with the American Rescue Plan Act signed by President Biden enacted in March 2021, resulted in new rules or changes to already existing rules in the tax laws. Many more changes were made to the tax laws than listed here, but I am addressing a few of the ones that will affect most working families. As of this writing, unless specified, many of these changes only apply to

tax returns, the limit on investment income increased from \$3,650 (2020) to \$10,000, workers who wouldn't be able to claim the credit because their children can't satisfy the identification requirements can now claim the childless EITC.

Unemployment

Up to \$10,200 of unemployment compensation was exempt from federal income tax for households with an adjusted gross income less than \$150,000. However, the exemption only applied to unemployment compensation received in 2020. Therefore, unemployment will once again be fully taxed for 2021.

Taxes can be confusing and daunting, but the friendly, knowledgeable staff of Professional Business and Tax Services LLC will be glad to assist you with your tax needs. Call (843) 413-2826 for an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome.

the 2021 tax year.

The Child Tax Credit

The ARPA provided a one-year expansion of the child tax credit for the 2021 tax year. For 2021, the credit jumped from \$2,000 per child 16 years and younger in 2020, to \$3,000 for most children, and \$3600 for children five years old and younger. The amounts are reduced depending on the adjusted gross income amount and filing status of the taxpayer. Another important change is that the 2021 credit is fully refundable and the \$2500 of earned income requirement is dropped for 2021. Unlike 2020, children who are 17 years old also qualify for the 2021 credit.

In July, half of the 2021 credit amount was paid in advance through December 15. The other half of the credit can be claimed on the 2021 tax return. To determine what the taxpayer will be entitled to claim, a reconciliation of the monthly payments received from the IRS will be calculated. If the credit amount exceeds the total monthly payments, the excess credit can be claimed on the return. However, if the credit amount is less than the payments, the taxpayer may have to pay the excess back. If taxpayers opt out of the monthly CTC payments, they can claim the full credit on their tax return.

Child and Dependent Care

The ARPA made significant improvements to the child and dependent care credit. Child and dependent care expenses are for either, a dependent child under age 13 when care was provided i.e., daycare, or a qualifying disabled dependent or spouse of any age that lived with the taxpayer. In 2020, this credit was a non-refundable credit worth up to \$3,000 in eligible expenses for one child/disabled person or \$6,000 for two or more.

For 2021, this credit is fully refundable. The credit is allowed for up to \$8000 in expenses for one child/disabled person and \$16,000 for more than one. At the 50 percent maximum credit percentage, the top credit for the 2021 tax year will be at \$4000 for one child/disabled person and \$8,000 for more. Another plus, the full child and dependent credit will be allowed for families making less than \$125,000 a year as compared to \$15,000 per year. The credit will start to phase out after \$125,000, but all families making between \$125,000 and \$438,000 will receive at least a partial credit.

Earned Income Tax Credit

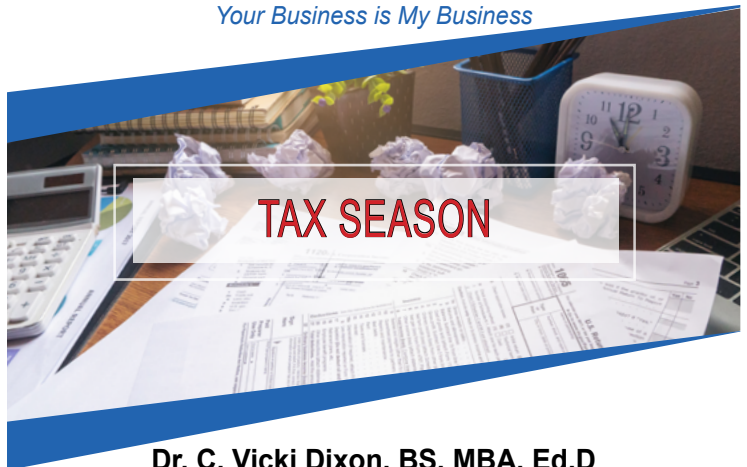
The ARPA expanded the 2021 Earned Income Tax Credit by changing, lowering the minimum age from 25 to 19, except for certain full-time students, eliminating the maximum age 65 to receive the credit, increased the maximum credit for childless workers from \$543 to \$1502 for the 2021 tax year and expanded the eligibility rules for former foster youth and homeless youth as well. As in 2020, taxpayers may continue to use their 2019 earned income, not 2020 income, instead of their 2021 income, whichever will boost the credit amount.

A few permanent changes that will take effect for 2021 are, certain married but separated couples can now claim the EITC on separate



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MPD ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ANNOUNCES KULLEN BOLING AS VICE PRESIDENT



Kullen Boling

BENNETTSVILLE-MPD Electric Cooperative is pleased to announce that Kullen Boling joined them as Vice President of Rates and Contracts on January 3, 2022.

Having previously served as Rates Manager with Central Electric Power Cooperative, Boling brings a wealth of utility experience ranging from managing, billing and metering to rate analytics for large industrial members across South Carolina. Prior to that, he spent 14 years at SCANA Corporation in various finance

roles focused on electric and gas, nuclear, fiber and tower communications, as well as deregulated gas marketing.

“We are very excited to welcome Kullen to MPD,” says President and CEO, William Fleming, Jr. “His leadership, experience and expertise in all areas of rate analytics will not only benefit the entire MPD team, but all our residential, commercial and industrial members as well.”

Along with a strong utility background in electric and gas markets and deregulated gas marketing, Boling holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of South Carolina Aiken where he graduated with honors.

MPD was formed in 2020, as a strategic collaboration between Marlboro Electric Cooperative and Pee Dee Electric Cooperative with the goal of creating joint economic benefits, long-term efficiencies and overall improved service for members residing in Northeast South Carolina.

MDT ACQUIRES OIL COMPANY

Submitted by Katie Wilcox, Marketing and Community Development



Preston Moore Family

BENNETTSVILLE - Marlboro Development Team, Inc. a wholly owned, for-profit subsidiary of Marlboro Electric Cooperative is pleased to announce the acquisition of Bennettsville’s Preston Moore Oil Company, which will now be known as MPD Energy.

Founded in the 1950s, by Preston Moore, Ray Patterson started out driving one of the field delivery trucks. He worked his way up to keeping the books and assisting Mr. Preston until 1977, when he purchased the company.

Family-run ever since, daughter Janet Patterson Sides joined in 1990, followed by husband Rusty in 1991. Their son, Raymond Sides, vice president of Operations, officially became part of the family venture in January 2014, sharing that, “I grew up here. Go to school, come to the bulk plant after school, get your homework done and play in the yard. I’d sit in the trucks and pretend to drive them.”

After the acquisition is complete, the three Sides, along with their three employees will stay on and grow along with MPD Energy with the addition of several new employees.

“We are so excited to have the former Preston Moore Oil Company, now MPD Energy, and its employees join Marlboro Development Team,” stated MDT President and CEO William Fleming. “This opportunity is exactly the sort of strategic alliance that helps not only our companies, but the greater community of South and North Carolina, the region we will continue to serve.”

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SWEENEY JOINS UNITED WAY AS CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

Submitted by United Way



Sarah Sweeney

In September, United Way of Florence County added a new team member. Sarah Sweeney is the new director of Campaign and Donor Relations at United Way of Florence County. As director of Campaign and Donor Relations, Sweeney's duty is to fundraise on behalf of United Way of Florence County and the 22 partner agencies and 30 programs it supports.

Cameron Packett, president of United Way of Florence County said, "Sweeney is a great addition to the team. Sarah has a demonstrated team-player mentality and has a strong

background in nonprofit work. She has a variety of skills that I've seen firsthand, and she has been an asset to this organization. Sweeney is used to wearing many hats and rolling up her sleeves, which is exactly what it takes to work in the nonprofit world."

Les Ward, chairman of the board for United Way of Florence County said, "the Board of Directors is excited to have Sweeney on board. The director of campaign and donor relations is a vital role for United Way of Florence County, because fundraising through the annual campaign directly impacts our ability to fulfill our mission for the community. Sarah has worked directly with two of our partner agencies, so she understands how critical funding from United Way can be."

Sweeney serves on the Florence Symphony Orchestra board of directors, volunteers as a docent at the Florence County Museum. A native of Thibodeaux, Louisiana, Sweeney has called Florence home for the past 10 years. She graduated from Nicholls State University in Louisiana, earning a mass communications and public relations degree in 2011. In her free time, she likes to run, kayak and hike with her husband, John Sweeney, their four-year-old daughter and their dog, Shakespeare.

Over the last few months, Sweeney has had the opportunity to learn and expand her knowledge on the nonprofit world and United Way. Here is what she had to say when asked a few questions.

What do you like most about United Way?

"United Way has always meant a lot to me because I came from two United Way funded agencies, The CARE House of the Pee Dee and Pee Dee Coalition, and so I saw firsthand the benefits of it. Being a part of the United Way allows me to make an impact in my community. United Way of Florence County does so much to support local nonprofit organizations in the community, and I'm very excited to play a key role in ensuring funding for a variety of programs that support those in need. I have a passion for this work and this community that I think will speak to donors and potential donors."



How can someone get involved with United Way?

"I am so glad you asked! Getting involved with United Way is one of my favorite things to talk about. You can donate through our website or get your workplace to run a donation campaign. You can volunteer with us or one of our partner agencies. Also, you can be a voice in our community and advocate for United Way of Florence County. We need ambassadors in the community talking about how important our mission is. United Way focuses on health, education, and financial stability of the community and talking about United Way's platform helps us spread the word," said Sweeney.

About the United Way of Florence County:

The United Way of Florence County is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit that has been a cornerstone of the social service sector in Florence County for over 65 years. Our mission is to positively impact the needs of our community by strengthening relationships, programs, and services that produce measurable results and improve the quality of life and to be recognized as the leading health and human services support agency in the Pee Dee through resource development and community impact initiatives. For more information, please visit www.uwflorence.org or call us at 843-662-2407.



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TECH TRENDS INSPIRE SMALL BUSINESSES

Small businesses are important parts of communities and a key driving factor of the current economic recovery. Modern technology and workplace trends are transforming how these organizations are run, not only to increase productivity, but expand the possibilities of the future.

New research found that the United States is home to 32.5 million small businesses employing 46.8 percent of the private workforce, according to the 2021 Small Business Profiles from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Combine small and medium-sized businesses, and you cover most companies in the country - a powerful economic force.

"We see a bright future ahead for businesses in 2022," said Eric Yu, Lenovo senior vice president, small and medium business segment. "Small to medium-sized businesses can utilize the best in technology to help overcome the challenges today and drive growth, engage employees and boost profits."

Yu and the experts at Lenovo offer tips for SMBs based on their top technology predictions for 2022. Learn more at Lenovo.com.

1. Add hybrid workforce technology

Workplace culture continues to evolve with hybrid workforces here to stay. Technology is driving this momentum forward, enabling businesses of all sizes to remain agile and adaptable. SMBs should seek purpose-built technology solutions that bring equity, parity, presence and inclusion to hybrid work.

Emerging technology will also advance SMB growth, with augmented and virtual reality creating custom workplaces for employees, immersive training, efficient data analysis and enhanced productivity. Just imagine the possibilities of training employees virtually, tapping resources beyond what's available locally and

removing the need to travel. Technology makes this a reality.

2. Enhance digital security

Digital threats are as much a concern for SMBs as they are for large companies. Whether it's private client data, proprietary company information or financial accounts, security must remain top of mind in 2022 as cybercriminals become savvier every day.

Prioritizing security with seamless authentication driven by artificial intelligence and biometric technology (such as fingerprint scans) will be key for SMBs as they further transition to public key infrastructure-based device security, like those used today to access mobile banking applications, and multifactor authentication, for application and device access.

3. Invest in modern monitors

The desktop monitors SMB employees use can transform their work experience for increased comfort and capabilities. Investing in modern monitors makes sense, especially for remote employees and those in technology roles. For example, SMB employees can seamlessly multitask through modern desktop monitors that offer larger screen real estate and single cable management for easy connections.

What makes these monitors different? Next-generation monitors feature higher resolution, new aspect ratios such as ultra-wide and low blue light tech to reduce eye strain. Monitors will extend functionality for SMB employees as they can provide a docking hub for connection of other devices such as smartphones, speakers, headphones and tablets.

4. Upgrade your accessory ecosystem

Beyond modern monitors, other aspects of home office technology are transforming, too. Creating an up-to-date and efficient workspace at home is important for productivity but also for personal well-being. Providing employees with complementary tools that bridge the gap between home and office will elevate the experience and empower hybrid working trends.

When researching new accessories for SMB employees, consider the most common pain points of power, anxiety, poor audio quality and physical stresses of inappropriate input devices resulting from longer working hours. Power banks, noise-canceling headphones certified for unified communications platforms and ergonomic mice and keyboards will become more mainstream in 2022, allowing teams at SMBs to improve their work-from-anywhere capabilities and productivity.

5. Support agility and flexibility

The growth of hybrid and remote workplaces has elevated the need for work tools that allow employees to work when and where they want. Evolving form factors and better connectivity will become more ubiquitous, allowing SMB employees to set up shop anywhere. This flexibility can add strain to IT resources, and impact business capital expense.

SMBs need to consider as-a-service subscription-based models, not just for hardware but to support their solution lifecycle. Successful businesses will embrace this trend and seek vendors with end-to-end capabilities to securely deploy to remote users; offer hardware and software managed services and provide end-user tech support. As-a-service solutions reduce pressure on capital, allowing SMBs to redirect investment into new growth opportunities.



SPHERION FLORENCE LAUNCHES ANNUAL COMMUNITY GIVEBACK PROGRAM

Submitted by Spherion Staffing and Recruiting



(LtoR) Director of Communications, Harvest Hope Food Bank of the Pee Dee, Mia Thomas, Executive Director of Harvest Hope Food Bank of the Pee Dee, Nicole Echols and Owner of Spherion Florence and Conway, Doris Lockhart

Spherion Staffing and Recruiting in Florence, SC is focused on giving back this holiday season with the announcement of its annual Community Giveback Program.

The Community Giveback Program launched in early November and will run through the holiday season with the intention of spreading the giving spirit through contributions dispersed across the communities where Spherion operates. The campaign also aims to highlight the efforts of organizations that are creating change in local communities like Florence. Spherion Florence will see a contribution of \$1000 go to Harvest Hope Food Bank.

“The type of work we do is driven by not only the local people in our community, but also by the businesses in our community,” says local Spherion Owner, Doris Lockhart. “This year, as we have in previous years, we have chosen to give back to the community through a non-profit organization that is responsible for getting food to families and individuals in need of it. We live in a wonderful community, but that does not mean there aren’t still people in need or in bad situations. Thanks to Nicole Echols

and all those who work with her at Harvest Hope, I feel confident that this contribution will serve the community well.”

Spherion’s Community Giveback Program began in 2014, since then, the company has donated more than

\$1 million to nonprofits nationwide. The charities vary in size, scope and cause and are selected based on their ongoing efforts to create change in their local communities. Organizations that will receive contributions include the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, along with local food banks, schools and animal shelters. Aside from monetary donations, Spherion’s local teams have ongoing partnerships and volunteer their time with a wide variety of these organizations.

Along with the Community Giveback Program, Spherion is committed to helping local client companies optimize productivity and get job seekers back to work as jobs are resurfacing. The staffing firm’s 200-plus offices from coast to coast are all filling rewarding positions, as nearly 10 million Americans remain out of work due to reasons related to the pandemic.

To learn more about the Community Giveback Program, visit <https://www.spherion.com/about-spherion/in-the-community/>.

To learn more about Spherion Staffing and Recruiting Florence, call 843-664-0050.

About Spherion

Spherion, a leader in the recruiting and staffing industry with 75 years of experience, brings the power of local to its clients and candidates through a network of independent and empowered franchise owners. Backed by the drive and stability of the global leader in human resource services, Spherion is growing and evolving to tackle what is next for the emerging workforce. In 2021, the company unveiled a striking new brand identity that reflects its successful growth to meet the needs of client companies and the emergent workforce. It also revealed a new purpose-driven tagline, “Let’s Get to Work.” Today, Spherion services the workforce needs of more than 4,000 businesses and operates more than 200 offices across the country.

To learn more about Spherion’s services, visit <https://www.spherion.com>. For information about the Spherion franchising opportunity, visit <https://www.spherion.com/franchise/>.

ABOUT SPHERION

Spherion is a national recruiting and staffing enterprise that brings the power of local to you through a network of empowered franchise owners. With intimate knowledge about the communities we call home and backed by the global leader in HR services, we are growing and evolving to tackle what’s next for the emerging workforce.

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LET'S GET TO WORK.

CITY OF FLORENCE WORK DYNAMIC

Submitted by the City of Florence



City Center Sign

The City of Florence strives to operate efficiently with its management of projects and tasks, as well as ensure that appropriate processes are in place to help operations run smoothly and provide exceptional service to our customers. The city's mission statement is, "We will utilize proactive means to provide timely, effective and fiscally responsible municipal services to elevate the quality of life

in our city and region." What does that mean for the City of Florence?

Providing municipal services to the community cannot be sustained by completing work alone. The City accomplishes these endeavors by adhering to its core values; collaboration, professionalism and ownership.

- Collaboration — Pursuing the best solution or outcome – thinking "we, not me."
- Professionalism — Demonstrating competence, proficiency and skill, as well as honesty, integrity and respect.
- Ownership — Taking personal responsibility to be engaged, innovative, accountable and receptive in the completion of tasks and assignments.

Operating with these values creates an inclusive, collaborative and balanced environment that encourages growth in the workplace. Building a healthy work dynamic also includes taking time to improve workplace recognition. The City of Florence recently started distributing its digital e-newsletter bi-weekly. In the Limelight is a new section created within the release that occurs once a month. This concept is to highlight job positions and the people in them. It also provides an opportunity for subscribers to gain an understanding of the services we provide and insight into the diverse workgroup at the City of Florence. Anyone can sign-up to receive this e-newsletter by visiting the homepage on the City's website; <https://www.cityofflorence.com>.

Recognizing the value of staff and their dedication in serving the community encourages others and gives meaning to the job. Victoria Nash,

the Recreation division manager, said, "Being able to be an outlet for our community and being able to partner with other organizations to improve the quality of life, is what I love." Geraldine Cuypers, the compliance inspector said, "I really consider myself fortunate because my position plays a big role in preserving the health of the environment and our waterways. I love that I am a part of an organization that values the health of the ecosystem."

Some employees like Jenny Lee, the arborist, finds joy in her local community, "One of my favorite things about working with the City of Florence is the people I meet. I've been working for the city for over 20 years, so I've met a lot of people, whether it's staff or forming friendships with citizens. The city is a great place to work, and I really think I have the best job in the whole City." Robert Drulis, the police captain, said, "This is the only police department or law enforcement agency that I've ever worked for in my career. Looking back over that time, over the past 24 years, I cannot think of anywhere else that I would rather be than in Florence, South Carolina, working for the City of Florence."

Identifying passion in the workplace expands the potential for excitement and growth. The city is currently looking to build up its workforce to continue providing services for the community. Like other local businesses, the city is also facing challenges to fill vacant positions in the existing labor market. There are currently 85 vacant positions within the city and a pressing need to fill 19 police department positions.

The city's employment opportunities are available online at <https://www.cityofflorence.com>. The City of Florence is an equal opportunity employer and provider. Come work with us as we work together with the community to keep advancing Florence. Full Life. Full Forward.



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DIVERSITY WORKS INITIATIVES OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE by De'Angela Haynes

What are initiatives? According to the dictionary, the ability to assess and initiate things independently. The power or opportunity, to act or take charge before others do. This is certainly the mission and purpose of Diana Murphy-Eaddy as she began the non-profit Diversity Works Initiatives, to bridge the gap between the continual struggles of diversity, equity and inclusion. It's sad that we still see it today, however, change is taking place among businesses and organizations, and it's awesome when there are opportunities to learn, train and receive great information/resources to experience growth.



Diana M. Murphy-Eaddy

On November 4, 2021, at the Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology on the campus of Florence-Darlington Technical College, Murphy-Eaddy, conference founder of the Diversity Works Initiatives, hosted its fourth biennial diversity focus training and luncheon. Murphy-Eaddy believes, "Every forward-thinking person, business and company pushing to progress their workplace and community must be in attendance to mutually benefit from the 2021 Biennial Diversity Focus Training and Luncheon."

All businesses and organizations were encouraged to bring as many as possible because in every workplace/community, diversity best practices are essential to turning the key that unlocks the door to our overall survival and growth.

According to Murphy-Eaddy, "This event is a must see/do/commitment for employers and employees to get more informed about diversity and inclusion in our workplaces, schools and agencies. When diversity practices are acknowledged and honored, managers will find new ways to maximize and capitalize their bottom line." The conference was slated to take place in 2020 but was postponed due to the pandemic. The opportunity came where we were able to host it in the Great Pee Dee Region. There were some great presenters and facilitators that impacted, influenced and participated in this conference that shared their overviews.

IMPORTANCE OF DEI TO COMPANIES



Max Siegel

We live in a world that is connected globally through technology. To reach diverse consumers it is critical that businesses understand the needs and desires of a diverse and eclectic customer base. Having diversity of thought and perspective within an organization leads to the most effective strategies and problem solving. This ultimately enables organizations to bring the best product to market and respond to the needs of its customers. Keynote speaker Max Siegel said, "The conference was a first class event. Diversity and inclusion is one of the cornerstone principles of how I conduct myself professionally. Everything was timely. And the staff was extremely professional and accommodating".

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION NEXT FRONTIER: EQUITY

Diversity and inclusion are no longer black and white. This work and its challenges are now a part of a larger dialogue about social justice and equity. We all come to the table with different diversity dimensions, diverse perspectives and a plethora of needs to be successful. Leaders must be able to distinguish

between equality (sameness) and equity (fairness and support) as we move into the next frontier of diversity and inclusion work. There are currently five generations in the workplace, with each requiring something different (individually and collectively). Employees need to feel like they belong to something greater than their role and responsibilities. The questions that need to be asked:

- When building a culture of inclusion and belonging: "What in your organization needs to be equal?"
- When building a culture of inclusion and belonging: "What in your organization needs to be equitable?"

Leaders must be able to address the individual needs of each employee by developing competencies, tools and metrics to embrace diversity and value inclusion. Leaders must meet employees where they are and provide resources for all to thrive in the work environment. By doing so, organizations will reap the following benefits, increased retention, improved employee engagement, a stronger sense of belonging, improved customer service and financial stability. It reminds me of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and if you cannot meet the basic needs of the employees, then they'll never reach actualization in your organization/business.

One size no longer fits all. Accountability for growing a culture of inclusion and belonging must become the responsibility of all in the organization, not just the office of diversity and inclusion. Those who participated gave some great feedback. They really enjoyed the session, those that presented, did so in a way that engaged everyone. Some have asked, "Can you come to my organization and present this information?" Others said, "I really enjoyed the opportunity to be open and transparent," and that it was a great session!

FOSTERING INCLUSION AND ALLYSHIP



Larry O'Brien

Based upon this session, we discussed what it means to be the "other", and the impact it has. Many participants shared stories of when they experienced being the other, and the real-life implications it has on one's ability to be productive, along with the negative consequences it has on people's careers, perspectives and even health.

Many women and people of color shared their experiences of being the other or having experienced microaggressions or even worse. The reality is that people of color, women and other underrepresented groups, experience being the other to a much greater extent. One of the benefits to this program was that we heard first person accounts that unfortunately, were not from the 1950s and 1960s, but from today. This shows how we need to continue working towards bridging the gap of diversity, equity and inclusion.

The question for this workshop is, "What do you do about it?" In the workshop, we also explored typical microaggressions and their underlying meaning. Sometimes, microaggressions are meant as a compliment, but they are based on certain assumptions or unconscious biases that people have about a group of people. To that end, we explored a simple three-step process to interrupt microaggressions: break the silence, demonstrate empathy and share your perspective. When we see or experience a microaggression, something must be said, either at the time of the microaggression, or soon after Break the Silence. To intervene, we should get curious about why the person said what they said or did what they did. If we stay out of judgment and practice curiosity and demonstrate empathy, they will be in learning mode as opposed to fight or flight mode. Finally, you need to share your perspective about the choice of words that they used, the underlying meaning behind the words, and the impact of their actions. If we don't speak up, we are missing an opportunity to change the microaggressor's behavior, and we are certainly not being an ally to the

DIVERSITY WORKS INITIATIVES CONT'D



Rinah Rachel Galper

person who was the target of the microaggression.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

This session began with a, calling in, of our multiple identities and how this can begin to create a sanctuary in which all can be heard, seen and valued. We discussed how unconscious bias is a bit of a misnomer given the fact that many of us can feel, if not acknowledge, on some level the biases we have that drive our personal and collective practices and policies. We examined different types of

biases and their consequences, including the characteristics and costs of assimilation into a white male dominant culture. We talked about the importance of making biases explicit since we cannot change that which we cannot name.

We also learned that while we may not be able to control our first thought, we can surely learn to control our second and beyond using radical habits or mindsets adapted from the work of Dr. Welp in "Four Days to Change: 12 Radical Habits to Overcome Bias and Thrive in

a Diverse World." Finally, we looked at our resistance to change using the lenses of power and privilege and why this work is critical to our personal and collective survival. We ended with each of us making a specific commitment to helping create more just equitable, diverse and inclusive workplaces. Almost 30 participants asked me to send my slideshow and many more expressed their interest in continuing this work.

For more information on Joyoushout's professional development and consultant services, contact Rinah Rachel Galper, at joyoushout@gmail.com. **COMPANY STRATEGIC PLANNING DEI**



Chase Clelland

Most sessions were very interactive, and attendees were able to learn, laugh and have fun. We took a complex topic and made it accessible to local leaders to affect change in their businesses.

Please keep your eyes and ears open for information on the next biennial Diversity Focus Training and Luncheon to be held November 2023.



SC SBDC COLLABORATES TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC IMPACT

Submitted by Susan Sturgeon marketing manager SC Small Business Development Centers



COLUMBIA – The South Carolina Small Business Development Centers, the state’s premier provider of business assistance to small business owners and entrepreneurs, is pleased to announce that it is collaborating with the S.C. Commission for Minority Affairs, South Carolina’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities, lenders and other partners on a joint initiative to uplift the economic prospects for African American business owners and entrepreneurs by facilitating their access to capital, a leading issue for African American business owners, developing solutions to their business challenges, encouraging dialogue and ensuring business owners support the communities they serve.

The BRIDGE Initiative

The SC SBDC initiative, The BRIDGE, stands for, Better Resources for Inclusion, Dialogue, Growth & Equity. Its objectives are to:

- Expand outreach and awareness of small business services in underserved African American communities throughout the state of South Carolina;
- Enhance and tailor business assistance to meet the needs of African American entrepreneurs; and
- Engage African Americans in the challenge to pursue goals that advance both their own businesses and their communities.

“The BRIDGE is a transformative initiative,” said SC SBDC State Director Michele Abraham. “More than just a moral or cultural

imperative, it’s an economic imperative that addresses three factors impacting African American businesses and entrepreneurs: human, financial and social capital.”

According to Abraham, 45.4 percent of SC SBDC clients are African American, and the network is committed to doing more.** The SC SBDC pledges to invest its time, talent and resources into each business that ‘accepts the challenge to participate in this initiative.’ South Carolina’s HBCUs and other partners will play a key role by helping the SC SBDC promote and facilitate essential components of The BRIDGE. “For example, the SC SBDC has established relationships with lenders that are committed to improving access to capital,” Abraham said. “Our charge and challenge are to funnel \$20 million into businesses owned by African Americans to help them create jobs, wealth, services and opportunities within their neighborhoods—culminating in meaningful community impact.”

There are five key components to The BRIDGE program:

- A podcast series with African American entrepreneurs, community leaders and educators.
- Training sessions tailored for African American business owners.
- Customized private consulting sessions.
- A virtual student center to supplement the work of SC SBDC business consultants.
- An Advisory Council consisting of key stakeholders in the African American and HBCU communities.

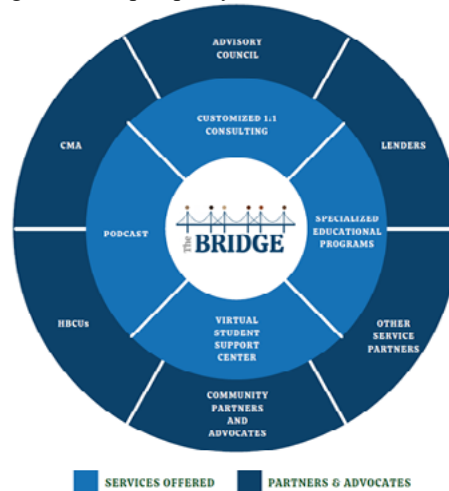
COMPONENTS AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE BRIDGE PROGRAM

“We intentionally crafted The BRIDGE to facilitate the important conversations and collaborations that must occur to create economic growth and prosperity in African American communities,” said Rebecca

Blackburn Hines, the SC SBDC’s CARES Act program manager.

The SC SBDC invites all African American small and medium-sized business owners to support The BRIDGE program by accepting the challenge to pursue goals that advance both their businesses AND their communities. Visit scsbdc.com/bridge to take the challenge today.

** Based on SC SBDC clients self-



identifying as African American.

About the South Carolina Small Business Development Centers

Twenty South Carolina Small Business Development Centers, located throughout the state’s 46 counties offer no-fee individual, confidential business consulting. Highly trained consultants assist both existing and startup companies by providing a variety of services including business plan development, fiscal and operations management, human resources, financing options, marketing strategies and much more. In addition to conducting a variety of affordable education workshops, the SC SBDC refers clients to useful business resources. Specialized services include government contracting, exporting, technology commercialization, veterans’ business assistance and minority outreach. Visit [SCSBDC.com](https://scsbdc.com) to find a center and make an appointment.

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NEW YEAR, NEW YOU, NEW BUSINESS! Submitted by the Florence Downtown Development Office Staff



Provided by Florence Downtown Development Office

If you've chosen 2022 as the year to start your own business, you are not alone. According to a recent Forbes article and accompanying survey, nearly one third of employees who left a job in 2021, did so to start their own business; and if you are a new entrepreneur with a great idea who isn't sure where or how to begin, this article is for you.

Before beginning any new business venture, an entrepreneur needs to ask themselves one question, "Why do I want to start my own business?" Whatever your reason is, you need to be able to objectively answer this question, work on strategies and develop plans prior to opening your doors to set yourself and your small business up for success. If you are interested in opening a business in the Florence area, there are several resources located in Florence that can help you get on the right path for success:

- The Greater Florence Chamber and their Pee Dee SCORE Chapter provides free business advice and mentoring offering low or no-cost business training and the sharing of free business templates and resources. New entrepreneurs can count on confidential free advice from expert advisors who are committed to helping your small business succeed. Resources can be found online at www.grandstrand.score.org/peedee or by calling 843-665-0515.

- The Francis Marion University Kelley Center for Economic Development, located at 142 N. Dargan Street in Downtown Florence, offers three areas of program services including small business incubation, business planning assistance, and low or no-cost training programs led by industry experts and seasoned entrepreneurs. Additional information can be found at www.fmarion.edu/kelleycenter/ or by calling 843-661-1205.

- The Florence Area Small Business Development Center, located at Florence-Darlington Technical College, serves Florence, Marion, Dillon, Darlington, Marlboro, Chesterfield, Williamsburg and Lee counties and is a program of the Winthrop Regional Small Business Development Center and the US Small Business Administration. The SBDC provides free management and technical services training from idea to open. They can also assist small business owners with referrals, government contracts, business planning and identifying financing. Additional information can be found at www.winthropregionalsbdc.org/florence-sc-sbdc or by calling 843-661-8256.

- The Florence Downtown Development Office offers free technical assistance, business plan review, market research and acts as a conduit for connecting entrepreneurs to available resources for starting a small business within the City of Florence. The office also administers various grant programs to assist small business owners with building up-fit within target improvement areas in the City of Florence and assists small business owners operating within the city limits with navigating the various permitting processes at the city. More information can be found at www.florencedowntown.com or by calling 843-678-5912.

Whether you are at the very beginning of your entrepreneurship journey or are a seasoned pro looking to be re-inspired after two years of challenging conditions, these resources can be a great place for you to start. We end this article with sage advice from Mahatma Gandhi, "Every worthwhile accomplishment, big or little, has stages of drudgery and triumph: a beginning, a struggle and a victory." Don't give up on your small business dream, take advantage of the local resources available for entrepreneurs, and make your resolution a reality in 2022.

Congratulations

to our newest Downtown
Florence entrepreneurs for opening
small businesses in 2021!

3-2-1 Selfie
Aroha Afro Latin Dance
Balloonz & More
B Suites Salon
Balance Yoga Studio
Bubble by Bridget
Da Factory
Dash-N-Dogz
Glam Kouture Boutique
Greyfeather Real Estate
Lil Jazzi's Cafe
Purvis Florist & Event Planning
Save A Lot Grocery
The Hideaway
U-Slay Hair Salon

FROM DOWNTOWN FLORENCE

Ready to open your own business?
Visit www.florencedowntown.com for resources.



RUIZ FOODS FLORENCE TEAM MEMBERS GIVING FROM THE HEART *Submitted by Ruiz Foods*



Left to Right: Kim Ruiz Beck and Krista Meekins, Ruiz Foods, and Jill Bramblett and Davis Sawyer, McLeod Hospital



Florence team Members helping with Angel Tree program

Caring. Giving. Community. “I’m proud to say it’s who we are,” said Jamie Moore, manager, Human Resources, Ruiz Foods Florence. “This spirit of caring and giving to our community is a commitment that goes back to our co-founders, Fred Ruiz and his father, Louis. And it’s something, I am so very proud to say, we do all year long.”

Louis and Fred Ruiz, father and son team, started Ruiz Foods in 1964 in a small rural community located in the central valley of California. “For as long as I can remember,” said Matt Ruiz, director of Corporate and Community Relations, “my dad and grandfather shared their feeling that giving back to the community where you live, and work is extremely important. ‘Invest in your community and in its people,’ dad would say. And I’m excited to see our team members embrace that philosophy and give back with such dedication and purpose.”

Twenty twenty-one, proved to be another year of caring, giving and community to team members at Ruiz Foods Florence. “Since Ruiz Foods Florence last shared details of community supported events, the annual Florence ‘Pink Out’ Day ... held October 2021 ... raised over \$7200,” said Ruiz, “which brings the Ruiz Florence total to over \$31,000 since the first ‘Pink Out’ Day held in 2015 – and all donated to the McLeod Center for Cancer Treatment and Research.”

“In addition to giving, this is such a fun day for team members,” adds Moore. “They get to bring smiles to everyone’s faces by dressing in pink, having a little fun while raising money to fight a type of cancer that has likely touched someone we know.”

The Ruiz 4 Kids Mini-Grants for Teachers Program, which also began in Ruiz Florence in 2015, awarded over \$15,000 to local area teachers in January of last year. For the 2021-2022 school year, Ruiz Foods Florence has decided to move back to the spring timeframe. Applications should be ready early April 2022 with the deadline to submit in May 2022. Checks would be issued in July/August so that teachers have their grant for the 2022 – 2023 school year.

“Team members really enjoy this program and look forward to it every year,” adds Moore. To participate, a team member authorizes deductions directly from their payroll check knowing that all the monies go directly to the educators in the community. Ruiz team members enjoy seeing the kids participate in unique programs created by the teachers, knowing the kids are benefitting from out-of-the ordinary opportunities that are both fun and challenging. “It’s great to see such creativity by the teachers,” adds Moore. “And we’re so proud to be able to help teachers bring these unique experiences to the kids.”

“We’re so very proud of our Florence Team Members,” adds Ruiz. “Since Ruiz 4 Kids began the Mini-Grants for Teachers Program

our Florence team members alone have awarded nearly \$120,000 to Florence area teachers, and that spirit of giving is nothing short of amazing.”

The Florence community “Angel Tree” program, partnering again with the Salvation Army, is in its sixth year helping children receive Christmas gifts on their wish list, comments Moore. Once again, Ruiz Florence team members helped 40 children. “And, personally, it was my first experience since joining Ruiz Foods earlier this year. What a wonderful feeling to see our Team Members smiling knowing they were going to put a smile on the faces of so many kids.”

In addition, Ruiz Florence also supported Florence Harvest Hope with 220 turkeys. “We’ve been working with Florence Harvest Hope for a number of years,” adds Moore. Harvest Hope is the local food bank helping over 1 million people put food on their tables and find stability.

As we begin another year, we continue to view our own Company’s beginning and subsequent success as an example of the American Dream come true,” adds Ruiz. “With that in mind, our commitment is to pay it forward whenever possible. We are proud of our Team Members, their commitment to giving and their commitment to the community. We will always thank my dad and grandfather for laying the groundwork for the culture we fully embrace. Together, we honor our past and embrace our future, a future that is exciting and full of promise.”



Some of the gifts for the Salvation Army Angel Tree from Ruiz Foods Florence Team Members.



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4 CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

While opportunities continue to grow for female entrepreneurs, women-owned businesses are still in the minority, and women still face many challenges when embracing the entrepreneurial life.

Starting a business is far from easy, and can be even more difficult for women, as they are often kept out of financial conversations, impacting their financial confidence as they age and preventing monetary discussion within their communities.

While women face many obstacles in business, there are several powerful solutions that can take you far down the path of creating your own business.

Here are some of the common challenges women in business face and tips to help throughout the process.

Challenge 1: Work-life balance

Work-life balance can be a challenge for men and women alike, especially parents, who juggle both family and career responsibilities. Striking a healthy balance between business and family life may be one of the biggest barriers to success for many.

Solution: As an entrepreneur, creating the right balance is all about flexibility. Your schedule may look different than a typical nine-to-five job, and that's OK. Focus on achieving balance - not perfection - and remember to ask for help and delegate tasks when necessary.

Challenge 2: Lack of funding

Lack of funding is one of the biggest issues facing entrepreneurs, especially those that are female. Sourcing capital is the first step to getting your business up and running.

Solution: Funding programs for female entrepreneurs are helping women break down the financial barriers to owning a business. The #DOVEInstaGrants program by Dove Chocolate is working to foster true financial equity and agency for women everywhere.

To learn more about the DOVE brand's partnership with CARE, visit DoveChocolate.com, or visit InstaGrants.DoveChocolate.com to submit a small business or entrepreneurial idea.

Challenge 3: Building a support network

In the U.S., despite undeniable commonalities in experiences with money, female entrepreneurs often lack a financial community where they can seek inspiration or counsel from other women like them. In fact, 58 percent of women report that they do not currently have another woman in their life to talk with about finances, according to an NBC news survey.

A robust network of supporters and connections is crucial for success as an entrepreneur. It can be difficult to forge a path through business networks, especially when success can be dependent on who you know.

Solution: Start by finding and attending women-focused networking events in your area. You can find in-person conferences as well as online forums created specifically for women in business. Once you've built your network of supporters, don't hesitate to reach out for help.

Challenge 4: Lack of role models and representation

Although representation is growing when it comes to female entrepreneurs, it is still a male-dominated field.

Solution: Find women you admire and take inspiration from them. You can search for books, blogs, virtual talks, podcasts and so much more to learn about females in business and entrepreneurship. Additionally, work to build your network of women to help you feel more connected and supported.

By overcoming these challenges, women can feel empowered to define their financial voice and make their entrepreneurial dreams come true. Learn more at InstaGrants.DoveChocolate.com.



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WOMEN IN PHILANTHROPY AWARDS PEE DEE NONPROFIT GRANTS

Submitted by Belle Zeigler, executive director Eastern Carolina Community Foundation



Meg Temple, executive director of CARE House, Belle Zeigler, executive director of Eastern Carolina Community Foundation and Nicole Echols, WIP board member

In November 2021, Eastern Carolina Community Foundation's giving circle, Women in Philanthropy hosted a brief program at St. John's Church to announce the 2021 grant recipients. This year's grants totaled \$47,000 and were awarded to ten nonprofits who were carefully selected by the WIP Grants

Committee. Grants ranged in amounts from \$2,500 to \$7,000.

"The members of Women in Philanthropy are thrilled that we could award \$47,000 to 10 very worthwhile nonprofit organizations," said Carrington Wingard, WIP board member and grants committee chair. "This giving circle allows each member to be a philanthropist and make meaningful contributions to important community organizations."

This year's grantees are:

- CARE House of the Pee Dee
- Drama Lady Theatre Group
- Foster Care Closing Closet
- Mercy Medicine Free Clinic
- The Naomi Project
- Caring Hearts of the Pee Dee
- Free Medical Clinic of Darlington
- Helping Florence Flourish
- Manna House
- Trent Hill Center

"Women in Philanthropy is a wonderful group that supports CARE House of the Pee Dee and other local nonprofits," shared Meg Temple,



2021 Grant Recipients with WIP President, Elizabeth Kahn

CARE House executive director. "This funding will ensure the privacy of child abuse victims while telling their stories of abuse by improving sound quality of interview space for investigation and prosecution."

WIP is a giving circle fund of Eastern Carolina Community Foundation, serving Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, Marlboro and Williamsburg Counties. The philosophy is that women informed about philanthropy and community needs can collectively make a difference in improving the quality of life and bring about change in the Pee Dee by combining financial and intellectual resources to award annual grants to local nonprofits.

Since its 2009 inception, the WIP fund has contributed over \$500,000 to nonprofits in the counties served by Eastern Carolina Community Foundation. More information about Eastern Carolina Community Foundation and Women in Philanthropy membership may be found at www.easterncarolinacf.org or by calling 843-667-1131.

GUESTS ARE BACK - THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED FOR GOOD

In this new era of hospitality, technology is driving customer retention, automation and efficient food costing, which have all become key factors to profitability. The pandemic forced restaurants to adapt to not only a new, leaner business model but new consumer behavior as well. With customers opting for alternatives to dine-in, restaurants adapted to build solutions to offer takeout, delivery and curbside pickup options. Meanwhile, restaurants are struggling with staffing challenges, government mandates and dynamic reopening in different regions.

In a recent Lightspeed and One Poll survey of Global hospitality merchants, 90 percentage feel that technology has helped their business survive the last two years, and 92 percent feel their business is more efficient today than it was one year ago. Peter Dougherty, general manager, Lightspeed Hospitality, offers three ways tech is reshaping the hospitality industry.

1) Once seen as a job killer, automation will save an understaffed industry.

In a recent Job List survey of 13,000 hospitality employees, nearly half said they had left their job for good, and a third said they were done with the industry. This aligns with Lightspeed's U.S. research which shows 55 percent of operators struggling to retain staff.

Amid this shortage, restaurant operators and customers are seeing the value in automation technology. This means saving time by automating functions like taking orders or processing inventory with a solution like Lightspeed Restaurant. Lightspeed found that 67 percent of hospitality merchants in the U.S. see more automation as the best way to combat employee turnover, 50 percent plan to utilize some form of automation technology within the next two to three years, and another 50 percent also see a future with more flexibility for hospitality employees.

2) Guests' behavior drives technology, but also staff shortages.

The guests are back: 77 percent of U.S. consumers in Lightspeed's poll are dining out at least once a month or more, with 40 percent dining

out more than two to four times a week, and 30 percent saying they are dining out more than they were before COVID, taking advantage of what they've missed.

QR codes, once seen as outdated tech, were one of the big winners of distanced dining. And with restaurants and bars more short-staffed than ever, guests are suddenly more comfortable ordering through a QR code while a smaller floor staff maintain a level of guest service. When it comes to U.S. consumers dining out, ordering through a QR code 21 percent or contactless payments 31 percent made them feel "safer."

But this rabid return has had its consequences: 62 percent of hospitality professionals in the U.S. report that guests have been more demanding, and 40 percent said they were tipping worse. Forty-eight percent of U.S. merchants say "more patience and empathy" from guests would help them retain staff.

3) Technology helps merchants diversify their business.

The pandemic forced a tremendous amount of change in the hospitality industry, with 90 percent of U.S. merchants surveyed noting they feel that technology has helped their business survive the last two years.

When asked what technology the biggest positive impact on their business had, nearly half of merchants, 47 percent noted online ordering; a habit once relegated to urban millennials that became a necessity during COVID-19. Lightspeed's survey found that 37 percent of U.S. merchants have brought their online ordering technology in-house to avoid third-party fees, and 60 percent say guests are still ordering more takeout than before COVID.

Looking ahead to the future, 78 percent of the merchants surveyed see online ordering technology vastly improving in the next two to three years, which will likely be a time of consolidation and automation for the industry, as stand-alone players will struggle to compete with larger integrated solutions.

SAY IT WITH ME, I'M BREAKING THROUGH IN 2022! *by Robin Lewis*



HEMINGWAY-In the last three years, we have suffered from the effects of shutdowns, lockdowns, setbacks and fear. The result is a form of hesitation that can cause you to stay where you are and hide out for fear of Covid-19, criticism or simply not feeling safe.

Safe never won any races. Safe never wrote a book. Safe never accomplished a dream. Safe never started a business. Safe just stays warm and comfortable but doesn't grow, try, dream or risk.

Safe is the opposite of breakthrough. Safe wants you to stay in your comfort zone. Safe is the enemy of a glorious future! In Joshua Chapter one, God appeared to Joshua and told him he would be the new leader of Israel that would take them into the promised land. They were going where they'd never been before and there were giants in the land. His encouragement to Joshua was two-fold:

- Only be strong and courageous.
- I will be with you wherever you go.



It takes courage and faith to step outside your comfort zone and face what wants to hold you back; but all the growth, blessings and abundance are always over the fence of fear that wants to block your way.

You and I must be willing to step out and create change in our lives.

Say It with Me, I Am Creating Change!

To create lasting change, we must get a new mindset for growth and forward movement. We must renew our minds about what God says is possible.

When the angel of the Lord appears to Gideon in Judges Chapter six, he addresses him as a valiant warrior who will save Israel from their enemies. Gideon was suffering from low self-esteem and fear. He did not see himself the same way that the Lord saw him.

Instead, he mumbled about excuses and revealed his low view of himself. But here's the key, you and I must learn to see ourselves the way Heaven sees us. That is our truest identity. And with that identity and mindset, we can begin creating change by choosing to step into opportunities that are going to challenge and grow us like Gideon.

When Gideon agreed to follow the Lord into battle against the enemy army who had been stealing from them for years, the Lord arranged it so that a small army of only 300 men went into battle against thousands!

Maybe you feel like you are too small or there are not enough with you. That doesn't matter when you know you're stepping out in faith. You + God = anything is possible. And the greater the odds against you, the bigger God will show Himself to be for you!

Gideon was victorious because he depended on the Lord being with him. He allowed his circumstances to grow his faith and his obedience gave room for God to perform a miracle!

For you and me to succeed, we must be determined to go to the next level and refuse to be held back by fear or negative circumstances. We must ignore how small we may feel and see how great our God is.

Say It with Me, I Am Going to a New Level!

Going to a new level requires guts and faith. This is when you



must not allow your thoughts to spiral into doubt. Have you ever thought about the story of Peter walking on the water?

In Matthew Chapter 14, Peter and the other disciples are in a boat in a raging storm. He sees Jesus walking on the water, has the crazy idea that he could do it, too, and says something

I'd probably never say: "Lord, if that's you, call me to come out on the water to you!"

Jesus shouts back, "Yes, come!" which can also be translated as go for it! Peter climbs out of the boat and starts walking towards him on the surface of the waves.

Have you ever wanted to try something that truly seemed impossible to you? Did you go for it, or did you hold back and stay safe?

If we want to go to the next level and truly breakthrough in 2022, we must learn to go for it! We must be willing to step out of the boat in faith and try something we've never done before.

Fear and doubt will partner against you to fill your mind with uncertainty and questions. These thoughts will never include God, so we must take control of our thinking to go to a new level. We must align our thinking with God's Word.

The enemy of your destiny will attempt to block any breakthrough you are created to accomplish. But remember, if God is with you, who can stand in your way? Romans 8:31 says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

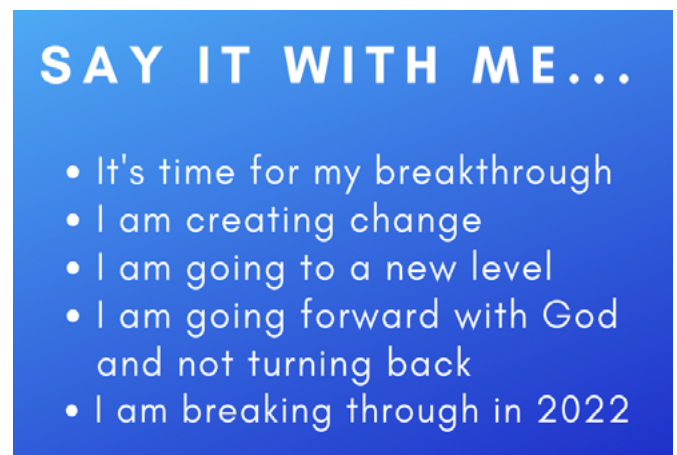
When Peter started looking down at the raging waves around him, he began to sink. He called out to Jesus who instantly lifted him up! As you and I step forward in 2022, we must call out to God and keep believing that our dreams can be accomplished.

Say It with Me, I'm Going Forward with God and Not Turning Back!

God wants us to dream and believe. He is calling us forward to do things that may seem impossible for us, but we must step out anyway. Why? Because we only get one life and heaven forbid that we find ourselves on our death beds one day with a heart full of regret!

Decide now that you will stay focused on God and keep going forward. Refuse to pay attention to the voices of doubt. Refocus on God's faithful presence with you. Keep taking the next step. Pray and declare your breakthrough in 2022.

For extra encouragement, cut out this image and put it where you'll see it daily.



Robin Lewis is a Certified Life Coach who works with women to help them breakthrough things like fear, limiting beliefs and trauma to discover their abundant life filled with confidence, courage and inner peace. Book a Free Discovery Session at www.RobinLewisLife.com.

CASTING YOUR VISION FOR 2022 by Dr. Grace Stephens



Dr. Grace Stephens

oversee and manage his creation. **Since we were created in God's image, and we have God's DNA, it's our destiny to be creative visionaries, too.**



The bible says in Habakkuk 2:2, “And the Lord answered me, and said, write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” **It's the year two thousand twenty-two, have you written down your vision so that rightly appointed people can help you run with it?** A good visionary paints a picture of the future so effectively that others will become passionate about it, too.

Jesus was the greatest visionary who ever lived. He came into this world with a purpose that was laid out by his Father in heaven. And while He knew what He had to do; His path was not always clear regarding how He was going to do it.



Yes, that's right: like us, Jesus was a student, too. Hebrews 5:8 tells us that Jesus even learned obedience through His sufferings. Through it all, God was the influencer in Jesus' life, and Jesus' job was to influence the multitudes to help them enter into a relationship with His Father—which was a radical concept at the time.

In my many leadership roles over the years, I've been blessed to get to lead more than 1,000 employees. I've led them through great times of growth, innovation, and excitement—but I've also led them through challenging and uncertain times: job retrenchment, revenue shortfalls, massive restructuring, uncertainty regarding the future of the organization, September 11 attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and everything in between. I've been a consultant for many leaders whose organizations needed assistance with vision-casting and sometimes with executing that vision.

In having had the privilege of doing all of that, I've found that the most important aspect of being a visionary is the ability to get others to regard as true what you're asking them to do. Otherwise, the vision will never be fulfilled. **People believe visions that are**

clear, have an impact, and allow them to contribute in a valuable way.

The fact is that after writing down the vision; visionaries need a key component to be successful: the other people God places in their lives. **Leaders and visionaries cannot accomplish what they envision without help.** Visionaries must have others' financial support, labor, enthusiasm, and passion. They need the help of those around them to back the vision and bring it to life.

Additionally, visionaries must be able to convey a vision that others sometimes can't see themselves. I cannot begin to imagine what it was like for the Wright Brothers to conceptualize such an undertaking as designing and developing an airplane from scratch. To execute their vision, they first had to convince someone to finance the idea, and then they had to persuade the world to buy into it. Today, the implementation of their vision means we have faster ways to transport people from one place to another—and can even spread the Gospel more easily throughout the world.



If you are leading a group of people, you must cast a clear vision regarding your future for that group. Can you imagine getting on a boat and discovering that the captain of the ship doesn't know where he's going? Or how he's going to get there? Or if he doesn't know how many crews will be needed or what type of equipment will be required? What would happen to this boat? It would never reach its destination. It would drift aimlessly with no clear purpose, and everyone on the boat would be lost. No wonder Proverbs 29:18 tell us that without a vision the people perish.

Imagine if Martin Luther King Jr., had kept his vision of a desegregated and racially unified nation to himself. Imagine if the clear picture he had of black and white kids playing together and of the descendants of slaves and former slave owners were sitting together at the table of brotherhood had simply remained in the recesses of his overly active imagination. The march on the National Mall would have never happened. A movement would have been stopped dead in its tracks. Millions of marginalized people would have looked into a bleak future without a glimpse of hope.

But visionaries, by their very nature, can't do that. They can't hold it in. Even Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, said that if he tried to contain the vision God placed in his heart, it would be like fire in his bones. “I am worn out trying to hold it in! I can't do it!” (Jeremiah 20:9, NLT).

What vision are you holding in or afraid to cast? When God places a vision in your heart, it's your duty to make that vision known and to spearhead the effort to execute it.

Although God could have chosen anyone to cast the vision, he specifically chose you.

Now, Onward March!

This is an excerpt from Dr. Grace Stephens' Amazon #1 Bestselling book “I Am A Christian First: 12 Success Principles from the Diary of a Christian CEO.” Stephens serves as chancellor of Generations College (formerly MacCormac College) in Chicago and Founder of the Global Christian Professional Women's Association. You can invite Grace to speak at your next ministry event or business conference or follow her online at GraceStephens.org.

DELMAE ELEMENTARY NAMED BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

Submitted by CEO, Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Dr. Judy Warden Fields



Delmae Elementary staff celebrate being named a Lighthouse School

There was a celebration early December at Delmae Heights Elementary School as staff received the news, they had all been hoping for: Delmae was officially a 2021 Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Lighthouse School.

Principal Roy Ann Jolley said, “the award is a validation of the dedication she sees every day from the entire Delmae school family.”

“When I think about this recognition, I think about the hard work of all the individuals in this building,” Jolley said. “I think of this as confirmation that what we’re doing here at Delmae is the right thing and we’re going in the right direction. Because of that, our students are benefitting.”

Jolley shared the news on the intercom with the entire school and cheers could be heard down every hallway. She said that this award was the best Christmas present that she could have gotten.

The distinguished Lighthouse School Award is given to schools who meet a set of criteria from the BRSE national validated

assessment process. This process includes evaluating nine performance areas found within high-performing schools. The nine areas are:

- Student Focus and Support
- School Organization and Culture
- Challenging Standard and Curriculum
- Active Teaching and Learning
- Technology and Integration
- Professional Community
- Leadership and Education Vitality
- School, Family and Community Partnerships
- Indicators of Success

In addition to the comprehensive review process for the nine performance areas, stakeholder surveys, interviews, and onsite



Delmae staff member Julie Sheaty couldn't contain her excitement as principal Roy Ann Jolley shares the good news.

school visits were also completed.

Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence CEO, Dr. Judy Warden Fields, applauded Delmae Elementary School for their courage, collaborative spirit and commitment to excellence in ensuring all students get the education they deserve - all while dealing with the disruptions of a global pandemic.

Florence 1 Superintendent Richard O'Malley, Assistant Superintendent Michelle McBride and Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Assessor, Johnny Calder hand delivered the Lighthouse School award news, complete with a cake.

“Florence 1 Schools is excited to acknowledge Delmae Heights Elementary School achieving the status of Lighthouse as recognized by Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence,” said Michelle McBride, assistant superintendent of instruction PK-5. “The school did an excellent job showcasing best practices of instruction during the visit. This recognition affirms the engaging high-quality instruction that takes place on a daily basis at the school. Jolley and her staff have done a great job creating an inviting school culture for students, parents, teachers and community.”

Florence 1 Schools have concluded the first round of BRSE assessments. Ten schools were evaluated during this period and Delmae was the third to receive the highest honor of the Lighthouse School award. A second round of ten assessments will take place in Spring 2022.

ADVANTAGE ACADEMY RECEIVES FAA AVIATION GRANT

Submitted by Melissa Rollins, communication specialist, Florence 1 Schools



Advantage Academy Aviation Classroom

The Federal Aviation Administration awarded Florence 1, Advantage Academy a grant for \$339,000 for Aviation Workforce Development Aircraft Pilots. The goal of the grant is to ‘educate the next generation of aviation professionals across the United States in rural, suburban and urban areas,’ according to the FAA.

The aviation program at Advantage Academy was started in the 2021-2022 school year after a local needs assessment identified it as an area of interest. It is designed to build a foundational knowledge of the commercial aviation environment with the ultimate objective of producing FAA-certified private pilots.

Advantage Academy Director Sarah Carpenter said that the grant will allow her and her staff to continue to build the program and provide opportunities for more students.

“We jump-started the program this year by selecting 18 students to be the inaugural class,” Carpenter said. “Before we return for second semester, we will choose students to receive a scholarship to continue flight training and complete their private pilot’s license by the end of this school year.”

Carpenter said, “that with the FAA grant, Florence 1 students

will have a chance to get their license without the hefty price tag.” “This grant is going to give more students the opportunity for scholarships,” Carpenter said. “That is the big thing for us. We want to have top of the line equipment and to be able to allow more students to have the opportunity to earn their private pilot’s license while still in high school.”

Of the 16 Aviation Workforce Development Aircraft Pilots grants awarded by the FAA, only four went to public school districts; a majority of them were awarded to higher education institutions across the country. Carpenter said that a larger school district in South Carolina offers an aviation course, but it is only introductory, whereas Florence 1 students will be able to get actual flight training.

“They stop it at the ground training and all of their students are responsible for paying for and getting their flight time on their own,” Carpenter said. “We are actually paying for our students to get that flight time.” Advantage Academy students will fly with a local company to get the 40 hours required. “We will pay Carolina Flight School to take them up and get them their flight time,” Carpenter said. “They are the certified flight instructors who will train our students and actually get them their pilots license.”

Advantage Academy Counselor Bryan Dubose said, “that with the grant from the FAA, students can complete the licensing process and be prepared for a possible career right after high school.”

“It is expensive to do this, around \$10,000 per student,” Dubose said. “Having a grant gives us more confidence because now we’ve got the financial resources to really push to promote this program and get more students involved. We’re super excited about it.”

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS IN MARION COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Submitted by Dr. Kandace Bethea, Superintendent



Dr. Kandace Bethea

MARION- Marion County School District offers several innovative programs, which parents can choose for their children. Choice allows both parents and students to focus on the future, determining career possibilities and prepare students for their future. Choice also allows students to take more ownership of their education. Even our youngest students now realize that they have a hand in shaping their educational goals.

The Academy of Early Learning was created based on studies that show that children's minds are prepared to begin learning to read as early as 3 years old. By centralizing the early learning program and pooling resources our youngest learners take advantage of this window of opportunity and prepare for kindergarten.

Italian physician Maria Montessori developed the Montessori Program. This child-focused approach to education emphasizes independence. It views children as naturally eager learners who can initiate learning, formulating questions, and making connections between the curriculum and the real world. Montessori students work with specially designed learning materials in a well-supported learning environment. Parents may apply for their child to attend this program for kindergarten through fifth grade.

The Marion Virtual Academy is available as an option for parents who feel that virtual learning is ideal for their children. From kindergartners to high-school students, our virtual students have quickly developed technological skills that they will need once they enter the work force. This includes communicating appropriately online, knowing how to access and make use of relevant software and being able to conduct

research independently and responsibly.

The Creek Bridge STEM Academy places an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. This kindergarten through eighth grade program integrates STEM activities throughout the curriculum. Students complete projects and develop problem-solving skills based on important College and Career Readiness proficiencies.

The Early College Program offers select students the opportunity to earn both their high school diploma and a two-year associate degree at the same time. Our district has partnered with Florence-Darlington Technical College to offer students this educational opportunity. Students may apply for this program as eighth graders. Those who meet the criteria enter the program in ninth grade at Mullins High School and upon high school graduation, these students will earn dual diplomas.

At the Academy for Careers & Technology, high school students can choose career path options, which include auto collision repair technology, auto technology, computer assisted drafting and design, cosmetology, culinary arts management, entertainment technology, mechatronics, nail technology and sports medicine. High school seniors may also opt to

begin the Licensed Practical Nursing program. Gaining these industry-recognized certifications allows our students to enter the work force with a competitive advantage.

The freedom of choice is a key element in modern education. We are very proud to offer these programs. And we are especially appreciative and honored when our former students choose to take on jobs and careers right here in Marion County to serve their community.



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HGTC & GREENWOOD GENETIC CENTER HOST BIO SCIENCES EXPO

Articles submitted by HGTC



Gene Machine

CONWAY— Horry-Georgetown Technical College and Greenwood Genetic Center hosted the Bio Sciences Expo and Genetics Lab Open House event in December on the HGTC Grand Strand Campus at 920 Crabtree Lane in Myrtle Beach. Everyone was invited to explore the future

with the “gene machine” hosted by GGC’s “Gene Machine” Mobile Science Lab.

“The Gene Machine is a 40-foot bus that doubles as a science laboratory and provides innovative activities for middle and high school students across South Carolina,” said Leta Tribble, PhD, director of education at GGC. “We are excited to work with HGTC and other partners to share our enthusiasm for genetics and provide hands-on activities for students and other community members who want to explore this in-demand field.”

“We are grateful to have hosted the Genetics Mobile Lab at HGTC in December. This affords students, the community and educators an opportunity to have hands-on experiences involving careers in health sciences. We are pleased with the strong partnerships established for the event especially when it comes to engaging and developing our SC workforce pipeline,” said Eileen Patonay, regional workforce advisor for the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

Those in attendance will be able to learn about HGTC science programs, explore careers in the life sciences, find apprenticeship opportunities, and meet with local healthcare employers. Visitors were also able to learn what skills are needed in the life sciences workforce.

The event was presented by Apprenticeship Carolina, Brightwater Senior Living, Conway Medical Center, Greenwood Genetic Center, Horry-

Georgetown Technical College, McLeod Health, the South Carolina Department of Commerce, SC Works-Waccamaw, Tidelands Health and Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments.

For more information, contact Eileen Patonay at 843-331-6822 or epatonay@sccommerce.com.

HGTC REIGNING CHAMPS



HGTC Students (Pictured Left to Right) Jacob Smith, Michael Miller, Collin Rosenbaum and Harrison Rothwell

CONWAY – Horry-Georgetown Technical College students are the reigning champions of the 2021 Carolinas Turf Bowl Championship at the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association Conference and Show held at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center. Professors Charles Granger, George McCauley and Ashley Wilkinson prepared their A team to lead the pack and take the win just 50 points clear of North Carolina State University’s B team. This year’s winning team consisted of four Golf & Sports Turf Management students including Jacob Smith, Michael Miller, Colin Rosenbaum and Harrison Rothwell.

“HGTC is proud of its students and proud of this win,” said Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president. “We may be underestimated at times but, our students are truly the masters of the game and have an outstanding record to prove it.”

Harrison Rothwell is the son of longtime Carolinas CGCSA member, Paul Rothwell, from Oyster Reef Golf Club in Hilton Head, SC. He was there to cheer on the team for his first time seeing the Turf Bowl in action.

Other participating colleges in the 2021 Turf Bowl included Clemson University, North Carolina State University and Alexander Baldwin Agricultural College; all four-year institutions.

HGTC has captured the prize seven of the last 10 years.



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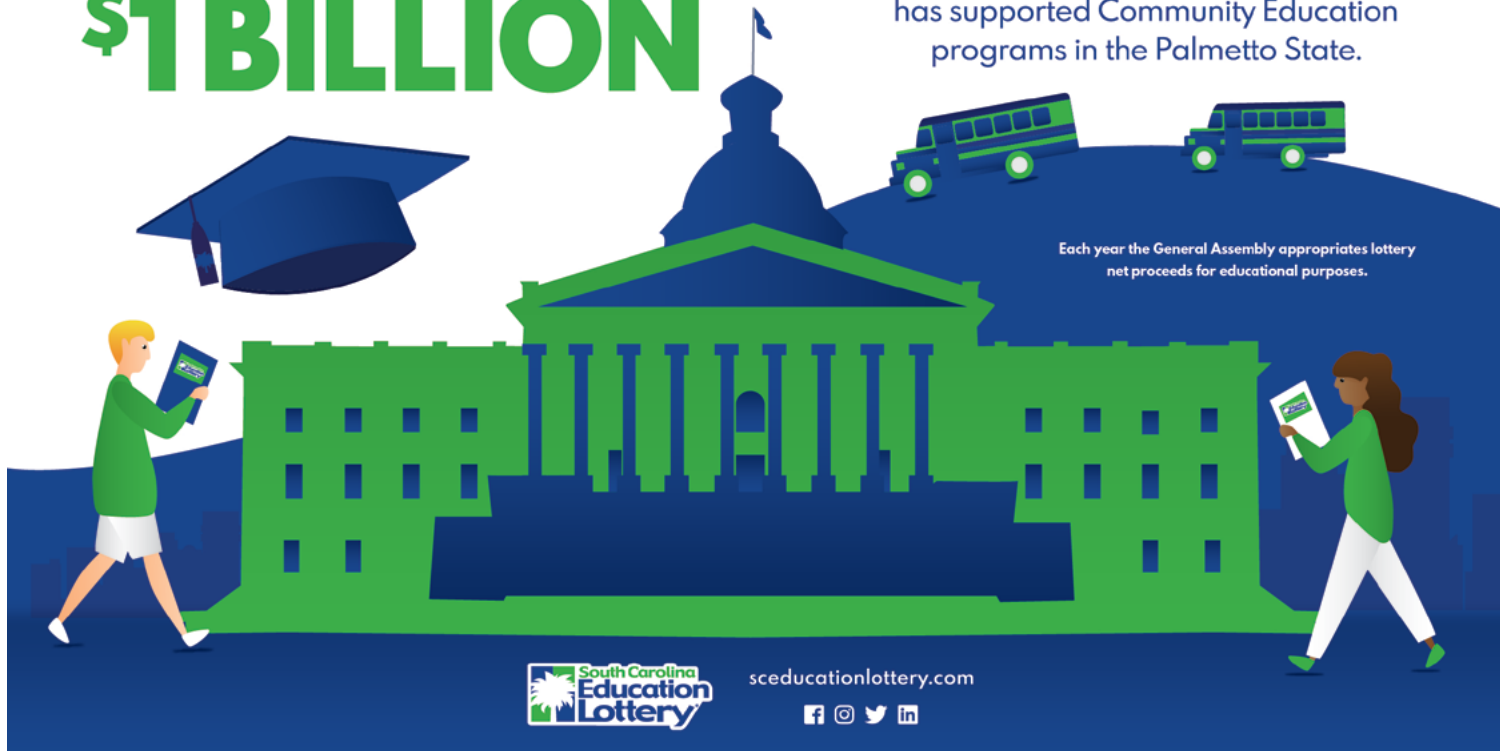
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FMU NAMES STANTON VP OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT Articles submitted by FMU



Lauren Stanton

Francis Marion University has announced that Lauren Stanton is being promoted to the position of Vice President of Institutional Advancement.

Stanton, who has served as executive director of Francis Marion University's Education Foundation since 2019, will continue to work in her current capacity while taking on additional responsibilities related to community outreach and service.

The Foundation uses its donor gifts, property holdings and endowment fund to promote the educational objectives of FMU. Since its establishment in 1974, the Foundation has enabled the University to address an extensive number of needs, especially focusing on scholarship assistance for thousands of students over the years. It also supports the university's instructional mission by funding endowed chairs, faculty research and development and sponsoring various lecture series and cultural events.

"Over the past two years, Lauren has done a remarkable job managing the Foundation, growing its endowment and broadening the scope of its initiatives," Dr. Fred Carter, president of Francis Marion, says. "Her new role will allow her the opportunity to represent the University more extensively across the Pee Dee region and within the communities that we serve."

As Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Stanton will assume an expanded role in working with non-profit organizations and community-based organizations. She will also oversee the university's Nonprofit Leadership Institute and Local Government Leadership Institute. The latter is a joint program offered by Francis Marion, the College of Charleston and Coastal Carolina University.

"I am excited by this new opportunity to continue serving my alma mater," Stanton, who received both her undergraduate degree (2009) and a Master of Business Administration (2013) from Francis Marion University,

says. "I'd like to thank President Carter, members of the Education Foundation board, the Board of Trustees and the Francis Marion community for the confidence they continue to show in me."

FMU'S NEWEST TRUSTEE RESEARCH SCHOLAR



Dr. Brandon D. Goff

Dr. Brandon D. Goff is Francis Marion University's newest Board of Trustees' Research Scholar. Goff, an associate professor of Music Industry, was presented with the award during a luncheon at Ervin Dining Hall at FMU. Accepting the honor before a gathering of members of the FMU Board of Trustees, faculty, staff and other research scholars, Goff expressed his thanks to the trustees and the entire FMU community. Goff said, "the high-level of support faculty receive from the University is part of what makes Francis Marion a special place." "It's that kind of climate, it's that kind of culture that makes us so happy to

be here, and to continue to be here for years to come," Goff said.

The Board of Trustees' Research Scholars program was formed in 2002 and is designed to recognize and promote high-level research and scholarship by university faculty. Appointments are awarded to senior faculty members who have compiled a significant record of research and publication, and who show promise of continued scholarly productivity.

The appointment is for three years, is renewable, and includes a reduced teaching load with a salary supplement. Francis Marion President, Dr. Fred Carter, who presented Goff with the award, praised Goff's ability to provide students with unique opportunities for hands-on learning experiences. "I don't know of any faculty who involves students more extensively in his or her work than Brandon," Carter said. "And after all, that's why we're here. He's the ideal choice as a Trustee Research Scholar."

AN EASY DIY ACTIVITY TO GET KIDS EXCITED ABOUT STEM



Most parents typically tell their children not to go to the pantry for a snack before dinner, but what if letting your kids into the pantry could help ignite their passion for science, technology, engineering and math?

STEM learning can be accessible and right at children's fingertips no matter their age or background. It can even be as easy as walking into the kitchen and looking around for inspiration. Igniting a curiosity for STEM early can help drive youth into a future including STEM, enabling them to take advantage of a field where jobs are projected to grow nine percent by 2029, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To help close the STEM opportunity gap, Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Raytheon Technologies are partnering together to enhance Boys & Girls Clubs of America's DIY STEM curriculum so that it is culturally relevant and focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.

The organizations want to get kids excited about STEM, inspiring youth to start seeing STEM in their everyday surroundings (like through food), providing more access and opportunity to STEM learning.

"By integrating a diversity, equity and inclusion framework into the new Boys & Girls Clubs of America DIY STEM curriculum, we are able to create a program that inspires all youth and highlights the possibility of a STEM career," said Susan Cody Ciavolino, director of educational STEM foundation at Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Boys & Girls Clubs of America, an expert in youth development, suggests this fun, hands-on DIY STEM activity, aimed to surprise and excite kids while also building important social-emotional skills needed to succeed in STEM, both at school and within the workforce.

DIY STEM Activity: Bridge Building

* Items needed: Various materials that can be found in the kitchen - use your imagination! From gum drops or marshmallows as the "glue" to dry spaghetti noodles, graham crackers and pretzel sticks as the connectors, encourage kids to use their imagination as to what materials will best create a bridge.

* Directions: Play around and try different methods to build a homemade bridge between two tables or surfaces. Encourage youth to test the weight of their bridge with everyday items like a toy car. Enjoy this DIY activity and continue to encourage the kids in your life to look at their surroundings and have fun with DIY STEM, as it can lead to a great future.



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CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI NEWS

Articles submitted by J. Craig Cotton, Director of Public Relations Office of Communications and Marketing

ORANGEBURG -Claflin alumni in the Golden Class of 1970 were recognized during the University's 2021 Fall Commencement Convocation.



Top Row/From Left: George Alexander, Charles B. Gary, Idella Waymer Carson, Clyde A. Bess, Eugene Mincer, Ronald A. Ravenell
Middle Row/From Left: Glendra Smith Watson, Jennifer Green White, Shirley M. Taylor, Gloria Gant Lambright, Jenette V. Wright, Liz Zimmerman Keitt
Bottom Row/ From left: Jenetha McCutcheon Hollis, Janice Wannamaker Marshall, Joan Steward Stevens, Thelma Johnson Ravenell, Shirley Anne Hugee, C. Donna McPherson Harris, Gloria Grant Breland



Dr. Leon Prieto & Dr. Simone Phipps

Congratulations to Dr. Leon Prieto, '04, and Dr. Simone Phipps, '05, for receiving the 2021 Distinguished Achievement Award for Breakthrough Idea from Thinkers50. Dr. Prieto is the director of the Center for Social Innovation & Sustainable Entrepreneurship and associate professor of management at Clayton State University. Dr. Phipps is associate professor of management in the School of Business at Middle Georgia State University. They were also featured in a recent online article in "Forbes." The title of the article was "How Two of the World's Top Business Professors Are Preparing Leaders, For the Future by Honoring the Unsung Heroes of the Past."



Claflin First Lady LaKisha Warmack pictured with Principal Rena Bowman and students in the second grade.

Claflin First Lady LaKisha Warmack visited Orangeburg's Rivelon Elementary School on behalf of her initiative, Claflin Treasure Chest. Warmack and Claflin University faculty and staff collected more than 400 toys for students at Rivelon. Warmack (standing at left with a gift) is pictured with Principal Rena Bowman and students in the



Terrence Jenkins

second grade. Bowman is a 1988 Claflin graduate.

Terrence Jenkins has been named the interim women's basketball head coach. After a long career as an assistant coach with the Panthers men's basketball program, Jenkins will take the helm of the Lady Panthers and will look to lead the team to new heights.

Jenkins will take the reins of the program after a long, storied career with Panther athletics. Currently, Jenkins is in his fourteenth season with Claflin University. After beginning his career as a student assistant, he proceeded as a graduate assistant coach and as an assistant coach with the men's basketball team before moving into his position as interim head coach with the Lady Panthers program.

Before becoming a leader on the coaching staff, Jenkins made his mark as a leader on the court for the Panthers. He played two seasons with the Panthers where he was named team co-captain and the 2002-2003 team's Most Valuable Player. He was equally impressive in the classroom where he earned the athletic achievement award presented to the men's basketball player with the highest grade-point average and he also received the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.'s prestigious David M. Dupree Award, which is presented

CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY CONT'D

to the student-athlete with the highest GPA in the Southeast. Prior to joining the Panthers, he spent two seasons at Denmark Technical College where he earned an associate degree in 2001. While at Denmark Tech, Jenkins was named Rookie of the Year and was a two-time team captain and Most Valuable Player. Academically, he also earned a spot on the Dean's List in 1999-2001.

Jenkins is a 2005 graduate of Clafin University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education. In December of 2006, he earned a Master of Science Degree in Rehabilitation from South Carolina State University. He is a graduate of Blackville-Hilda High School in Blackville, South Carolina. He is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity, Inc., and the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

MARCIA L. FUDGE TELLS CLAFLIN GRADUATES TO "ALWAYS BE MINDFUL THAT THE WORLD IS WATCHING YOU"



Marcia L. Fudge

ORANGEBURG -The Clafin University 2021 Fall Commencement celebrated student success and reaffirmed that the University has not only survived but thrived during the current coronavirus pandemic. Clafin conferred bachelor's and master's degrees to more than 170 graduates during the ceremony held, December 10, 2021, at the Jonas T. Kennedy Health and Wellness Complex.

"Today is one of the most important milestones for our graduates. Many years of dreaming, sacrifice and hope have paid off for our graduates today," said Clafin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack.

"When many of you arrived at Clafin three or four years ago, I am pretty sure you had no clue that you would face the most challenging global pandemic of our lifetime – COVID-19," Warmack said.

"But I am excited to say to each of our graduates today, if not for your hard work, dedication and real accomplishments, your degree would mean nothing. It would just be a piece of paper. But instead, it is a tangible symbol and outward recognition of the increased knowledge and skills that are now a part of you. Your diploma is a well-earned honor and recognition of your accomplishments."

Marcia L. Fudge, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, was the keynote speaker. Fudge is the eighteenth Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Throughout her career, Fudge has worked to help low-income families, seniors and communities across the country.

"I am absolutely thrilled to be here with you on one of the greatest days of your life," said Fudge. "Throughout history, Clafin University graduates have been trailblazers, innovators, and groundbreakers, and we expect no less from you. You are the future history makers of Clafin."

Fudge served as U.S. Representative for the eleventh Congressional District of Ohio from 2008 to 2021. She was a member of several Congressional Caucuses and past Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. In 1999, Fudge was elected the first female and first African American mayor of Warrensville Heights, Ohio, a position she held for two terms.

"This commencement ceremony represents a defining moment in your life," said Fudge, whose career in public service began in the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office, where she served as the director of Budget and Finance. "You will have many more to come but enjoy this one as long as you can. But as you prepare to embark on your

next chapter, always be mindful that the world is watching you and be mindful of the example you set for those who look up to you."

Fudge earned her bachelor's degree in business from Ohio State University and a law degree from the Cleveland State University Cleveland-Marshall School of Law. She is a past national president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and a member of its Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter.

"Take pride in your success, and remember that people choose to hire, mentor and promote people they like and respect," Fudge said. "Resist the temptation to take the easy way out. Things that are important and valuable come at a cost. Opportunities will always come -- you just need to be prepared for them, so do the very best you can and trust that you have the talent and skills to overcome any situation. It's not important to be the best to the world. Be the best to yourself."

Clafin's commitment to student success and academic excellence was further illustrated by Mykia Deshay Hugee, a psychology major from Columbia, S.C. Hugee earned valedictorian honors for the Fall Class of 2021, by maintaining an accumulative 4.0 grade-point average.

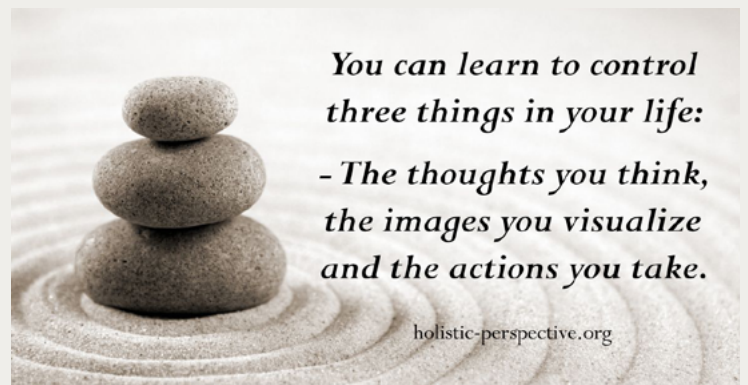
"Today, we celebrate our triumphs and achievements," said Hugee in her senior's challenge speech to her classmates. "Each of us had our own unique experiences – a combination of good times and bad times. What people don't understand is that we are not like any other graduating class. Not at just this institution, but in the world."

Hugee referenced the global health crisis that disrupted every aspect of society – including higher education – while reflecting on her Clafin experience. "If people look at us after today, they will see simply college graduates," Hugee said. "But I see students who went home for a spring break and did not return until a year and a half later. Students who were in the classroom one day but were in virtual classes the next day; students who were forced to enter the real-world half-way through college."

Hugee plans to work during the Spring 2022 semester before returning to school to pursue a master's degree in social work or clinical psychology. "Moments away from receiving our college degree, people say, 'I hope you are ready to enter the real world,'" Hugee said. "But what makes us so different is that we have already entered the real world. We do not need to prepare for it – the world needs to be prepared for us. As we begin writing our next chapter, let us remember all we have accomplished so far and how we did not let anything deter us because, Clafin creates the visionaries the world needs."

Clafin alumni in the distinguished Golden Class of 1970 were also recognized during the Commencement Convocation. "The Golden Class of 1970 is truly special," Warmack said. "They could not have imagined 50 years ago they would be seated here today. Two members of the class are on the Board of Trustees - Janice W. Marshall and Joan Steward Stevens. They represent being committed and giving back to this institution."

Warmack hosted a Presidential Luncheon for the Golden Class of 1970 on December 9, at Ministers' Hall. He thanked the members for their service and contributions to the University and announced that the Golden Class of 1970 had donated nearly \$100,000 to support scholarships at Clafin. "This class not only gives their time and talent – but their treasure as well," Warmack said.



FDTC GRADUATES EARN IMPRESSIVE PASS RATE AVERAGES

Articles submitted by FDTC



Respiratory Care Students

Florence-Darlington Technical College's Allied Health Programs have featured a 96.25 percent pass rate average on board exams in 2021, despite battling COVID-19 restrictions.

In higher education, everyday function drastically changed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, but FDTC's Allied Health students did not miss a beat in the classroom or on their board exams. In 2021, the Allied Health Program has seen 80 first-time test

takers, and 77 of the students passed their board exams. The impressive performance featured a 96.25 percent average pass rate. The programs that report test scores to the state saw a 9.3 percent pass increase from 2020.

"The Class of 2021 was the cohort that had the most class and lab times affected by the pandemic," said FDTC Allied Health Department Chair, Dr. Dawn Nelson. "During that time period, all of our programs scored significantly higher than our discipline peer groups."

Respiratory Care has now scored 100 percent for two consecutive years. Surgical Technology also scored 100 percent on their board exams. Those two program's statistics are reported to the state; however, programs that are not reported performed well, also. Health Information Management and Dental Assisting scored 100 percent, too.

"With all the disruptions and challenges we have experienced due to COVID-19, maintaining notable nursing and allied health board scores is nothing short of amazing," said FDTC Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Marc David. "My hat goes off to all the nursing and allied health faculty, staff and administrators for a job well done!"

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, FDTC's Allied Health students have earned a vast array of experience while working with local healthcare professionals during clinicals. The expanded knowledge will greatly benefit

the graduates as they embark on their journey of becoming a healthcare professional.

For more information on Allied Health programs at Florence-Darlington Technical College, email Dawn.Nelson@fdtc.edu or call 843-661-8364.

FDTC LAUNCHES GRANT-FUNDED PATHWAYS



Florence-Darlington Technical College
(Benton Henry, Photographer)

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) recently received \$3 million in grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education to launch the Pathways to a Brighter Future Program.

The new grant-funded program will build upon previous programs to improve the college's capacity to expand services to address the needs of minority and other underserved populations.

The Pathways to a Brighter Future Program will work with other FDTC programs serving high school students, such as Upward Bound and the Dual Enrollment Program to identify and recruit Pathways students. It will also focus on helping student's complete credentials in STEM and healthcare programs. Intensive tutoring, counseling, advising, mentoring, targeted workshops and other student and academic services will be provided as well.

"Pathways offers important services to help our students succeed in gaining credentials that will make them competitive for good paying jobs," said Jennifer Mabry, FDTC Director of Institutional Grants.

A dedicated Business Liaison will work with local industry to place students in internships and apprenticeships as the program provides job placement services for students who complete credentials. There will also be more services on FDTC's satellite campuses in Florence, Darlington, Lake City and Mullins.

For more information on the Pathways to a Brighter Future Program at FDTC, please email Jennifer Mabry at Jennifer.Mabry@fdtc.edu or call 843-661-8129.



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JAMES E. CLYBURN POLITICAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM by Glaciera Brown Mason



2021 James E. Clyburn Political Fellows with Congressman Clyburn

COLUMBIA - For more than 25 years, Representative James E. Clyburn has worked tirelessly as the first African American to serve the U.S. Congress from South Carolina. Regarded as the most successful congressperson in the history of the SC Democratic Party, Clyburn's political career is noteworthy as he is the third-highest ranking individual in the majority party, the Majority Whip. Clyburn is in his 15th term and is the longest serving congressperson in South Carolina. But did you know that the SC Democratic Party established the James E. Clyburn Political Fellowship Program with the goal of cultivating new talent and leaders for the party?

The Clyburn Political Fellowship Program is a competitive and highly intensive training program specifically for SC residents. The Program's facilitator is Executive Director of the Democratic Party, Jay Parmely. Over a 12-month period, selected fellows meet two weekends for four months to learn, network and hear national facilitators share their political experiences, lessons learned, tools and strategies, to help them become better politicians, organizers, campaign managers, fundraising directors and consultants in local, state and county politics. Fellows engage in discussions on communications and marketing, fundraising, messaging, governance and more. In addition to having the opportunity to hear from accomplished facilitators in the field, Clyburn Political Fellows have face to face conversations, engage in Q&A segments and receive words of wisdom and sage advice from Congressman Clyburn.

Past selections to the Clyburn Political Fellowship Program have been 30-40 persons however, the 2021 selection process yielded twenty individuals. Fellow and 2021 class president, Tracey Ellerbe put me in touch with a quarter of the fellows who recently completed the program, Kenneth Harvin, Erica Sampson, Tyrrea Glover, Christa Williams and Robbie Shortt, who were happy to share their experiences and thoughts with @Diversity Works.

Williams, a commissioned officer with the SC Army National Guard and president of The Rural SC Project shared her enthusiasm when she said, "I was absolutely ecstatic when I received an email from the SC Democratic Party notifying me that I had been selected to be a member of the 2021 Clyburn Fellows Program. This four-month program expanded my dedication to the Democratic values through in-depth conversations with various leaders from the party. During my time in this program, I was a candidate running for a local office and the fundamentals of this course helped to shape my understanding of the campaign process and have also strengthened my leadership skills for future campaigns. Our high-energy discussions definitely facilitated a fun learning environment and a chance to explore different points of view."

Kenneth Harvin, a SC native with a background in community development, resides in the midland region in historic Summerton, SC, where he is a candidate for its upcoming mayoral race. Of the experience and opportunity, Harvin says his involvement was, "a wonderful and moving experience!" He describes the fellows as a cross section of talented young and mature men and women, with an even racial split. Harvin says, "with such diversity in the room, the

fellows bonded and engaged in rich discussions. I gained a history, hearing southern stories, the nuances of culture and learned others' views. Congressman Clyburn is, a legend in his own right, a veteran in the field who gave nuggets to be successful." Clyburn told them to tell people what you are going to do; follow through; and come back and tell people what you have done. Harvin said, "this experience will help me become a better candidate."

The fellows collectively echoed the great experience of being a Clyburn Fellow and continued to share positive feedback about their participation. Shortt, senior pastor of the Lee Street First Church of God in Darlington, shared his thoughts on the program saying, "the Clyburn Fellowship encompasses and mentors the quintessential attributes of becoming a servant leader. I gleaned that serving the community and others regardless of race, color, creed, gender, religion, ethnic background, or nationality is the epicentrum of being a public servant. Also, the mentoring program equipped and strengthened each fellow's acumen in community development and action, voting rights, leadership, and the deployment of volunteers." He went on to say, "the fellowship not only taught me to listen to the voices of our community, state, and nation but learn to empathize and understand life from other people's perspectives." One of the most memorable quotes for Shortt, from Congressman Clyburn states, "You don't have to be unanimous to have unity."

Participation in the Clyburn Political Fellowship Program has left an impression among its fellows. When asked, what the biggest take-away and what the program taught them, Harvin says, "the networking and fellowshiping with 'like-minded' folks making positive change." Orangeburg native and criminal justice instructor, Tyrrea Glover, who was inspired to apply by DNC Chair Jamie Harrison, also from Orangeburg, told me that the Clyburn Fellowship taught her that, "we are all united by the need to see change and the need to create a destiny/future that is greater than our present. Through this fellowship we were equipped with the necessary knowledge to go out into our communities to put boots to the ground to educate and help our communities improve by being the change that we seek. The fellowship was an amazing, rewarding and engaging experience and one that I will never forget." Further, Erica Sampson, director of Diversity and Inclusion for the Charleston County Democratic Party and co-creator of Influencers Unlimited continued, "the Clyburn Fellowship has taught me no matter your gender, religion or ethnic background, we collectively want to make a difference. We want to help others be seen and heard, and we want to make a change within our state and community. We have the tools, and now it's time to help past, present and future fellows with some good trouble!"

With such dynamic individuals collaborating, the knowledge and ideas shared during the 2021 Clyburn Political Fellowship Program



Congressman James E. Clyburn

was successful and, SC communities will be better for it. Advice for those interested in participation in the upcoming Clyburn Fellowship Program, whether your goal is to seek public office, work behind the scenes or to gain knowledge, Harvin concludes, "...being a part of the Program, you learn a tremendous amount from people of different walks of life and skill sets, it is well worth it."

To learn more about the James E. Clyburn Political Fellowship Program visit www.scdp.org.

SEARCH UNDERWAY FOR AMERICA'S TOP YOUTH VISIONARIES



Addressing student debt; dismantling inequity; creating thriving communities - If making real change to real problems is what inspires you or someone you know, you may be a Prudential Emerging Visionary.

Applications are now open for Prudential Emerging Visionaries, a program that celebrates young people bringing fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to pressing financial and societal challenges in their communities.

The program builds on the legacy and momentum of the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, the country's largest youth recognition program based exclusively on volunteer community service. Since 1995, more than 150,000 young people across the U.S. have been honored through these awards. Inspired by the impressive vision of these young leaders, Prudential has reimagined the program.

Emerging Visionaries now puts the spotlight on financial wellness as a foundation on which to build a solid future, championing projects that will help people improve their financial well-being and create thriving communities.

"To fulfill our purpose of making lives better by solving the financial challenges of our changing world, we take a fully inclusive approach, because we believe the best solutions can come from anywhere," said Chairman and CEO Charles Lowrey. "During more than 26 years of celebrating young people around the country, we've been inspired by their creative and selfless work. With the Emerging Visionaries program, we're excited to celebrate and support remarkable young leaders who are driving progress, and to create a community of change."

In April 2022, 20 U.S. students ages 14-18 will be awarded for their solutions to social issues, and five for their solutions to financial barriers. Each winner will be awarded \$5,000 plus an all-expenses-paid trip to Prudential's headquarters in Newark, N.J., for a recognition event.

During this event, the five honorees in the financial solutions category will pitch their ideas to Prudential leaders and one grand prize winner will receive \$15,000. Winners will also have the opportunity to consult with company leaders about strategies to advance their work, and to participate in a coaching program with employees to refine their projects.

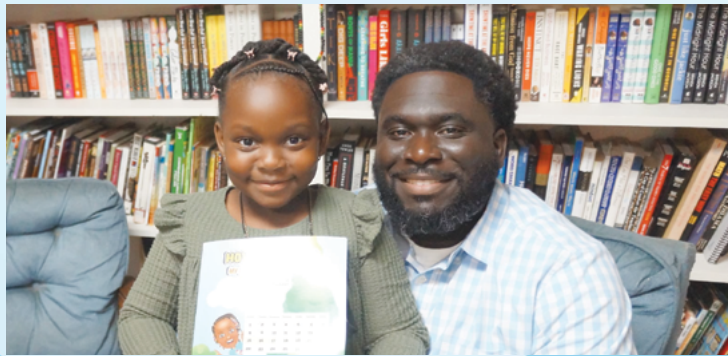
Prudential is partnering with Ashoka, a leading organization in the social impact sector, who will help develop winners' skills through ongoing workshops and online courses with advisory support from the Financial Health Network, a leading authority on financial health.

The new direction is lauded by 20-year-old Joshua Williams, a 2013 Prudential honoree and Ashoka Young Changemaker who runs Joshua's Heart Foundation, which has distributed more than three million pounds of food to impoverished families around the world.

"It's wonderful to see the program evolving and adapting," said Williams. "The U.S. is in a critical time where youth leaders are going to be needed more than ever to guide us into the future, and I know firsthand that they are key to creating lasting change to societal and financial issues."

For more information about Prudential Emerging Visionaries, including how to apply, visit Prudential.com/EmergingVisionaries.

A FATHER'S LOVE Submitted by Dewana Cooper



Co-authors 5-year-old Leah Tart and her father Leroy Tart, Jr.

MARION – Thankful and proud are the feelings that Leroy Tart, Jr. has after he and his daughter, Leah Tart, authored and published their first children's book, "How I Learned My Days of the Week." When he used this strategy to help her learn her days of the week, she was three years old.

Leah Tart is a 5K Montessori student at Latta Elementary, who has a passion for learning. At an early age, she has consistently blossomed academically. With personal growth and development, she continues to excel in knowledge. Leah Tart said, "I am excited about sharing my story with other children, and I hope their father is as great as mine!"

"How I Learned My Days of the Week," is a true depiction of how Leah Tart was able to learn her days of the week through the love and affection of her father. The book also contains a section called, "Gabby's Learning Corner," where children can reinforce what they have learned by practicing handwriting, recall and sequencing activities. The power of father-daughter relationships help children grow and develop their full potential.

Leroy Tart, Jr. of Marion, is a licensed Physical Therapist Assistant, licensed massage therapist, and owner of L2 Athletic Development. Leroy is extremely proud of his daughter's entrepreneurial spirit as well as her eagerness to learn. She not only loves to learn, but has a spirit of leadership, which drives her to share her knowledge with others. "I am constantly in search of new ways to learn and to better myself daily as a business owner, father, son, and friend. Leah is right there by my side, listening and asking questions," says Leroy.

Leroy says, "Due to COVID, the way our children learn has shifted, and it has drastically impacted them. Now, more than ever, fathers should be involved in their child's learning experience. We hope that this book will encourage more fathers, uncles, male influencers to be more engaged in the learning experience of kids. Take these teachable moments and show them how to apply them to life."

For updates, more information on the authors and upcoming events visit www.gabbyslearningcorner.com or follow GabbysLearningCorner on Facebook and Instagram.



DUKE ENERGY AWARDS \$150,000 NUCLEAR ENGINEERING SCHOLARSHIPS

Submitted by Ryan Mosier, corporate communications, Duke Energy - South Carolina



South Carolina State University Interim President Alexander Conyers (center, left) and Duke Energy South Carolina State President Mike Callahan (center, right) celebrated with university students who received scholarships from the Duke Energy Foundation for their participation in the school's Nuclear Engineering Program

GREENVILLE—Duke Energy today announced \$150,000 in student scholarships to South Carolina State University that will help to create a diverse pipeline of talent for the nuclear workforce of the 21st century. The Duke Energy Foundation has provided a grant to the university that is providing scholarships to 15 nuclear engineering students over a three-year period to increase the number of diverse graduates in the university's Nuclear Engineering Program.

"We are very proud of our Nuclear Engineering Program, which is the only undergraduate program of its kind in South Carolina," said South Carolina State University Interim President, Alexander Conyers. "We appreciate Duke Energy, one of the nation's premier energy providers, for supporting our program and helping create a diverse pipeline of talent for the nuclear workforce of the 21st century."

"Together we are working to ensure reliable, carbon-free and cost-effective nuclear power for generations," Conyers said. Strengthening relationships and recruiting strategy at HBCUs has been a priority for the company's talent acquisition team since 2018, when Duke Energy was the first utility to sign the HBCU Partnership Challenge. Congress created the challenge to increase engagement between corporations and HBCUs. At the time, 13 companies had signed, including Intel, Lyft and Amazon. Now, more than 40 are committed.

"South Carolina State University has a significant reputation as a leader in building the high-quality workforce our state and nation needs today and in years to come," said Mike Callahan, Duke Energy's South Carolina State president. "We are excited about the future of the clean energy workforce and what these scholars will achieve."

Visit <https://scsu.edu/about-sc-state/> to learn more about South Carolina State University and its Nuclear Engineering Program.

Duke Energy Foundation

The Duke Energy Foundation provides philanthropic support to meet the needs of communities where Duke Energy customers live and work. The foundation contributes more than \$30 million annually in charitable gifts and is funded by Duke Energy shareholder dollars. More information about the foundation and its Powerful Communities program can be found at duke-energy.com/foundation.

Duke Energy (NYSE: DUK), a Fortune 150 company headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., is one of America's largest energy holding companies. Its electric utilities serve 7.9 million customers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky, and collectively own 51,000 megawatts of energy capacity. Its natural gas unit serves 1.6 million customers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio and Kentucky. The company employs 27,500 people.

Duke Energy is executing an aggressive clean energy strategy to create a smarter energy future for its customers and communities – with goals of at least a 50 percent carbon reduction by 2030 and net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The company is a top U.S. renewable energy provider, on track to own or purchase 16,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2025. The company also is investing in major electric grid upgrades and expanded battery storage and exploring zero-emitting power generation technologies such as hydrogen and advanced nuclear.

Duke Energy was named to Fortune's 2021 "World's Most Admired Companies" list and Forbes' "America's Best Employers" list. More information is available at duke-energy.com. The Duke Energy News Center contains news releases, fact sheets, photos and videos. Duke Energy's illumination features stories about people, innovations, community topics and environmental issues. Follow Duke Energy on Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.



Fortune's 2021 MOST ADMIRABLE COMPANIES

MCCALL FARMS ATTRIBUTES SUCCESS TO ITS PEOPLE by Glaciera Brown Mason



Jackie Causey, Angel Wingate & Sue M. Courtney
(Cover photo by William "Cash" Stukes, At Your Service Media)

EFFINGHAM - One of the largest employers in Florence County is also one of the oldest local businesses in operation today. What started as a 2000-acre farm has grown into a canning company with nine national brands. I spent some time down in Effingham to learn more about this family led company and its products, and I learned they attribute their success to their people.

McCall Farms was first established as a family farm, and in the 1950s, JW Swink had the foresight to diversify from farming tobacco to canning southern vegetables. In 1954, he purchased the Lord Chesterfield label and canned 10 weeks a year. Today, the company owns nine brands, runs year-round and distributes its products nationwide.

While the company has changed with the times, the family who runs it is the same, the Owners Marion and Henry Swink and Co-Presidents, Woody and McCall Swink and Thomas Hunter, one of Marion's sons-in-law. The three co-presidents lead more than 1200 employees in areas such as human resources, marketing and public relations, quality, inventory, distribution and more. In addition to being one of the largest employers in the state, McCall Farms also contracts with SC farmers. This not only helps local farmers but aids in keeping the state's farming industry alive.

A significant part of the reason McCall Farms is successful is because of its commitment to its people in the local farming community and beyond. Hiring Manager Susan Courtney shared that they are committed to meeting people where they are, "We actually go to various social services and work with people who need employment, who want employment. We utilize business partners such as vocational rehabilitation, such as probation and parole and DSS." The company also uses more traditional employment outlets such as SC Works and employment agencies.

When asked what is one of the biggest challenges in recruiting a diverse population, Courtney emphasized the need for clear communication. Each plant has people who serve as translators to ensure "we can communicate and that we make sure that they are properly trained." Safety is a priority for the company and that begins with clear communication.



Grower holding tomatoes

Courtney is quick to mention the strength of McCall Farms' diverse and inclusive workforce. She is most proud of a past

recruiting campaign that advertised openings for everyone. Courtney shared they have DEI practices in place to ensure a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce.

Courtney also emphasized that, "we work to reduce turnover. We want people to stay, and we work hard to accomplish this." When I asked Courtney for specifics, she had several examples. First, she said, "McCall Farms conducts 360 reviews of employees, so each individual is able to clearly understand how they contribute to the company. Last year, McCall Farms contracted with an outside agency to conduct a confidential employment engagement survey and found that employee participation far exceeded the expected outcome by over 85 percent. McCall Farms also has suggestion boxes that ask for employee feedback. Finally, the HR department is committed to implementing change by appointing internal groups to address issues that are brought up by employees."

Distribution Clerk Angel Wingate spoke highly of the company culture, "one of the things that stuck out to me when I started was that people spoke and took time out to know my name." She was struck that upper management would greet employees, saying that sort of friendly, personal greeting is unheard of in other environments that she comes from. Additionally, Hiring Clerk Jackie Causey interjected, "this is the first place I've worked where; they make you feel like you are truly a part of the team. You are treated with respect. The environment is really healthy."



From left, Angel Wingate, Jenny Treaster and Claudia Soto stand with one of McCall Farms' three angel trees. The Florence County company has partnered with the Salvation Army to ensure children in the Pee Dee have a merry Christmas.

Wingate said that when she began working at the company, the McCall Farms management team let her know "they want to see people succeed." Management takes the time to find out what works, and they equip their employees for success. "You can accomplish things here. It's a family and to look around and see the diversity and seeing everybody get the opportunities to do what they need to do. I am just delighted to be a part of the company and to speak for them because it is very genuine." The company's commitment to her success is the driving force behind her work ethic. Because she feels invested in by the company, she invests her best in her work.

"McCall Farms corporate culture is rooted in the foundation of a family business. It's a family-owned and operated business and they treat everybody like family." They offer a very fair benefits package. One such employee benefit includes a company store. Here, employees can purchase canned items as well as McCall Farms branded clothing at cost or less. To further demonstrate the McCall Farms company culture and how leadership feels about its employees, over the recent Thanksgiving holiday period, McCall Farms fed over 1100 employees

MCCALL FARMS CONT'D



on three shifts in one day. Employees who were off, received a gift card to get a meal on their own.

“One of the hallmarks of business is the community service,” according to Courtney. Their family-oriented culture extends through its charitable service donations to places like the United Way, Harvest Hope Food Bank and the Angel Tree project; support of The CARE House, School-Business Partnership with Dewey Carter -- all places where employees can volunteer time and support.

At McCall Farms, the recipe for business success includes solid leadership, and commitment—but it starts with its people. And after successfully operating for more than 100 years, McCall Farms is obviously cooking up more than just southern vegetables in Effingham!

Interesting Facts About McCall Farms

- Did you know McCall Farms purchased Peanut Patch from Dean Foods as a small regional brand and today, Peanut Patch is the number one selling boiled peanut brand in America? It is sold in most major retail stores in the U.S. and sold in over twenty thousand convenience



McCall wears pink to raise awareness for Breast Cancer

markets nationwide!

- Did you know McCall Farms supports local family farms by contracting 50 percent of its growers throughout SC?
- Did you know that McCall Farms’ canning and distribution facilities run year-round, and they process close to 600 million pounds of produce?
- Did you know that for 33 years, McCall Farms has produced ready-to-eat seasoned vegetables under the Glory Foods brand and that collard greens are the biggest selling brand of the Glory product line?
- Did you know that McCall Farms produces over 100 million pounds of sweet potatoes annually for Bruce’s Yams?
- Did you know that McCall Farms’ largest acquisition of products and equipment came in 2017, when they purchased Sager Creek vegetables, a Del Monte Foods line that includes Allen’s Green Beans, Popeye Spinach, Princella and Freshlike brands?
- Did you know that McCall Farms continues to use original recipes and has an on-site test kitchen?

To learn more about McCall Farms, visit mccallfarms.org.



TOGETHER  **WE CAN!**

FAMILY OWNED  USA GROWN

McCall Farms, is a family-owned company in Effingham, SC. We have been harvesting a wide range of fresh vegetables for over 180 years. Most of our produce is locally grown by generations of proud South Carolina farmers. But the flavor of our Real Southern Style cooking is savored beyond the south, to every region of the country. And our offerings continue to grow. Our brands include Margaret Holmes, Glory, Peanut Patch, Allens, Veg-All, Popeye Spinach and Bruce’s.

Come Grow With Us! **Now Hiring for All Shifts** – Laborers – Machine Operators – Forklift Drivers – Clerks - Mechanics & more. For employment opportunities visit McCallFarms.com, or call us at 843.662.2223. We offer benefits including: paid time off, medical insurance, healthcare savings or reimbursement accounts, 401-K, education assistance and flexible schedules in some areas.

BRIDGING THE GAPS *by De'Angela Haynes*



Dr. Iris Johnson Arnold

DARLINGTON - How do you define gaps? The definition of a gap according to the dictionary is a break or hole in an object or between two objects. An unfilled space or interval; a break in continuity. With these definitions, Dr. Iris Johnson Arnold is bridging the gaps, as a successor of her mom, Wilhelmina P. Johnson. Gaps are in various areas such as among the youth, financial gaps, wellness gaps and, gaps in the community.

Johnson is a name familiar to many in the Pee Dee. Johnson influenced many as a home economics teacher at both Mayo and St. John's High School. SJH Blue Devils above age 30, still fondly recall the mouthwatering smells of chocolate chip cookies wafting through the corridors of the high school. This dedicated servant leader, however, knew that her purpose extended far beyond the halls of a high school.

Johnson saw the need for programs that were tailored to address the gaps in the surrounding community in the areas of culture, wellness, education, life skills, recreation, after-school support and summer enrichment. She, along with an evolving, yet small corps of dedicated volunteers, breathed life into what is currently the Darlington County Cultural Realism Complex, Inc. The mission of the CRC Center was and currently is, to bridge the gap between school and home with educational, historical and cultural activities within the community.

What began in 1972, as a vision, blossomed into an iconic community staple which secured multiple properties to be used for its people, provided financial, educational, and cultural opportunities to the people and nourished the minds and bellies of people both young and old. Johnson and the Center invested in the community by securing properties with historical significance to the African American community. In 1981, The DCCRC acquired the former Bethel African American Methodist Episcopal Church property located on 112/114 Coker Street. The nonprofit turned the parsonage of the former Bethel Church into one of the first Museums of Ethnic Culture in the Pee Dee through funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the South Carolina Arts Commission.

In 1995, the DCCRC secured more property for the people on 302/304 Pearl Street. Over the years, Johnson and the DCCRC continued its mission of nourishing the body, mind and talents of youth locally and statewide. In 1977, the nonprofit became the sponsor to the Summer Food Program through funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The food program provided both full-time and part-time jobs and meals to over 5,000 children at 24 sites in low-income communities.

Summers at the CRC Center also catered to the cultural and performing arts. Enrichment classes ran the gamut from self-defense to modeling, dance and creative arts. Johnson served for 30+ years as the South Carolina sponsor for Hal Jackson's Talented Teen International Pageant. Born in Charleston, South Carolina, Hal Jackson became a legendary radio and television personality in New York City.

During the years of 1980-2010, hundreds of teenage girls from the Pee Dee, Midlands, Piedmont and Low Country gained invaluable experiences to improve their communication skills, develop their performing talents and increase their self-esteem, self-confidence and self-discipline.

Participation in the HJTII exposed local and statewide pageant winners to places beyond the borders of South Carolina and to notable entertainers such as Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, New

Edition, Music, Alicia Keys, LL Cool J, Boyz II Men, Omarion and many more.

Despite the appearance of consistent progress, the CRC Center and Johnson faced numerous obstacles which primarily included racial discrimination and unequal access to resources. Johnson realized that in order for African Americans to truly enact change, more African Americans must fight for a seat at the table in which major decisions and laws were being made.

Johnson did not have political aspirations and believed that her good works would suffice to make the world more equitable. After years of using her voice to promote historical preservation, programming and resource development, this impassioned advocate decided to use her voice to enact change within the realm of governmental policy.

She was emboldened by the practices and speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. He was a black man who most people had come to venerate as he seemed to be above the trivialities of the tense day-to-day racial exchanges.

Years later, the legacy of the CRC Center is at a crossroad due to the aging of a generation of committed stakeholders, lack of resources and the Covid-19 pandemic. The community leader's offspring and several long time devoted board members are working to make the organization and its five properties strong and viable once again.

The current Executive Director is Johnson's youngest daughter, Dr. Iris Johnson Arnold, a university professor at the historically black university, Tennessee State University. Like her mother, she is dedicated to educational uplift, community involvement and the arts. As a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Arnold utilizes the many skills acquired within the walls of the CRC Center. She designed and served as one of the spearheads for a Covid-19 safe scholarship fundraiser which netted more than \$50,000 for young college bound women. She also has been selected to serve as a trainer for her Nashville chapter of DST's Grow with Google workshops. More locally, Arnold became a Woodland Community Advocate Liaison through Heirs Property, a South Carolina nonprofit organization that helps families protect and keep their family land and build generational wealth.

Arnold graduated with honors in 1987 from St. John's High School. She completed her bachelor's (c/o 1991) and master's degree (c/o 1995) at South Carolina State University. In 1999, Arnold graduated from the University of Memphis with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Speech Language Pathology.

As of today, Johnson finds satisfaction in knowing that a couple organizations in Darlington now provide similar opportunities and activities as the CRC Center. The long-time educator, however, follows those happy sentiments with the statement, "but we still have a lot of work to do."

The Board of Directors of the DCCRC are diligently reaching

out to past associates, community members, leaders and organizations to renew relationships and initiate new ones. For more information on the revitalization of the DCCRC or community use of the facilities, contact Dr. Arnold at 843-968-3770 or theCRCcenter@gmail.com. The legacy is still moving forward for the Johnsons, and they have been and are continuing to bridge the gaps.



(LtoR) Long time Board member Andrew Smith, his great grandson Sentrell King and dedicated servant leader Wilhelmina P. Johnson stand viewing the Buddy (Woodrow Wilson) Johnson sign.

ENCOURAGEMENT: WINNING AMERICA

by De'Angela Haynes



Robert Skelton

What does it mean to win? According to the YourDictionary, used as a verb, to win means, be successful or victorious in a contest or conflict. To acquire or secure because of a contest, conflict, bet or other endeavor. This is certainly what it means to Robert Skelton, chief executive officer of Winning America. Robert is affectionately known as Bob.

To set the background for Skelton's story as to how he got to where he is today and the project "Winning America," he left the field of prosthetics to make it rich in another field with two friends. Well things did not go as planned and he lost everything, after selling everything he had that had any value. Skelton still owed \$90,000 at 19.5 percent interest. The pressure was so great his body ached 24/7. He was only sleeping two to three hours per day for four years. The pressure became so great that he went to a hotel in Columbia, South Carolina to end it all.

Skelton did not want to take his life, he just wanted relief from his pain. Through the encouragement and prayers from his wife, he was not able to follow through with his plans. He came home not knowing what the future would hold, but he knew if he had breath and a heartbeat, he was going to shake off the dust and put things back together in the prosthetic business. He totally restructured the way he was going to do business. His income that first year was four times more than he had ever made in any previous year. The next year it doubled, and it doubled again the next two years. Skelton is not sharing this to impress anyone, but to impress upon you how the amazing power of an encourager influenced him personally. He learned another thing, no one knows what the future holds for them. Never Give Up. He owned four airplanes over the course of thirty-five years or so. He saw his son grow up, get married and give them three beautiful grandchildren.

If Skelton had given up, the history of his family would have drastically changed. Hence, Winning America was born out of a concern for how people see, treat and value each other. When he looks at all the hurting people; the suicide rate has grown 33 percent from 2009 until 2019, in just 10 years. And in 2020, we had 10,000 more people take their life on purpose than by accident. There are more hopeless people. The numbers continue to grow and the ages for suicide are declining, whereby, we are seeing third graders take their lives. Our mission statement is to create a pathway for change as to how we SEE, TREAT and VALUE others. It's done in three ways, by being an encourager not a discourager, by building up not tearing down and the by-product is to unite. It is amazing what can be accomplished when we work together.

Skelton has given his life to making this happen in our city, state, country and our world. He has been working with city leaders to formulate plans for a citywide campaign called, Let it start in me. He realizes the only person he can change is himself, but he can lead by saying, Let it start in me. Skelton's challenge to readers is to join with him and thousands of others by saying, Let it start in me. What are we starting with? ENCOURAGE - BUILDUP - UNITE. When we do this, we will SEE, TREAT and VALUE others differently. Remember the Golden Rule, do unto others as you would like to be done unto you? It will take the concerted effort of every person who desires the city of Florence to be different for this to work and together we make our world, starting with Florence, a safer, happier and more desirable place to live, work, play and worship. LET IT START IN ME. Watch for the citywide campaign in 2022.

If you would like to have Skelton meet with your group to clarify any question or concerns contact him through email Skelton@winningamerica.us. It is amazing what we can do together. Let's all join hands America, at the crossroads. LET IT START IN ME! As the CEO, Skelton understands that to win America, it's going to be through encouragement.

FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL WORKING TO ACHIEVE A BELOVED COMMUNITY

by Yvette Crawley



Chaquez McCall

Attorney Chaquez McCall of the McCall Law Firm is a lifelong resident of Florence, South Carolina. He's a proud graduate of Wilson High School and Francis Marion University where he majored in political science. While at Francis Marion, McCall was awarded the Jesse A. Cole Political Science Scholarship and the Neal D. Thigpen Award in South Carolina Politics and Government. In this role, he collaborated first-hand with attorneys, solicitors and judges in the

area. Upon completion of his clerkship, McCall opened McCall Law where he practices personal injury and criminal law. At twenty-seven years old, McCall has a passion for his community and is no stranger to public service.

McCall's first year on the Florence City Council was 2021. He felt it was imperative to change the focus of the City of Florence to our neighborhoods and communities. The switch was made in many ways. McCall introduced, and the Council passed, a law to improve police relations within our communities by implementing an independent Citizen's Review Board. The responsibility of this independent board is to address citizen's complaints against the police department and make recommendations on necessary changes. Secondly, the Council addressed the infrastructure of the city in a three-prong approach:

- Implemented new LED lights across the city.
- Increased investment of our Stormwater Drainage System which focused on areas that have been left behind for years, such as Oakland and Marsh Avenues.
- A \$6 Million revitalization investment into our neighborhoods for the creation of a Community Development Corporation. The Corporation, Neighbor Works, partners with local and community stakeholders to ensure continued investment into our neighborhoods going into the future.

Looking forward to 2022, McCall's focus will continue to be on Florence communities. This includes seeking an investment to tackle the abandoned homes that have been left to rot and decay by absentee property owners in our aging communities. In addition, McCall's focus is finding developers to invest in our communities focusing on affordable housing and developing public/private partnerships with local stakeholders.

When asked about the priorities he and the Florence County Council are willing to shift in creating a beloved community, McCall stated, "There's no secret that the revitalization of downtown Florence was something extraordinary and historic for our city. Although I would support any effort to continue that revitalization; myself and other members of the Council have already made a shift to begin focusing on our communities. The City of Florence's largest investment in neighborhoods in the city was \$3 million over five years. With renewed focus, the Council recently passed a resolution that invested another \$6 million over five years, doubling our previous investment. The City of Florence can rest assured that the present Council is focused on improving the quality of life of our citizens with a primary focus on community redevelopment."

HONORING THE LATE DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
It Starts with Me: Shifting Priorities to Create the Beloved Community

REPRESENTATIVE ROGER KIRBY – FIGHTING FOR OUR COMMUNITY *by Jennifer Robinson*



Roger Kirby

A beloved community may seem like a utopia for many but can be obtainable if people like, State Representative Roger Kirby provides solutions to make it so. Our world continues to experience poverty, discrimination and violence. In the United States, our counties, and cities grapple with these extensive global issues but there are people working to eradicate these issues. The people who are working are leaders in our states and country. But our communities must be willing to

be informed about their own issues and work together. Kirby, who has served and represents Florence and Marion Counties, says, “there are many things that communities need,” but he has focused on some specific issues.

He spoke about the importance of early childhood education as a goal in impacting communities. In South Carolina, Kirby stated, only 23 percent of three- and four-year-olds have access to early education and it costs the state \$7500 per child per year to educate them. Most children are living below the poverty level. South Carolina’s two-year college graduation rate is forty-eighth in the nation. To improve graduation rates, South Carolina legislators voted to freeze tuition rate increases. Students will be able to afford tuition, attend class and be active at their institutions without being concerned about whether they can complete their education. Another approach that has been effective according to Kirby is an educational center that was introduced to Florence County. “The Continuum is a regional center for education and training in innovative and technical skills and workforce development, created through the collaboration between The Darla Moore Foundation, Florence-Darlington Technical College and Francis Marion University.” The mission of the Continuum is to provide opportunities for

students through training and certifications in workforce development skills, courses that lead to two and four-year degrees.” High school students from Pamplico, Florence, Johnsonville, Olanta and Lake City can earn college credits at no cost by enrolling and attending programs in science and innovation. The Continuum is also a space where students have access to the internet.

During the early era of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, many rural students did not have access to internet connection to attend virtual classes, complete assignment, study or complete homework. This caused an awareness in schools, school districts and with local and state government. Political officials acted and invested \$25 million for rural areas to have broadband internet by 2023.

Kirby also champions the fight for mental health and the fight against opioid abuse. According to scdhec.gov, “DHEC’s Bureau of Emergency Medical Services regulates and monitors paramedic usage of the opioid antidote naloxone and expanded the scope of practice for first responders including EMRs, EMTs and AEMTs to authorize them to carry and use naloxone.” Law enforcement officers and firefighters have been trained across the state of South Carolina to identify, treat and report drug overdoses attributed to opioids. Reports received from incidents of overdoses are reported and are used to continue efforts to combat abuse.

Kirby says, “to have beloved communities we cannot have divisions with an us and them mindset.” There are significant social issues within our communities that need to be changed and Kirby’s mission is to bring those issues to the House. He quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “the time is always right to do what is right.” Kirby is working diligently to make things right.” He closed by saying, “I don’t want to be on the right or the left of issues. I want to be part of the light shining bright on the issues and enacting solutions.” Thank you, Representative Roger Kirby for being that light and enlightening our communities.

GROWING SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITIES *by Les Echols*



Debbie Jones

The legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. is built on peace, love and service for our fellow human beings, regardless of their race, gender or ethnicity. For years, Debbie Jones has been a superlative for many of the concepts embodied by the legacy of Dr. King. Jones is the membership relations manager with Florence County Economic Development Partnership. She had held a wide array of leadership roles on the local and state levels, including the SC PTA, School

Improvement Council, YMCA Florence, and Emerging Leaders Florence. She is a graduate of the Fred Sheheen Nonprofit Leadership Institute at Francis Marion University, a SC Education Policy Fellow, a Riley Fellow, and she is currently a legislative appointee on the board of SC First Steps Florence and is currently participating in Leadership Florence.

Before joining Florence County Economic Development Partnership, Debbie volunteered with the School Foundation, then began working with South Carolina Future Minds, an organization created to serve as a resource development office

for South Carolina public schools. “My advocacy journey for public education really started when my children walked through the doors of Carver Elementary in Florence, South Carolina. I have been honored to work with teachers, principals, superintendents and community leaders all invested in the success of students across the state,” explained Jones. “I am looking forward to advocating just as hard for economic development in Florence County. We need to work aggressively to promote our community and programs that will positively impact our economic prosperity, growth and opportunity, all of which rely on a strong public education system, which we have in Florence County,” Jones continued.

When asked about creating a more harmonious community, Jones went into detail about her goals in helping build a legacy Dr. King would be proud of. “My goals for 2022, are to use my strengths of growing sustainable and impactful partnerships and relationships to help improve our community and quality of life in Florence County. That also means I need to step out of my comfort zone and take the time to really listen to fellow community members. Working on a statewide level for so many years, I felt disconnected to my local community. I knew more about state issues than I did issues affecting my own backyard. In my role as Membership Relations Manager, I can go around and talk with local small business owners, nonprofits, industry leaders and local government leaders. I have been actively listening to

GROWING CONT'D



Jones First Library Program, now housed with the Original Six Foundation. They gave outgoing 5K students from high poverty schools around the state their very own home libraries. They consisted of ten books, hand selected by each student.

each of their needs to see how we can work together and how we can help each other.”

Jones also elaborated that, while participating in the Riley Institutes Diversity Leadership Initiative, her team came across #345. #345 represents phrases of positive affirmations, three words, I love you; four words, I care about you and five words, I am here for you. Or if in a hurry you simply say #345. Jones explained that the concept that the impact of hearing one of these three phrases each day combined with simple acts of empathy, inclusion and kindness can make a difference.

Jones continued speaking on the value of community camaraderie and partnerships. “We are very lucky that we have a collaborative culture within our county and amongst our business and community members. I think we need to continue to work together to come up with solutions to aid and support each other. We need our business owners to ask how and what they can do to support our industries, our education system, nonprofits and vice versa. Because helping each other means helping our community. We need a complete community approach to build the framework to leverage our existing assets to improve the economic prosperity, growth and opportunity for our community,” concluded Jones.

Jones graduated from Meredith College with a marketing/merchandising degree. She is the mother of three Florence One Schools, graduates. Her oldest son, Zack, graduated from Clemson University and is working for Clemson at the Pee Dee Research Station. Her middle son, Benjamin, is a graduate of the University of South Carolina and is working at Anderson Brothers Bank. Finally, her daughter, Lexie, is currently a senior at the University of South Carolina majoring in public health.

CREATING A BELOVED COMMUNITY *by Les Echols*



Wallace “Jay” Jordan

Wallace Jay Jordan wears many hats in the Florence community and the state of South Carolina overall. Jordan is a practicing attorney with his own firm in Florence that represents clients in cases throughout the Pee Dee. Before starting his firm, he clerked for Judge Michael Scarborough. Since 2015, Jordan has served as the representative for South Carolina House District 63, which includes sections of downtown Florence and areas

of the city’s western suburbs. In the State House, he serves as the chairman of the House Ethics Committee. He has served as chairman of the Florence County Election Commission and Voter Registration Board and on the City of Florence Planning Commission. Jordan is also a youth football and baseball coach and a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Florence Baptist Temple.

Jordan was born and raised in Florence, and he stresses that it is also where he learned firsthand the importance local businesses have on the community through his time growing up in his dad’s car dealership on the corner of Irby and Cherokee. “The experience I gained from dad and growing up in Florence built the foundation for why I chose to serve our community,” said Jordan.

We spoke to Jordan in detail about creating a Beloved Community, or a community where poverty, discrimination and violence are unacceptable and our policies, practices and language are infused with unconditional love.

DW: What are your goals and vision for 2022 as it pertains to maintaining harmony in our community?

JJ: The Pee Dee is a great place to live, work, and raise a family. At our core, we must focus on education, public safety, and economic development. First, we must keep our children

safe and provide an environment for them to succeed. Second, we must provide our law enforcement with the resources they need to protect our citizens. Furthermore, the best system in the world is only as good as the people who must operate it. Keeping and attracting dedicated teachers, public safety officers and health care providers is an absolute necessity.

DW: How can we as business leaders and community members move in a better, more harmonious direction?

JJ: Florence is an example of a growing economy. For our area to continue growing harmoniously, we must ensure conditions are ripe for progress and that opportunity exists for every person in our community. This means keeping taxes low and reducing the burden of government regulation while also improving infrastructure and strengthening education. By maintaining and advancing these policies, we become more competitive in the race for economic growth and all-around prosperity for our community.

DW: What priorities are you and your organization willing to shift in creating the beloved community?

JJ: As an elected official, I strive to protect the values our country was founded on where we put our faith in God and respect for the community at the centerpiece of our lives. I believe these principles serve as our guide to achieving a beloved community.

DW: Anything else you would like to add?

JJ: I was raised to believe anything is possible, and if you work hard, the American Dream can be yours. That opportunity is alive and well – but we must protect it. I am proof of that dream, as I earned my bachelor’s degree from the College of Charleston and completed my law degree from the Charleston School of Law.

The proudest accomplishment of my life is marrying my wife, Tara Monroe Jordan and raising our three children Wallace, Lana Claire and Monroe, in our hometown of Florence. My faith in God, love for my wife and dedication to my three children guide my principles and drive me to make this community and state better.

HONORING THE LATE DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
It Starts with Me: Shifting Priorities to Create the Beloved Community

LET'S TALK FLORENCE TAKES STEPS TOWARD THE KING LEGACY *by Les Echols*



A part of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is mobilizing people from all levels of society and from different socio-economic backgrounds. Let's Talk Florence SC, utilizes that principle in the

creation of a networking platform to get people from different walks of life to have real conversations. The Let's Talk Florence SC organization was initiated by local retired executive Joan Billheimer by inviting a group of people with diverse backgrounds, races and ideas to her home to plan the way forward.

Billheimer gave input on how and why Let's Talk began. "Let's Talk is an opportunity to have conversations in an informal setting. While gaining knowledge of one another, creating and building rapport organically. People want to have difficult conversations, but we found it very important to become cordial and build accountability. Building momentum was created through word of mouth and people's willingness to attend. As time progressed, we saw more community leaders attend and build a network of leaders dedicated to long-term change in our community," stated Billheimer.

Julius and Kaye Floyd-Parris were a part of the original conversation that sparked Let's Talk. "It seemed like something that needed to be done and something we could do and expand our relationships and learn about other people. We talk about different aspects of our respective lives and build new friendships. We want to keep expanding, and we may eventually delve into some topics. For now, we want to continue building and growing friendships," concluded Parris.

Attorney and City of Florence Judge Linward C. Edwards II

was also a vital cog in the start of Let's Talk. "Let's Talk was the result of a conversation between a number of people, including myself, Joan, Kaye Floyd and Julius Parris. It started as a generic conversation amongst colleagues that evolved into a 45 minute to hour long social between people who were all different. We were not talking age, politics, race or socio-economic status. These conversations removed barriers and gave us all the realization that our views are all more aligned than we realize. The Let's Talk model is removing barriers with simple conversations. The value is opening more doors with no agenda or programmatic aspect. Just come meet people from different backgrounds and socialize," Edwards explained.

Debbie Jones of Florence Progress Economic Development mirrored Edwards' sentiments as she gave her take on Let's Talk. "Let's Talk attendees represent a variety of backgrounds, races and ideas from Florence County. The mission of Let's Talk is overcoming barriers with simple conversation. It is through that group that I have made connections that have turned into friendships where we can have tough conversations that will then lead to us working together to improve our community and its quality of life. The more questions we ask about each other and the more involved we become, the more we start making a larger impact on our community and realize that even the smallest steps can make a huge difference."

Local business owner and community leader, Mike Reichenbach has also been heavily involved in building the initiative. "Let's Talk is a wonderful example of how people from diverse races, backgrounds and ideologies can come together and appreciate both our individuality and commonality. Through communication to break down barriers and preconceived notions, we learn how to better understand and value each other. And in the end, there is more collaboration as we work to make Florence and the Pee Dee a better place to live and work," Reichenbach concluded.

FLORENCE UTILITIES DIRECTOR ON CREATING A BELOVED COMMUNITY

by Les Echols and Glaciera brown Mason



Michael Hemingway

The son of the late civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., says that creating a beloved community is about, "bridging the gaps between the haves and have-nots with real opportunities." Martin Luther King, III goes on to explain, "it's about creating more of that precious commodity that we call hope."

The City of Florence Utilities Department is managed by Utilities Director, Michael Hemingway.

Diversity Works caught up with Hemingway about the City and its ever-evolving mission to create a more inclusive community in response to the King holiday commemoration theme, It Starts with Me, Creating a Beloved Community.

For Florence to become that beloved community, we must be willing to shift to a community that is completely inclusive in every part of our daily lives. Involving all of us not by how we are different but by our shared life experiences. Culling out those unique efforts to provide a place; a space, for us to gather with our variety of personalities, experiences and talents that can provide our community with solutions that unify rather than divide.

People of Florence from every lifestyle must make a commitment to come together to create community. This requires commitment to tasks that will not be achieved overnight but will require years. Florence's revival can provide a future of diverse neighborhoods, a vibrant arts community, walkable medical centers and strong schools. All shaped by the character of Florence's diversity that is yet to be

fully recognized.

To help us get to a more inclusive environment, the city supports programs and events by organizations like the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce and Diversity Works Magazine. "It is organizations like these and others that assist the city in seeing the issues through new lenses and developing practical solutions for moving forward. It is these new challenges and views that the city must commit itself to fostering opportunities that are progressive and inclusive to every citizen, every neighborhood and employee," Hemingway explained.

As we enter a new year, the priority goals for 2022 is to ensure the safety and well-being of the City of Florence employees during the current world-wide COVID-19 pandemic. The second priority goal is to staff and promote the organization with the best and most qualified individuals and continuing to provide a high level of customer service to advance the quality of life for all citizens and businesses. We want to meet the challenge of developing Florence into a community that is uniquely special and desirable for all current and future citizens and businesses.

Significant strides have been made within the past year to achieve more diversity, equity and inclusion with the promotion of two women to director level status within the City of Florence. This is the first time in the city's history that two females have been directors at the same time. This move has provided more ideas and skills to the leadership team and a unique direction for the entire City of Florence organization. In addition, the City of Florence has also selected its first female Hispanic supervisor within the Utilities Department.

Moreover, to achieve more diversity, equity and inclusion to create a beloved community, Hemingway says he will continue

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working with his City of Florence teammates, leading, guiding and ensuring that our community is a place where all people are welcomed and accepted. Promoting and providing that unique blend of urban living with hospitality and charm.

Hemingway was born and raised in the Britton's Neck community of Marion, South Carolina. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology from Clemson University and a Master of Business Administration from Francis Marion University. Among numerous accolades, he earned a Master Certification Health Administration & Policy from MUSC and is a graduate of Francis Marion University Rural Area Leadership Institute, Leadership Florence, and the South Carolina Department of Commerce Economic Development Institute. Away from work, Hemingway connects with family and gardening. He is engaged with various youth and young adults in Britton's Neck and Florence in search of excellence for present and future growth and success.

The City of Florence Utilities Department provides residential and business customers drinking and wastewater services. They design and oversee construction projects, manage storm water and conserve natural resources to the Pee Dee. Its divisions include water production, distribution operations, sanitary sewer collection system, wastewater management, storm water collection system, maintenance, what not to flush and compliance.

HOW LIFE EXPERIENCES LED TO EQUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

by Adalia Ellis



Dr. Emrys Hamidi

Dr. Emrys Hamidi grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, where, as a white person, she had very little interaction with African Americans. Her grandmother grew up on a sharecropping farm where the sharecropper's house was in the back. Emrys went to an all-white church and her circle of influence was limited to the white community. Her life changed when her mother became a member of a religious community, the Baha'i Faith. Her community circle

expanded to include people of other races and during this time she met her lifetime best friend who is African American. Her life was transformed. She was exposed to the lived experiences of people whose reality was very different from her own. This transformation and exposure had an impact on the trajectory of her life and her approach to patient care in predominantly African American communities.

She also is engaged in community building activities rooted in education in predominantly African American neighborhoods. She is having conversations regularly and she listens. She listens to her friends' experiences with racism on nearly a daily basis and understands that racism is very much alive and well. She understands that as a white person, she wouldn't know this if she didn't have friendships with African Americans. Because she listens, without judgment, and is not dismissive, she is safe to share these hardships with all the experience and understanding she carries with her into the ER.

As she reflects on her experiences as a doctor, she has many thoughts regarding how the health care system underserves the African American community. When America's systems consider African Americans, historically it has been in terms of what can be taken from them and marginalizing the community, keeping many people in poverty. This mindset carries over into the health

care field. "The African American community is an afterthought so, in general, the health care system doesn't recognize the unique challenges they face," says Hamidi. With this lack of recognition comes lack of attention to making access to healthy foods, access to affordable health care and education a priority.

This lack of recognition also manifests in patient care when doctors have no exposure to African American communities outside of when people come into their office. "Low quality of care stems from ignorance on white people's part who have no exposure to people outside of their limited circle. This ignorance can be remedied if doctors are willing to listen with humility. As doctors, we have medical education but may not understand what the unique challenges of our patients may be. It's easy to say that a patient is non-compliant but asking why they are non-compliant will give a doctor a glimpse into the challenges the patient may be facing." When doctors consider historical racism that is embedded in the health care system, they can then find solutions that meet the needs of African American patients.

The pandemic has made the inequities pervasive in health care glaringly clear. Covid-19 hit African American communities particularly hard due to underlying health issues that are prevalent in African American communities. Diabetes, high blood pressure, hypertension to name a few, point to a history of oppression and the way it manifests in health disparities. For example, there is a history of African Americans not having access to healthy foods. In the present, it shows up as food deserts. Food and access to healthy food is a contributing factor to the development of these illnesses that make people susceptible to Covid. "I see people when they are so sick, it's too late. Most people don't have a car, so they wait and come in when they are almost dead. Many people don't have an established primary care physician, and although people do have Medicaid, 40-50-year-old men are not eligible and don't have health insurance. Many are African American.

Hamidi says, "the fear and mistrust around the vaccine has been tragic. There is a reason why people are fearful. There is a history of the medical field using African American bodies for experiments. One such example is the Tuskegee Project where Black men were infected with syphilis without their consent." Events like this have become cautionary tales within the African American community. Even amongst young people who have had family members die from Covid, are hesitant to get the vaccine. Hamidi emphasizes the importance of conversations, "Have a dialogue, why do you think it will kill you? The reason behind WHY is so much more complicated."

Hamidi is tired of seeing people die when there is a vaccine available and could have prevented it. When the pandemic first got bad, nurses and doctors were struggling not to become burnt out. Before there was a vaccine, when people came in with Covid, they did the best they could to keep them alive, but there was a sense of sadness that they could not do more. Now, they are fighting frustration as most of the people who are hospitalized, and die are unvaccinated. Their deaths are preventable. There is so much misinformation and it is killing people.

A silver lining in this gray cloud is that she has seen a growing number of white people in her profession who want to and have a desire to learn and to help people. They want to better understand the underlying issues that impact the health of African American communities and eliminate the disparities.

"Racism hasn't gone anywhere. Racism is still alive and well. Until we address the root of the problem, we won't see things change. And the root cause of racism is not seeing that we are all one family. And that each person has something unique to bring to the world. Being able to listen and learn is where we can start. When I have a patient, I am able to listen and recognize there is more to the story. And that I try my best to treat them with equality despite a system that is unequal."

DISPARITIES IN HEALTH CARE, NOT JUST ABOUT RACE Articles by Jennifer Robinson



Dr. Jeniqua Duncan

HARTSVILLE—Everyday there are conditions in life that affect how we live. From education to economics to health care, there are factors that determine what and how people access the things they need. Their quality of life can be affected based on what they do not have.

African Americans and other minorities have always faced inequities in getting resources they need. To receive adequate health care, most

African Americans need access to transportation, insurance and income. And without care, many African Americans will face more challenges.

Dr. Jeniqua Duncan is a physician who witnesses first-hand the troubles that minorities face in getting access to health care. Duncan serves as the chief of Value Based Care at CareSouth Carolina, Inc. She is a native of Charleston, South Carolina and received her bachelor's degree from Xavier University of Louisiana. Her medical training was done in Kansas City, MO and Orlando, FL where she served as chief resident. Duncan also earned a Master's in Business Administration with a focus on health care leadership and is a certified physician peer coach. Her professional devotion is to provide and support a system where quality and equitable health care are commonplace to all. Duncan is a member of several local civic organizations. She is married and has a teenage son. She believes that disparities in accessing health are based on other things than race. She said, "Other than race, lack of access is more of patients' direct relationship with economics."

Most of the patients she services live in rural areas that are not economically prosperous. Duncan said two barriers she sees most often are transportation and distrust of the medical system that hinder people from getting the care they need. Because much of South Carolina is rural, patients cannot make it to their

appointments or get their prescriptions due to practice locations being an hour or an hour and a half drive to the nearest city. Many minorities distrust health care because historically, they have been experimental beings and some of the practices in the past were deceptive. Patients thought they were being treated for illnesses but were being experimented on to treat future patients. Those experiences were shared generationally in minority families, and now, even with health care being more advanced, it is hard to trust the system. Duncan said, "it is also challenging to overcome these barriers because the data shows disparities in minority health care and unfortunately those disparities have been highlighted during the current pandemic.

What has been done in recent years to improve health access for minorities is the availability for minorities themselves to become physicians, specialists and health educators. With the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, minorities were empowered to vote and take action to attend institutions of higher learning to close the gap and impact access to health care.

In discussing what are some other major changes that have determined health care, the impact of Obamacare was mentioned because Duncan believes it was favorable to minorities. It gave access to health care because of options for insurance.

Duncan is not a stereotypical physician. She says that historically, doctors tend to be put on pedestals and often not connect with their patients. Her goal is always to have true conversations with her patients and be authentic in her concern for their care. The patient's transparency is how she can care for them mentally and physically because she recognizes how their mentality affects them physically. For her family she knows culturally in previous generations some were secretive about their health experiences. They did not talk about their social or health issues which made it challenging to receive care. The hope for Duncan is because the pandemic has highlighted many of the disparities that those who are now allies will work to help all people have access to better care.

EXERCISE FITNESS FOR OVERALL HEALTH AND WELLNESS



Reginald Sanders

Taking responsibility of your health is the key to wellness. The need to acknowledge exercising, eating right and even meditation for mental health is often not a priority unless a person is diagnosed with an illness. But often there are other reasons that many cannot or do not make their health a priority. In African American communities and other communities of people of color, there are various disparities that impact the outcomes

of health care. In some rural communities there are no health care centers. Access to transportation may be limited and the cost of care may not be affordable. African Americans and other people of color have history in the lack of economic access to quality health care. It began in slavery with African Americans and for some others, it was lack of job opportunities or employment in which salary was not comparable to white counterparts. Lack of money meant lack of good health and

many perished. In 1964, the passing of the Civil Rights Act allowed for more liberties including getting access to physicians. Mostly the physicians were in free clinics and availability was challenging because of long waiting periods. When patients were able to get appointments, the quality of the care was subpar. Though access to health care in 2021 was better and the passing of the Affordable Care Act under the Obama Administration helped many people get insurance, there are people who still struggle to get control of their health.

But if finding quality health care is challenging, then why are more people not choosing to eat right and exercise to improve their overall wellness? Fitness expert Reginald Sanders believes that just as some people cannot afford doctors' visits, quality fitness centers are not affordable. During his one and a half years at Flo-Town Fitness, he says, "there are not many African Americans who visit their facility, but the ones who do, are more engaged in self fitness. They use the exercise equipment without training or assistance from coaches." The advantage of using coaches on any fitness journey is accountability. Reginald took control of his health after learning that he was pre-diabetic

EXERCISE FITNESS CONT'D

and following the death of his sister from Type 2 diabetes. Though he is and was a martial artist when he received the news of being prediabetic, he learned there were changes he had to make to better his health. He changed his eating habits and began group fitness. Sanders says, "I am a fitness bully because I will not allow my clients to make excuses that allow time for quitting. They have to make the time to get fit." "But in today's society, Sanders stated, there is no magical way to get in shape. And people cannot mistake weight loss for health. Don't worry about shedding pounds but be concerned about your overall health." Sanders hopes that when it comes to fitness that people will not allow cost to be a deterrent. He does find it interesting that many will not address medicine costs but will critique gym membership costs. "To keep people informed about the benefits of fitness, Sanders says, "there has to be more visibility about the benefits of fitness versus get-fit-quick workouts." There are some gym owners who are concerned about the health of their communities and are willing to serve by assisting people who want to make healthy lifestyle changes. To be motivated to make healthier choices, Sanders declares, "people must think of their bodies as machines. Machines run optimally when they are used and maintained."

Though the options for better health access have increased, there are still disparities that need to be addressed. Though people should take personal responsibility for their health, many have barriers that are hard to overcome such as transportation, income, culture and race. The solution may or may not be simple to alleviate the barriers, but the work to begin helping people live healthier lives is continual.

WORKPLACE DEI HELPS PATIENTS

by Anna Bowman



James L. Rand

James L. Rand is a registered nurse at MUSC Health Florence Medical Center. He recently shared his experiences after 17 years of being a nurse as the guest speaker for the Florence-Darlington Technical College Pinning Ceremony in Spring 2021. Throughout his distinguished career, he's been the recipient of several prestigious accolades, 2010 Patient Choice Award; 2017 Nurse of the Year, 2016 Palmetto Gold inductee; Member of MUSC

Health Florence's Shared Governance Committee and sits on the MUSC Grievance Panel.

With all his accomplishments in nursing, male nurses such as Rand are still a rarity in the U.S. In fact, an article in "Minority Nurse," entitled "Men in Nursing: Where Are We Now?" (2/3/2020) stated, "Only 13 percent of nurses in the U.S. are men, compared with 2 percent in 1960, according to the Washington Center for Equitable Growth." However, the article did yield some good news, the U.S. is leading the way in increasing the number of male nurses in the workplace.

Rand, a charge nurse with the medical surgery unit at MUSC Health Florence Medical Center, once believed, like so many men before him that nursing was a female occupation. Thankfully,

he followed his passion and became a successful registered nurse and an inspiration for future male and female nurses.

As a Black male in the nursing field, Rand understands the importance of having an inclusive and diverse workforce in the medical field. He has a unique opportunity to encourage people of color to pursue appropriate health care. Frequently, patients are eager to interact with medical staff who resemble them and can communicate in a way they can understand.

Rand understands the importance of communicating how the food we eat contributes to our health. He stated, "Most healthy foods cost two to three times more than unhealthy foods, leading many African Americans to purchase unhealthy foods with sugar, salt and fat. It is what they can afford. These foods bring sickness and death to any community." He added that health disparities are worse among disadvantaged ethnic groups and economically disadvantaged ethnic groups. He acknowledged, "African Americans comprise a large percentage of individuals in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina with heart disease," he said.

Health care disparities within ethnic groups can oftentimes cause individuals to receive inadequate health care. As a registered nurse, Rand has witnessed that patients, even with the Affordable Care Act Market Place, cannot afford health insurance. "They have to decide on whether to spend the little money they have on their utility bill or co-pays for doctor's appointments or even medication." Eliminating these disparities can cause more equality in health care and allow better individual health care across all ethnic backgrounds and economic statuses. Rand looks forward to the day when every patient will be provided excellent health care regardless of their socioeconomic status. Rand hopes to use his knowledge as a registered nurse to help patients navigate the medical landscape to their advantage.

Rand and his wife, Natalie, are parents to four children. He is a graduate of South Florence High School and a 2000 graduate of Francis Marion University with a science degree; and a 2004 graduate of the Medical University of South Carolina with a bachelor's degree in nursing. Rand hopes that seeing more male nurses in the field will inspire young men to seek a career in such a rewarding field.



A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS by Jennifer Robinson



Dr. Jennifer Evans Scott

Health care is one of the most important issues that we face in our lives. Deciding the best way to take care of our bodies is perhaps one of the most significant decisions that one can make in preventive care. Dr. Jennifer Evans Scott, chosen the top chiropractor in the Pee Dee area for several consecutive years, believes that in many ways the health care industry has grown and changed substantially since the 1960s, but there is still work to be done. First and foremost, she believes that there are still disparities in health care based on multi-cultural and cross-generational factors. These disparities have caused some communities to suffer more than others with time. Education about health improvement through proper nutrition and exercise is readily available in various publications, on social media, at physicians' offices and health care centers. The information distributed often includes what people need to do to lose weight, fight diseases and maintain wellness. However, access to quality health care is still limited to many due to high percentages of disparities nationwide, and certainly locally in the counties in South Carolina for African Americans and other affected groups of individuals.

Scott believes that disparities, in great part, are a result of structural and systemic inequities. There are many realities to consider that directly contribute to this imbalance including, socioeconomic factors, psycho-emotional considerations, poverty, each patients' unique experiences and background, access to transportation and healthy food, levels of pollution, education and lower rates of health care coverage. As a chiropractor, she commonly serves patients who have sought her out as a last resort for pain relief and health care option, only after struggling or failing with their primary care physicians and specialists. She believes that with proper education, resources and an overall commitment to an integral and individualized approach to responsible and patient-centered health care, we can begin empowering patients, revolutionizing healthcare and transforming communities.

Chiropractors approach to patient care is very similar to what is used in conventional medicine. They interview the patient, obtain a detailed health history, perform an examination, complete various tests including orthopedic, neurological and musculoskeletal exams, perform and analyze diagnostic studies and develop a working diagnosis to create a treatment plan and course of action. Their mission is to address the root cause of the issue rather than simply treat the symptoms. While chiropractors are mostly known for treating problems related to the musculoskeletal system, patients can choose this holistic option as an alternative or complement to traditional medical practice to help with chronic pain and many other ailments. When chiropractors treat misalignments, it allows the body to heal naturally by restoring proper motion and function of the spine and joints, thus allowing the nervous system to communicate with the rest of the body easily and effectively. The central nervous system brain and spinal cord controls and directs every other function of the body, so by directly influencing it, they can affect every other aspect of the body and being.

Scott mentioned that though she believes that many of the systemic inequities are not intentional, those who are in control in

health care systems must be aware and knowledgeable of the uniqueness of the various demographics that are seeking care and intervene proactively. As we reflect on the evolution of healthcare since the 1960's, we can identify many strides but also much room for growth and improvement. In 1965 the original Voting Rights Act was signed by President Lyndon Johnson, which gave rights to minorities to vote. With the right the vote came opportunities for African Americans to elect officials who would represent them and their best interests in care. Though some doors have opened since then, Dr. Scott says the efforts are moving, they are not moving quickly enough. One major barrier to healthcare is the historical mistrust some minorities have due to myths, misinformation, but more importantly knowledge about many things such as: experimental procedures performed on African Americans from slavery, forced sterilizations of minority women, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, minority maternal mortality, and now the vaccinations being offered for the coronavirus and its variants to name a few. During slavery, African Americans were given poor food quality including scraps-leftovers and unwanted food parts, food of little or no nutritional value, and sometimes not much, if any to eat at all. Scott revealed "this directly influenced and compromised the health of African Americans from a metabolic and psychological perspective as these poor eating habits that we traditional witness in the African American community leading to many chronic illnesses continue to be passed down." Obesity contributes to the aging and illness process through the alteration of metabolic pathways evidenced biochemically in the relationship between caloric restriction and longevity and we must also consider potential genetic predispositions. Therefore, education about health is often ignored, neglected or withheld and this has become a cultural staple in the African American community.

Keeping patients informed about ways to maintain healthy lifestyles, least invasive treatment options and preventative measures is important to long-term wellness. The pandemic of 2020 was an awakening for people regarding their health and how basic life practices such as a balanced and healthy diet, adequate exercise, proper rest, minimizing stress and healthy lifestyle habits can give you an advantage. Many began to take on a personal responsibility of educating themselves on health benefits by researching natural and holistic ways to boost their immune system to fight viruses and diseases. The hope is that more individuals, especially African Americans, will change the narrative by empowering themselves, become health informed, reclaim authority and responsibility over their health/lives and access the tools for wellness available to them. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once stated, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." The change must start with each of us. As we become more educated and involved in our own health, we gain a greater self-respect and level of accountability that we in turn can use to build a collaborative culture with our health care team to help redefine each of our roles in this integrative approach from prevention, treatment and management of our health care concerns and issues.



BLACK HEALTH AND WELLNESS – COMMEMORATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

by Glaciera Brown Mason



Sharon Black, LICSW

Black History Month honors the achievements of African Americans. The Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the organization which determines the national Black History focus, has designated the 2022 theme, Black Health and Wellness. The theme opens the door of discussion with the medical community, on the health and health care disparities of African Americans.

As we move into a New Year and prepare to commemorate National Black History Month, HopeHealth's Behavioral Health Consultant Manager, Sharon Black, LICSW and the Director of Preventive Medicine, Dr. Heather Leisy contributed to this important discussion about health and health care disparities in the African American community.

Health disparities refer to systematic differences in health within certain populations. These differences are the factors that lead to disadvantages in populations that affect health status and outcomes. Health care disparities are differences that population groups face that impact their access to health care, and the quality and extent of the health care coverage they receive. The current state of Black Health and Wellness today, "is better than it has been in the past, however, we continue to struggle with health disparities in a lot of areas such as smoking, obesity, hypertension, heart disease and cancer," according to Black. "African Americans' lives are still adversely affected by these issues. This is depicted in the healthcare statistics, throughout society, and systems where African Americans are oppressed and experience ongoing injustice," Black adds. Having personal experiences with health care disparities, Black shared, "as an African American provider, these disparities matter to me because I want to see my culture continue to improve and have fair treatment just as our counterparts. I want the barriers to be eliminated so that we can thrive in society as much as our counterparts. Equity is important so that we all can have a fair chance to a quality life and lifestyle. I want to see all patients' health improved and them thriving in life."

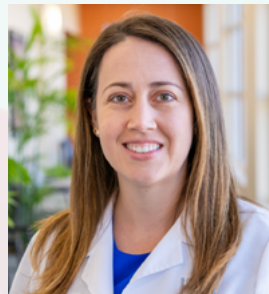
Stanford Health Care lists the rate of hypertension in African Americans as among the highest of any ethnic group in the U.S. While many factors, including genetics may play a part, health care disparities also contribute. "The topic of health disparities and health care disparities is important because, "they influence and determine the overall health, the quality of life within, and the economic outcomes of communities. Disparities create barriers for population groups who need services and deserve the opportunity to achieve healthy outcomes. If disparities are not addressed, quality of health and outcomes will not improve," explained Black.

One of the goals of the Healthy People 2000 initiative is to reduce health disparities among Americans. While disparities have improved, they still exist and are exemplified when people of lower socioeconomic status experience challenges in obtaining health coverage, or a lack of access to appropriate health care and achieving desired health outcomes. "HopeHealth is continually addressing social determinants of health factors that affect our patients. We depend on our community partners and resources to help address the needs of our patients that are outside our scope of expertise. It is important to serve patients in this way as we know that food, transportation, insurance, employment, support systems and more, greatly influence someone's health and wellness. The linkage to services and continuity of care that our patients receive help improve our community health outcomes," said Black.

Black emphasized that, limited resources in rural areas and inequity continues to be a challenge in addressing both disparities in the community. Further, she says poor economics, education, cultural competency, systemic injustices, oppression, and limited education are just some of the dynamics which create ongoing challenges. In

answer to the question of why it has taken so long for health disparities to be alleviated in the African American community, Black and Leisy gave similar responses that stemmed from a history of mistrust and injustices. Leisy responded that, "in communities in which African Americans have lived, jurisdictions, road developments, voting privileges, all potentially affecting their funding of education and social mobility. Economic developments in the neighborhoods and work opportunities are not quick processes, especially with lingering inherent biases that exist. Steps and laws in these areas need to occur and health disparities improvement will follow. There has been movement in decreasing these gaps of health over time, just not at the speed or equality level many providers hope for." Black interjected that in addition, "there is also a lack of knowledge and education, mental health issues, lifestyle and behaviors, food insecurities, unemployment, and lack of cultural diversity which play a huge role."

Initiatives to address disparities in the African American culture can be found in community-based initiatives, health ministries within the faith-based community, ongoing education and community forums, and dissemination of health information. HopeHealth, has many efforts and initiatives to minimize and address disparities. Financial situations and insurance coverage are often barriers to care. There are programs in place to strengthen relationships and build trust among underserved populations. HopeHealth provides services to all patients regardless of insurance status. "We are dedicated to helping make health care affordable for everyone. We also provide access to ACA enrollment," said Black.



Dr. Heather Leisy

Leisy revealed, "one of the reasons why I am so personally interested in population health is because this avenue can highlight disparities by looking at groups and seeing scientifically identified differences that need addressing. So first is awareness. We must know what the disparities are and where they are located. Next, is getting to earlier means of prevention." Leisy says, "one of the benefits of working in a Federally Qualified Health Center is that we work closely with community partners in attempts to elevate the social surroundings of our community and implement behavioral education. So, looking at housing, education, transportation, safety is where we need to start to address disparities. Specifics for health care disparities are tracked by utilizing quality of care measures and initiatives, these help identify those with poorer health and give them additional assistance such as chronic care management, financial aid, case management and care navigators."

Lastly, to address disparities in the African American community, clinical trials must be included in the conversation. Notwithstanding the historical mistrust which stem from the atrocities of the past, Black and Leisy explained why it is so important to participate in clinical trials. The NIH defines clinical trials as research studies performed in people that are aimed at evaluating a medical, surgical or behavioral intervention. Clinical trials are the primary ways in which researchers find out if a new treatment is safe and effective. Leisy, shared, "it is so important because you can only make conclusions of result on the population that was studied. If there are no African Americans within the research group, then the claims of health benefits or how it would affect that population cannot be known." Black said, "It is important to have diversity in clinical trials because of the underrepresentation in research to further help understand health populations in African Americans. It also provides hope for minority populations and to identify potential treatments that will improve quality of health and life."

So let us commemorate the 2022 Black History theme of Black Health and Wellness by raising the awareness of African Americans health and health care disparities. To learn more about HopeHealth's initiatives, visit hope-health.org.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH
Black Health & Wellness



Dr. Evelyn R. Coe

DARLINGTON-Dr. Evelyn R. Coe, family nurse practitioner serves as chief executive officer of the Hypertension & Diabetes Prevention Treatment Center. Coe also serves as the lead clinician and is responsible for overseeing the practice and providing patients with gold standards of care. Coe's research has been published in the Journal of Vascular Nursing. She is a three-time graduate of the Medical University of South

Carolina School of Nursing and a Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing alumnus. Having been a part of the nursing industry for over 20 years, Coe has served as a nurse in many capacities. After receiving her doctorate in nursing, she decided to open the family practice. The Hypertension and Diabetes Prevention and Treatment Center is a state-of-the-art medical facility born out of a vision and promise. The Center serves the Pee Dee region, which includes Darlington and Florence counties. HDPT Center focuses on the acute and chronic problems of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Coe also performs DOT and school physicals. She refers patients to specialists and works with an excellent internal medicine collaborating doctor, so patients are getting the full care needed.

Coe's biggest concerns regarding health care and patients is affordability, communication and understanding. "Some patients can't afford to be seen by their doctors. Some will stop going either for a lack of insurance or a lack of transportation. This opens the door for a small easily remedied illness to turn into a larger medical issue that may require further medical measures just to get the illness controllable. Patients should review the plans that are provided through the Affordable Care Act. There are several plans that have low premiums and low out-of-pocket costs that can make seeing a doctor more affordable," she says.

Moreover, says Coe, "Lack of communication between the provider and the patient is sometimes a problem. Some patients are discouraged if they feel like their primary care provider is not listening or doesn't understand. When some patients stop seeing their primary physician, they no longer follow up on their health care issues. This happens with or without having insurance." The doctor is careful to give instructions but also makes sure she is actively listening to the patient and asking questions that drive trust and openness.

"Some patients don't understand the what and the why. There is a disconnect between what is being said and what is being heard. For example, a patient may have been diagnosed with diabetes and placed on a certain medication. They believe it's to control the diabetes, what, but don't understand the underlying purpose, why, of the medicine. The medication prescribed could be to protect the kidneys, but if they aren't educated on the seriousness of not taking the medicine, they may stop taking it altogether, risking the health of the kidneys. Some patients tend to stop medications because the list of side effects make them nervous. Sometimes there's too much information and there needs to be a balance."

High pharmaceutical costs make it difficult for some patients to afford the medicines needed to get better. Coe made suggestions that may help, "Inquire and take advantage of the prescription discount plans that are available through your pharmacy or other programs like GoodRx. Patients can see huge savings if they inquire about programs offered through their pharmacist. Also, patients should not share their medications with others. Not only does it mean spending more money to replace what was shared, but the dosage could be harmful to the consumer that has not been prescribed the medication," says Coe.

Since the onset of COVID, the clinic has increased its focus on Telehealth. Coe wants the patients to experience individualized care normally provided during an in-clinic visit. COVID has also brought about many new guidelines and Coe is consistent about being aware of changes within the health care system.

"The urgency to control the virus seems to have pushed everything else off the table. Everyone needs to be educated and patients need to be more aware of their responsibilities. Pfizer, Moderna and Janssen should be taken within the time limits to be more effective. Some people are hesitant about getting vaccinated and the vaccination options don't provide the ultimate cure, but they do assist in treating the disease. Every vaccination can keep someone off the respirator and can save someone's life.

Lastly, Coe believes that community effort is more important now than ever before. Family members should communicate more within the family. Helping family members keep up with vaccination appointments and providing transportation really helps. More family involvement increases accountability.

"As providers we need to be present and in the moment. This can be difficult, time consuming and requires effort but it's well worth it. Actively listen to the patient and communicate in a way that they understand the problem. Don't forget that loved one that is caring for the patient. It's important that they understand the what and why as well," explained Coe.

"Patients should be comfortable with their provider. In preparation for a doctor's appointment make a list of concerns/questions to take to your provider. Speak up and ask for clarity on things not understood. Don't stop seeing a physician even when you're discouraged. Don't forget about options that make doctor appointments and medicine more affordable."

When asked why she's continued in the health care industry for so many years, she replied, "I love nursing. I try to use state of the art and evidence-based care in treating each patient. I love what I do, love taking care of patients and love being a part of their success stories. I love that I get to make changes to improve a person's quality of life."

The Hypertension and Diabetes Prevention Center is located at 2517 High Hill Road, Darlington, SC 29532. Contact us at (843) 307-2360.



CELEBRATING WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS IN HEALTH CARE by Les Echols



Michelle Logan-Owens

Women's History Month is an opportunity to celebrate and observe the vital role women have played in American history. Diversity Works caught up with Michelle Logan-Owens, chief operating officer for McLeod Health. We asked Logan-Owens about the importance of Women's History Month, women in health care and her role at McLeod.

DW: Tell us about yourself

MLO: I was reared in the quaint, little town of Pinewood in

Sumter County, South Carolina. My entire professional career, which began in 1993, has been spent in healthcare. I began my career as a nursing assistant on a surgical inpatient unit. In 1994, I graduated from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor's in Nursing, prior to that an associate degree from USC-Sumter. As a child, I was inspired by the health care team who cared for my grandfather and therefore, chose to specialize in the care of cancer patients. Soon after, I was blessed to have opportunities to serve in roles such as quality coach, director of training and development, director of human resources, and director of critical care and emergency services at an acute-care hospital in Sumter, South Carolina. In 2008, I served as vice president for all clinical ancillary and surgical services. I hold both a Master's and Doctorate degree in Healthcare Administration from the Medical University of South Carolina. In 2015, I was honored to become the first African American female chief executive officer of an acute-care hospital in South Carolina. I now proudly serve as the chief operating officer for McLeod Regional Medical Center in Florence.

DW: Tell us the importance of celebrating Women's History Month (March 2022). What is the importance of it to you and the organization?

MLO: Only in recent years, have the many contributions of women both in the workplace and the home even begun to be acknowledged. Historically, our roles and influence have been overlooked and overshadowed and we have been viewed as the proverbial supporting actresses while men have taken center-stage. When the truth of the matter is, without the voices and contributions of women, there would be no show at all. At times it still seems surreal to me, that in 2021, there are still so many glass ceilings that are hindering the advancement of women in many fields. This does not discourage me, it inspires me because that means there are still many great things for women to do. I am excited to see the degree of emphasis being placed on introducing young girls to fields of math and science. With more young ladies and women in the fields of health, science and mathematics our combined intellect and creativity with our male peers will ensure that the best solutions are brought to bear in response to some of our most daunting challenges.

At McLeod Health, we are very proud of our 115 years of service to this community. But this year, is even more special because 2021 marked a first in our history, the unwavering support for and appointment of the first female president and CEO of McLeod Health, Donna Isgett. My heart swells with pride as I think about Donna's appointment. While this is an incredible accomplishment for her as an individual, as leaders we know, what is more important, is the message it sends to young women who are watching that it can be done.

We value the contributions of each of our team members as every one of them regardless of their role or responsibilities is here

to take care of patients. We want team members to have their passion buckets refilled by this meaningful work and to pursue their personal aspirations because we all get better when as individuals, our continuous growth as professionals is encouraged and supported. The reason I am excited about team member growth is because our patients and their families are the beneficiaries of a dynamic and inspired team.

DW: Tell us the importance you all have placed on local healthcare providers and administration at McLeod serving the local community.

MLO: We are not just in the business of sick care. As the preeminent provider of healthcare services for the communities we serve, our mission is to support the health and well-being of the citizens. This mission means we are in the community and actively developing partnerships with other healthcare organizations and local businesses so that together we can identify the community needs and develop synergistic approaches to meeting those needs. The needs are many and no single organization can do it alone, but through strong partnerships we can continue to move the needle on health outcomes and social determinants of health. On a personal level, a sense of community is vitally important to me. I am a member of the Florence Rotary Club and have been working collaboratively with MUSC-Florence on a joint community health needs assessment and approach to the management of behavioral health patients in our community. This work touches on other community partners to include, our federally qualified health center partners, the school district, local churches and many others. We encourage members of our executive team to serve on community boards or councils. We have leaders serving with the Mercy Medicine Clinic, the United Way, Rotary and the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce, to name a few.

DW: The impact of women in health care is obviously extensive. Can you speak to it from your knowledge of the industry and McLeod?

MLO: The impact of women in health care is extensive, from the days of Florence Nightingale, the mother of modern nursing, to Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell the first woman in U.S. history to earn a medical degree. Women have continued to shape the care and compassion of health care as well as helped to develop the technological advancements we see today. Our influence extends beyond the walls of facilities to include those who are public health activists as well as those making breakthrough discoveries in research labs and facilities.

At McLeod Health, our executive cabinet is well balanced with equal representation of men and women at the decision-making table and an equal share of our acute-care hospitals are led by women. McLeod Health sees the value that each team member brings to bear on the success of our organization and continues to develop a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve.

DW: Anything else you would like to add?

MLO: I always like to encourage women to remember that none of us achieve positions of opportunity on our own, but rather we continue to stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. As such, we have a responsibility to pay this forward. We must actively, not passively, bring others along as we are not blessed for ourselves, but rather to be a blessing to others. Just imagine a future where glass ceilings are no more, and each person can fulfill their God given calling for their lives. This gives me tremendous hope for all our daughters, and I know that the words I say to my girls, Storm and Rhayne, each morning will come to fruition, "do great things!"

Women's
HISTORY MONTH

Women Providing Healing, Promoting Hope



SHE BELIEVED AND SHE DID!

by Anna Bowman



Darlene Fulton-Smith,
RN, MHA, BSN

Growing up on a farm in Cades, South Carolina, there were very gender-specific roles and chores, recalled Darlene Fulton-Smith. However, as time progressed, her parents realized the importance of having their seven children expand their skill set. Jobs that were once gender-specific were now being introduced to all the siblings and before long, it was not unusual for the girls to cut the grass, change a tire or even check the oil, while the boys were washing clothes, ironing, and even preparing the family meals. "Our parents grew up in a time of segregation and racial disparity so investing time in educating their children on how to navigate in the world became a priority," she said.

Today, Fulton-Smith is the director of the General Surgery Department at MUSC Health Florence Medical Center. The young girl, who learned she could do any job regardless of her race or gender, now heads a 36-bed unit, 70 care team member department.

Fulton-Smith recalled when she became a registered nurse, in March of 1991, she had a paradigm shift. "When I first started my career, I was a timid young lady who respected people in positions of authority. But as my confidence grew and my knowledge evolved, I became a more effective advocate," she stated. "I began to include more diverse people in my circle - people who had different experiences and different life choices. I soon realized I enjoyed the diversity. I still appreciate my core beliefs, but I can now add to them and see life from a broader perspective," she said.

In 1996, she became a nurse manager and appreciated diverse ideas and opinions. She wasn't intimidated by people who looked, thought, or acted differently than her. "I made it a goal to change my homogenous workgroup to one comprised of black, white, Filipinos, Indians, Korean, Vietnamese, Zimbabwean, Jamaicans, Hispanics, male, female, transgender, diverse sexual orientation, including Jews, protestants, atheists, spiritual or non-religious. "The more diverse the group, the more innovative the group became and the better the care is delivered."

When Fulton-Smith was approached about applying for the position of nurse director for her unit, she was hesitant because of one specific reason. "I did not see anyone who looked like me in the hospital in a leadership role," she admitted. But she would soon find the voice of reason. "I had a conversation with Dorothy Hines, an RN, a politically active African-American. She encouraged me to apply and not wait for someone else to do it," as she quickly admitted. "I have been eternally grateful for that piece of advice and encouragement. I applied and have enjoyed my journey in management and leadership. Granted, there were many days that I was the only person of color in the boardroom or leadership meeting, but I learned how to navigate through the current system to accomplish the goals and initiatives."

As an advocate for change, she strongly feels when given the opportunity, she talks about the importance of diversity. "I speak up when I see a stage of administrators and leaders that don't include diverse members," she insisted. "I encourage people to apply themselves and go after supervisory and leadership positions. I advocate for people from diverse backgrounds and have a different value system." But her advocacy includes patients as well as staff members. "I make sure I advocate for patients who appear non-compliant but may not trust the health care system due to prior negative experiences or racial disparity."

During the Covid-19 pandemic, initially, there were a high number of black and brown people who did not trust the vaccine. "I had a black patient who would not get the vaccines or follow a recommendation from his white physician. The physician could not understand why. I reminded the physician of the Tuskegee syphilis study and many other studies and practices that showed a disparity toward people of color. I explained that this disparity creates a distrust of the healthcare system and its providers. It's important to continue to hire and promote a diverse staff that includes all races, creeds, ethnicities and genders. This is one area I'm incredibly passionate about and advocate strongly to achieve. It's important for our hospital to mirror the communities in which they serve."

As she reflects on her own trepidation years ago, she feels it's important to be a mentor. "We all have gifts and talents that need to be cultivated," she stated. "As a leader, it's my job to help those coming after me, to excel and believe in themselves. Show them how to do it; be the example. I don't want another nurse to say they can't do something because no person "looked" like them at the table. I want to leave a trail for them to follow, open doors for them and help them identify pitfalls and barriers. I want to be the kind of role model that is compassionate but demands the best of a truthful, respectful and challenging person. Nurses take a pledge to advocate for our patients," stated Fulton-Smith, "but it's also important to be advocates for one another, as well."

WELLNESS IN THE AME CHURCH

by Jennifer Robinson



Phyllis N. Green

Saying to yourself, "I want to be healthy," or making the statement for loved ones, "I want _____ to be healthy," are declarations for the desire to be healed. The word "heal" is a derivative of the word "healthy" yet there are many who are not aware of what healing really is and how it impacts multiple aspects of one's life. We are holistic beings who function mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. With every function someone can be hurt and the next phase of growth, past the hurt, is healing, the process of becoming sound or healthy again. In the current state of the world, people desire changes from the many challenges they are facing. While experiencing those challenges, some may feel overwhelmed, tired and even depressed. Though coping with such feelings may be overwhelming, many search for ways to overcome them and begin the healing process.

Mental health providers, counselors or pastors can assist people who are in distress and need help on their journeys to healing, but there are others who want to help based on their desire to serve. Communities have people who want to make a difference, but there are also people who have been appointed to serve to help people grow mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Phyllis N. Green is Episcopal supervisor for the seventh district South Carolina of the African American church. She and her brother-in-law, Bishop Samuel L. Green, Sr., lead the AME church forcefully by serving and meeting needs of thousands of people among congregations throughout the state.

One of Green's greatest desires is for people, in and out of the fellowship of AME churches, to be well. She has identified that many people are searching for wholeness, but life circumstances have challenged their desire to be complete. Green says for her, "helping people to heal is innate." There are people who have been

WELLNESS CONT'D

shaped or have been blessed to help people and her care and concern for others began in her childhood. She stated watching her mother and grandmother help people in her neighborhood encouraged her interest in helping. It was not unusual for her mother to provide food and a place to stay for young women and their children when they were in need. Moreover, Green said, "people would come from all over the neighborhood to her grandmother's house for a chance to glean sage advice from her and to get a hot meal." She said that some would probably run from the calling of helping people to heal, but she is confident hers is a genuine calling. Positive touch and words are a part of her reaching out to help people heal.

Green shared that reaching out to young people is one of her passions. "They need to be embraced with love and connected to positive energy," Green shared. During her career at Florida A&M University, a part of her responsibilities was to recruit students for graduate programs at FAMU. She said this allowed her to visit other Historically Black Colleges and Universities and see things about young people that many do not get a chance to see. Correcting some of their behaviors often led to them being receptive to her outreach and breaking through the layers of pain, hurt and self-doubt some carried around. Her response to them was to serve them and consequently she gained their trust and was able to see them successfully complete their master's and doctoral degrees.

Though many young people may be accepting of people trying to encourage them, it may be more challenging when it comes to providing help for older adults who have faced much more trauma that seems to be irrevocable. This mindset, integrated with a historical ideology of healing has been difficult to trust and its true effectiveness may not be reachable. Most adults who were living in the 60s, 70s and 80s were introduced to faith healers, televangelists and religious leaders who claimed their abilities would heal people. While Supervisor Green is not negating those practices, she stated, "Healing was so much more than what was televised."

In recent years, the concept of healing has been revisited and its identity reestablished as spiritually based versus being religiously based. Green offered advice for those who seek healing:

- People must pack away preconceived notions about healing.
- Spiritual questioning is ok because one must understand what true healing is.
- Healing is about discovering who you are as spiritual beings.
- Those seeking healing should embrace forgiveness of themselves and others.
- They should tap into not only bringing awareness to what they think is wrong with them needing changing or adjusting, but to also assess what is good and right about them. A great starting point for self-healing is self-compassion.

One of Green's goals was to write a meditation guide for mainly women who are married to ministers. The purpose of her proposed book would be to give these women an opportunity to share their own personal joys and pains of ministry by writing them in a space designed especially for them. She dreamed of writing a book to express that encouragement and provide opportunities for healing within a population of women who often shoulder the burdens and blessings of ministry. Although apprehensive about undertaking such a project, she began to speak into existence what she desired to do. Her book, "Life Behind the Veil: A Meditation Guide for Clergy Spouses," is a collection of thirty entries was borne out of a need to provide support for other ministers' spouses regardless of denomination. "Life Behind the Veil: A Meditation Guide for Clergy Spouses," can be ordered only from SHOPIFY: lifebehindtheveil.com.

YOUR HEALING JOURNEY

Articles by Jennifer Robinson



Jennifer Robinson

Healing is a journey that begins with you. I remember when I had an aha moment, to think of this tagline for the organization I founded in 2012. I was looking for a way to communicate to potential clients to the organization that when a person decides to begin their healing process, only they can decide when and how the journey will proceed. This is an intentional process. I have always been a spiritual person, but I didn't understand healing until I began my personal path to wellness in 2004. I was a broken person whose heart was empty and could not see past all my bad experiences. I had been a survivor of molestation and rape for many years, but still felt a void in my life. After the birth of my son in 2000, I knew that I had to take control of my life. I felt I was on a downward spiral of pain and degradation because I was experiencing depression and had attempted suicide. I had all these negative feeling because I had been a victim of sexual violence. Sexual violence leads to trauma, and it is trauma most survivors cannot describe. There are feelings of grief and loss as though there is a loss of a loved one. Technically, I did loose myself. I lost innocence and control. I lost mental and emotional stability. I lost purity and security. When those inner, intimate pieces of yourself are lost, it is challenging to trust anyone, including yourself. I was lost for many years until 2004, when a dear friend encouraged me to get counseling.

As I went through years of counseling, I learned that I was creating a path to find the identity I lost as a child. I was violated, belittled and made to feel less than human, so I had to first learn that I was worthy of life and love. Understanding that I was still a person was crucial to the healing journey. Learning that I had to love myself first was critical to forgiving those who violated me and to finding my identity again.

The path to healing is one that can be challenging. Revisiting the things that hurt you can be weary and feel ineffective; but there are points people should be aware of when the decision is made to start the journey.

The journey is unique. No one can tell another person how to heal. Each person much decide their personal goals and expected outcomes.

It will be hard. When a person breaks a bone, it hurts in the beginning. Then as it heals, there are days when it hurts, when it's uncomfortable, and it can be long. The end result is being pain free.

Don't rush the process. I was in therapy for nine years. After I finished therapy, I knew I had to continue fighting to stay well. That meant I had to be patient and work on all aspects of the pain I was feeling. Though I still have struggles from time to time, I know how to manage my thoughts and emotions. Practicing how to not let myself be overtaken by my emotions and support from friends helps me stay focused on positive outcomes.

Empowering yourself. Find things that you like to do that make you happy and engage in those things. I set out to earn my bachelor's and master's degree and I did. I set goals and I met them.

There is no perfect way to healing. It is about determination to have a healthy life. Having mental and emotional clarity are very sacred things and to experience them, the journey to healing begins with you. When will you start?

Women's
HISTORY MONTH

Women Providing Healing, Promoting Hope



SOCIAL WORK: A CHALLENGING BUT REWARDING CAREER

by Anna Bowman



Sharon Thomas

a dedicated liaison to help them navigate the medical landscape, which can be complex at times.

Sharon Thomas has had stellar career as a Licensed Social Worker for 30 plus years and the last 15 years have been as a Medical Social Worker with McLeod Regional Medical Center, in Florence, SC, and one of its satellite hospitals, McLeod Health Cheraw, in Cheraw, SC.

Thomas always knew she wanted to help people. “My parents instilled in me and my siblings that helping others is everyone’s calling, then help myself,” is how they were nurtured.

She initially thought she would become a psychologist, but her career path led her to work with several service-based agencies such as, the Department of Social Services and the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department, before venturing into her current position as a Medical Social Worker.

In her current position at the 50-bed acute care hospital in the Cheraw location, her primary focus is the well-being of geriatric patients and their families. “My primary duties are placement of patients in nursing homes, assisted living, and hospice facilities,” she said. “I also have to work with families of the patients to ensure that their loved ones are receiving optimum care while at the hospital and/or referred to other agencies for extended care services.”

As the principal social worker for the hospital, she is engaged in various areas of the hospital from the emergency room to discharge. Once a physician makes referral, Thomas provides crisis intervention and assists the patient in understanding the implications and complexities of the medical situation and how it may impact their lives. She meets with the patient to begin the interview process. Sometimes a family member can be the primary contact for the patient due to the nature of the patient’s medical/mental state, or if the patient requests the family member be present during the assessment process, whether it’s for short-term placement in a rehabilitation facility to the emotional and challenging journey of placement in hospice care. She readily admits, “My job is extremely challenging, but fulfilling when I assist patients.”

Thomas relies on her work experiences and her professional judgment to plan and accomplish goals for patients. She said that as a social worker, she must be open minded because she must work with so many personalities daily; she must have the fortitude to move forward with care for the patient, regardless of complex personalities. The patient’s well-being is her primary goal. And this includes being able to multi-task throughout her workday, as well. She must control the situation, instead of allowing the situation to control her emotions, which could

affect the outcome for the patient. “Social work is a rewarding, challenging job, however, it has been a blessing to serve those who need an advocate.”

Throughout her career, Thomas has established working relationships with various services-based agencies that can aid patients. “One of the most challenging parts of my job is working with individuals with no family members,” said Thomas. “When a patient is incapacitated, due to illnesses like Dementia or Alzheimer’s Disease, and not able to make decisions for themselves, we will have to work with the Department of Social Service’s Adult Protective Service, to protect vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation.”

She also works closely with the Department of Mental Health to ensure patients receive psychiatric services, as requested by a physician. But she admits, even though it’s rare, one of the most challenging situations she faces is a child being admitted to the emergency room. “They are so innocent,” she stated “These are the cases that really tug at my heart the most. Even though children are transferred after their diagnosis, it’s still emotional to see a child in need of specialized medical care,” she said.

Because the field of social work is an extremely emotional career, Thomas, who describes herself as a spiritual person, finds solace each day by repeating her daily prayer before starting her workday. “Each day, before I enter the hospital, I take a moment to pray,” she said. “My prayer may be simple, but it strengthens my soul.” Her daily prayer says, “Ok Lord, there’s nothing that you and I can’t handle!” “She is also the beneficiary of a wonderful sister that allows her to vent, if needed. “My sister – who is a dean of a college – and I are extremely close and speak each day,” she said. “She allows me to share my experiences with her, as she fills me in on her busy schedule, as well. We balance each other’s lives.”

Thomas, a Bennettsville native, is a graduate of Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, with a degree in sociology. She enjoys spending time with siblings, most of all with her nieces and nephews. An active member of Shiloh Baptist Church, in Bennettsville, she is a missionary and member of various auxiliaries within the church. Since being appointed in 1995, by former South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, Thomas has served on the Board of Elections for Marlboro County. She enjoys reading novels by John Grisham and Terrie McMillan, and biographies, “The Promise Land,” by former President Barack Obama, “Becoming,” by former First Lady Michelle Obama, and one of her favorite biographies, “True Compass” by the late Senator Edward Kennedy.



SERVICE AND EMPATHY IN SOCIAL WORK by Adalia Ellis



Ashley Elizabeth Holman

CHERAW - Ashley Elizabeth Holman is the healthy outcomes plan coordinator for McLeod Health Cheraw and Dillon locations. She focuses her attention on helping navigate the health care system and other social systems for underserved and indigent populations. Her desire to become a social worker is influenced by a time in her life when she needed help from others around her, but she wouldn't accept it. "My mother died

when I was sixteen. I was angry and angsty; my family and friends offered so many times to talk or go to a counselor, but I wouldn't. I was the suffer in silence type, but they never gave up. They stood in the gaps I created and when I was ready for change, they were there to help." This experience lit the desire inside of her to be an advocate for change and to be that helping hand for those who aren't fortunate enough to have a strong support system. She hopes to be that person when they are ready.

Holman recognizes all people have the capacity to change their own story. Social work gives people the tools that help them to save themselves. To have someone to listen without judgment and help recognize the answers are already within them. "Society has often led us to believe we need someone else to save us, but we have the ability to do this ourselves. Social workers play a strategic role in providing tools and resources for empowerment and change. I was fortunate enough to have social workers in my life at an early age that were able to show great compassion and empathy shaping the person I am today."

Her career goal, as she looks into her future work as a social worker, is to leave the world better than when she entered it. That she can help a single person, family or community to change their circumstances for the better is the lifetime achievement she aims for.

For Holman, this desire to serve is rooted in empathy and a willingness to listen is what she draws upon as she addresses the needs of particularly challenging demographics. She identifies two demographics that are difficult, reproductive health and chronic care management. "I recently had a patient I had been working with for nearly two years and every day was a new struggle for her. It seemed her challenges would just escalate without any relief. She was very reliant on her community resources, and she had many. Slowly, each resource would step out as she had not met care plan goals or a major disagreement with her and an assigned worker. We were the last in the ring fighting for her to have access to health care, legal aid, housing, transportation and other basic needs. Unfortunately, we too had to step back and allow this patient to take the tools and resources she had been given to advocate for herself." This was such a challenge because of the amount of time and energy invested and the feeling of failing her patient that came along with it. To put things into perspective, Holman welcomed advice from others in her field and she reflected on the experience. Through this process she came to understand that she had done everything she could, and it was her patient's turn to take all that was given to her to change her circumstances.

Holman is continuing to expand her knowledge and capacity to serve by attending Winthrop University as an MSW candidate. She will graduate in 2023, from their advanced-standing program.

What advice would she give to someone who is considering a career in social work? She would tell a new social worker to, "remain open. I had a very clear path I wanted to work with those struggling with addictions or Veterans. Though I may still do that in the future, public health kept presenting itself my senior year at Coker. I turned down several opportunities and thought I had slammed the door, but a mentor continued to push me to just give it a chance. I'm so thankful I allowed myself to open those doors. You never know where you could be called and led to serve within this field."

COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL WORK

by Anna Bowman



Alfonso K. Woodward, LMSW

Alfonso K. Woodward, LMSW, is a social worker with MUSC Health Florence Medical Center. He is a staunch advocate for his patients. His job responsibilities include communicating with nursing facilities about placement options; collaborating with fellow team members on how to effectively achieve discharge plans and helping families solve any social issues, which may present as barriers to a patient's successful discharge.

Woodward said he believes the best attribute of a true social worker lies in the fibers of themselves. In some ways, the social worker field begets individuals who are truly passionate about the well-being of others. "It's who we are," he said.

Since joining the MUSC Health team, Woodward has had opportunities to assist with many challenging cases. "The most challenging cases often are when a patient or family feels no one is advocating for what is in the patient's best interest," he said. "I welcome cases like this, because it allows me the opportunity to exercise one of my favorite skills, rapport building. Utilizing this skill not only builds trust but also affirms the patient and family," he acknowledged.

Woodward is always eager to share his wealth of knowledge with individuals new to the social work profession to help them succeed. "I would encourage any new social worker to approach all opportunities with a goal of putting themselves out of a job. We address a variety of challenges in the work we do," he stated. Additionally, he emphasized, "It's imperative in our objective, for the patient to be autonomous and independent. We do not only want to provide our patients with resources, but rather teach them how to access those resources."

Being a social worker is an awarding profession. Still, because of the sensitive nature of the job, it's important to balance one's personal life to be efficient in aiding others with their own life issues. Balancing work and private life can be difficult, but the key is planning and making good use of time away from work. As a veteran social worker, Woodward is aware of the importance of self-care and setting personal goals to safeguard his well-being. "Currently, my greatest accomplishment is being accepted into my Ph.D. program. The other degrees I have earned felt necessary for me to effectively serve underserved populations," he stated. "However, the decision to pursue this degree cements my dedication to the pursuit for change other social workers and human service professionals are working toward," he proudly stated.

APPRECIATING OUR SOCIAL WORKERS
The Time is Right for Social Work



LIZ KERSHNER REFLECTS ON FORTY-FIVE YEAR SOCIAL WORK CAREER WITH WISDOM

by Yvette Crawley



Liz Kershner

Liz Kershner, MSW, LISW-CP has served as the director of Behavioral Health for CareSouth Carolina, a federally qualified health center for the past 29 years. CareSouth serves Darlington, Lee, Dillon, Marlboro and Chesterfield Counties and is a comprehensive medical and behavioral health care facility, which provides a fully integrated approach to meeting the overall health needs of patients. At

CareSouth, patients can see a medical provider and a behavioral health care provider on the same day, in the same location. This enhances the opportunity for not only ease of access to services, but also for an integrated approach when patients want a team approach to their care. With the support of our CEO, Ann Lewis, and our Board of Directors it was my privilege to start our Integrated Behavioral Health department at CareSouth 29 years ago. This was long before most had heard of this approach to treating the whole person.

CareSouth has 18 licensed behavioral health providers, including master’s prepared clinical social workers, LPCs and developmental psychology. In addition to our office-based practices within the medical sites, we also provide school-based counseling services in Chesterfield County.

Why did you choose social work as a career?

“In 1974, at age 18, when I was heading off to college at WVU, I had no idea what a social worker was or what a career in social work could offer. I was editor of my high school paper and so I was journalism school bound. As fate would have it, the journalism professors did not do a good job of selling their program, so I was a bit lost as to what I was going to major in -- or do with the rest of my life. A friend told me about the School of Social Work at WVU. I met with the Dean of the MSW program and learned that with a degree in social work, I could provide direct patient mental health counseling or work in agency administration, write policy, teach social work -- the potential seemed endless. I was sold on a career in Social Work.”

As a social worker, what do you hope to achieve? Tell me about your most difficult case. What about it was so challenging?

“I will be retiring in January. My greatest accomplishments in the field of Social Work and mental health over the past 45 years has been the staff I have hired and trained along the way. I am honored to have a diverse clinical social work and counseling staff. This is crucial, as our patient population is also very diverse.” “I have been so fortunate to provide mental health care to a multitude of patients over the years, all of whom have brought meaning to my life, and I feel honored to have been a part of their care.”

What are some of the personal experiences — or compelling arguments that have influenced your thinking around gender and technology and have motivated you to get involved in being an advocate for change?

“It’s easy to think you are doing everything equitably, but the only way to know is to measure your outcomes. At CareSouth we have an extensive depression management program and before we had data management systems, decades ago, I would have said that all of our patients are getting great outcomes. Once we had the

technology to measure outcomes based on gender and race, we saw that some populations benefitted from additional follow-up or case management to achieve depression remission at the same rate as others.”

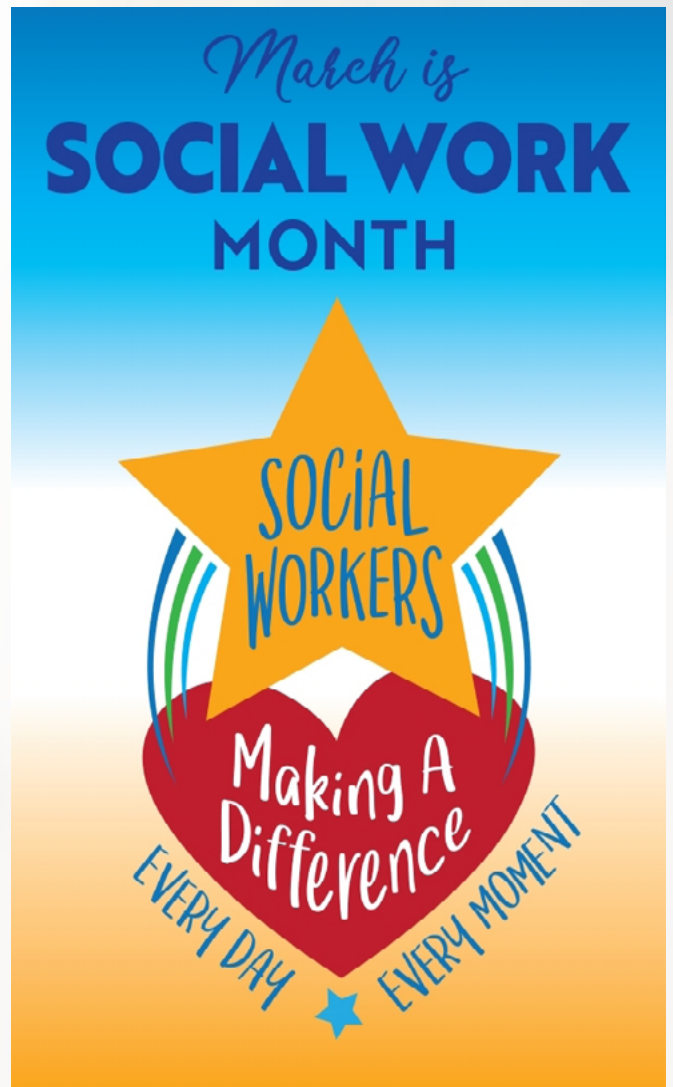
Which accomplishment are you proudest of, and why?

“A special interest of mine has been the impact of trauma, be it childhood, armed services related or adult life trauma, and how a history of trauma can sometimes lead to development of a substance use disorder. In addition to our integrated behavioral health counseling and school-based counseling services program at CareSouth, I am very proud of the growth of our substance disorder treatment programs over the past five years.”

If you could give a new social worker a tip that could help them succeed, what would it be and why?

“To meet people where they are, not where we think they should be. To understand that meeting someone where they are, means bridging a gap between our own expectations as therapists and those of the person we are helping. It means, not just listening to others, but listening to understand the other person’s values, needs, goals and especially their trauma related experiences. No one experiences trauma in exactly the same way.”

To schedule an appointment at CareSouth Carolina for a medical, behavioralhealth or substance use issue, please call 843-378-4501



DOES YOUR EMPLOYER OFFER ADEQUATE LIFE INSURANCE?



If your workplace offers life insurance at a low cost (or no cost) to you, you may assume it provides sufficient coverage for your family—and not bother to give the subject a second thought. According to the 2021 Insurance Barometer study, 57% of U.S. workers rely on their workplace for life insurance.¹ But you owe it to yourself, and your family, to make a careful assessment. You may find that the coverage offered by your employer, welcome as it is, won't actually cover your family's future needs.

Here's how to figure out whether your employer offers adequate coverage for you:

First, find out how much coverage is offered.

Your workplace's group life insurance may be included in your benefits package—and you may be automatically enrolled—which makes it very convenient. However, it's worthwhile to do a careful review of the coverage. The amount your employer offers may start at \$25,000 and range up to your annual salary. And it probably will not take care of your life insurance needs.

Second, assess your family's long-term needs.

Once you get married—or if you have dependents—you will probably want to increase your coverage. So that \$25,000 policy may not seem like much once you sit down to do the math and figure out your needs five, 10, or 20 years down the line. You'll probably want to make sure there's enough coverage to pay off a mortgage, send your kids to college, or help your spouse comfortably retire. (It is often recommended that insurance coverage be five to 10 times your annual salary.)

Even if you're single, the group policy through your workplace

may not be enough after you consider the potential total of your final expenses. Furthermore, if you have a co-signer for a mortgage, car loan, or student loans, remember that the burden will probably rest with your co-signer should something happen to you.²

What happens if you change jobs?

Long gone are the days when people expected to stay at the same job for 30 years. A study from IBM's Institute for Business Value found that 1 in 5 employees voluntarily changed employers in 2020.³

But if you job hop, you'll lose your workplace insurance when you leave the company. And while you may be able to convert the group life insurance policy from your old employer into an individual policy, the cost of that coverage could go up significantly.

Look into options to supplement your coverage. If you find your employer's group life to be insufficient, you may want to add supplemental coverage.

Concerned that you can't afford it? According to LIMRA, more than half of Americans estimate that life insurance will cost three times as much as it actually does.⁴ You'll need to balance your family's needs with the cost of insurance. But if you look into your options for a supplemental policy, you may find that life insurance is more affordable than you think.

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SATTERWHITE JOINS ABB

Articles submitted by Michele Rogers, Brand Ambassador



Trip Satterwhite

MULLINS— Anderson Brothers Bank is pleased to announce Tripp Satterwhite has joined as Mortgage Loan Officer. Tripp's responsibilities include originating residential mortgage loans and representing Anderson Brothers Bank in the local community by promoting our products and services to existing and future clients as well as business professionals such as real estate agents and home builders.

Satterwhite is a graduate of UNC-Wilmington where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Physical Education. He later received his Masters in School Administration and his Master of Arts in Sports Administration from UNC-Pembroke. He has served as vice president for the South Carolina Athletic Administrators Association.

Having spent the majority of his career as a professional educator, Satterwhite is excited to make the transition into mortgage lending. Possessing a result driven personal commitment to excellence, his ability to easily develop relationships with the community, strong analytical skills and his enthusiasm for helping others, he will be an asset to the Anderson Brothers Bank team.

"We feel very fortunate to be able to hire a professional like Tripp Satterwhite," said Tim McCoy, vice president Mortgage Banking. "Tripp's leadership skills and involvement and commitment to his community make him a great fit for Anderson Brothers Bank. We have no doubt he will be a valuable representative of ABB and our Mortgage Division for years to come."



ANDERSON
BROTHERS BANK

BUSINESS FINANCIAL TIPS FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Being a woman in business has its rewards and challenges. Accessing capital has historically been a challenge for female entrepreneurs. Although the Women's Business Ownership Act that passed in 1988 removed the requirement for a female entrepreneur to have a male cosigner when taking out a business loan, women-owned businesses are less likely to apply for new credit when they need it for fear of being denied, according to a report by the National Women's Business Council.

To help women in business finance their companies; here are some helpful resources from Anderson Brothers Bank, as well as funding options available to female entrepreneurs.

Free Training for Women Entrepreneurs

The Small Business Administration offers several programs for women in business through its Office of Women's Business Ownership to teach women entrepreneurs how to get federal contracts and access to capital or credit. It also offers general business counseling and training through local SBA district offices. Find your local SBA District Office to take advantage of this free training and consulting.

The SBA's Office of Women's Business Ownership oversees the Women's Business Centers to help female entrepreneurs start and grow their business. This is a free service that provides a range of training opportunities designed to help level the playing field for women in business. Find your local Women's Business Center or similar resource in South Carolina, Georgia or North Carolina:

- Women's Business Center of South Carolina
- South Carolina Women in Business
- ACE Women's Business Center (Norcross, GA)
- Women's Business Center of North Carolina

Anderson Brothers Bank offers a number of business lending options and can help you determine which is right for you. Learn more about our business loans or contact us to get started.

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HEALTH GOALS BURNING A HOLE IN YOUR WALLET



The key to improving your personal wellness might be as simple as a trip to your favorite store. According to a new national survey, two-thirds of Americans say they would be more motivated to pursue a healthy lifestyle if they were rewarded for doing so.

Most respondents, 56 percent, agreed financial rewards, such as gift cards or significant discounts to their favorite store or website would motivate them to make healthier choices. Free self-care/beauty products and treatments, 48 percent, household essentials 45 percent, treats and snacks 42 percent and cash 41 percent rewards were also selected as highly incentivizing. Less motivating were concert tickets, medals, trophies and sporting event tickets, all less than 20 percent. The survey also found Americans have a hard time balancing wellness and financial priorities, and most worry that these goals are often at odds.

“The survey reinforces what we’ve heard directly from customers and patients - people want resources that benefit both their personal and financial well-being,” said Maria Smith, vice president of payments & financial services at Walgreens. “Walgreens strives to help those we serve save money and be well. For example, the new myWalgreens Credit Card provides up to 10 percent Walgreens Cash rewards on purchases that support personal wellness.”

Three tips to benefit your health and financial wellness:

- **Plan to spend, save and splurge**
Prepare for success by planning for splurges and surprise spending:
- **To Spend**
Write down everyday expenses and plan on those dollars flowing

in and out of your accounts. Examples are housing, transportation, groceries, health care and childcare.

- **To Save**

Ideally, we save in three buckets - for emergencies (loss of work or unanticipated car repairs), for retirement and finally for splurges like a dream vacation, new piece of fitness equipment or down payment on a new home. When planned for, spending on splurges can be as beneficial to our well-being as anything else.

- **Find and use tools that reward you for the life you live, and the life you want**

No matter your goals, the path to success likely starts exactly where you are with small changes. With that in mind, look for tools that will benefit your life as it currently is, while also rewarding and incentivizing you to make daily decisions and help you achieve your goals. Walgreens launched the myWalgreens Credit Card with this strategy in mind. Cardholders can earn up to 10 percent back in Walgreens Cash rewards on better-for-you Walgreens branded purchases and everyday essentials that compare to national brands. The myWalgreens Credit Card also delivers rewards when shopping at the grocery store, on monthly gym memberships, pharmacy purchases and medical co-pays.

- **Set goals and be prepared to modify**

Acknowledge and accept that the path to personal and financial wellness won't be a straight one. Identify your goal, plan your path and also be prepared to modify. Slow down when unforeseen challenges arise and ramp up your efforts when you have momentum. By establishing good habits at the onset, you'll be more equipped to face obstacles that may arise.

For more information on the myWalgreens Credit Card or to apply, visit [Walgreens.com/creditcard](https://www.walgreens.com/creditcard).

HOPEHEALTH WELCOMES NEW PROVIDERS

Articles submitted by HopeHealth



Kathleen Budde, MSN, FNP-BC

Kathleen Budde, MSN, FNP-BC, joins HopeHealth in Manning, where she serves rheumatology patients with Dr. J. Harrell Docherty, Jr. Budde earned a Master of Science in Nursing-Family Nurse Practitioner from Francis Marion University and a Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of South Carolina.

Budde is board certified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center and is a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and the Association of Rheumatology Professionals.



Vicky Peterkin, MSW, LISW-CP

Vicky Peterkin, MSW, LISW-CP a behavioral health consultant joins the Medical Plaza in Florence.

Peterkin graduated from the University of South Carolina with a Master of Social Work and from the College of Charleston with a Bachelor of Science in sociology.

A Florence native, Peterkin has experience in treating depression, anxiety, adjustment disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder.



Anita McDaniel, LPC

Anita McDaniel, LPC, behavioral health counselor joins the Medical Plaza in Florence.

McDaniel graduated from Auburn University in Auburn, AL with a Bachelor of Science in family and child development and from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, TX with a Master of Arts in marriage and family therapy.

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 nearly 60,000 patients. To become a patient, call 843-667-9414 or visit hope-health.org.

HRSA RECOGNIZES HOPEHEALTH

HopeHealth has been recognized by the Health Resources & Services Administration “for notable quality improvement achievements in the areas of access, quality, health equity and health information technology,” based on data from the 2020 calendar year. HopeHealth was awarded community health center quality recognition badges in three areas:



Overall clinical quality measure performance - Silver

For achieving the best overall clinical quality measure performance among all health centers. Gold is the top 10 percent of all centers; silver, the top 11-20 percent and bronze, the top 21-30 percent.



Advancing Health Information Technology for Quality

Meet all criteria to optimize HIT services that advance telehealth, patient engagement, interoperability and collection of social determinants of health to increase access to care and advance quality of care.



Patient Centered Medical Home Recognition

Achieve PCMH recognition in one or more delivery sites. PCMH recognition patient treatment is coordinated through a primary

care physician to ensure the necessary care is provided when and where needed and in a manner the patient can understand. There are five core principles and functions provided by a PCMH:

- comprehensive care
- a patient-centered approach
- coordinated care
- accessibility of services
- quality and safety

Community health centers annually report a core set of information, including data on patient characteristics, services provided, clinical processes and health outcomes, patients' use of services, staffing, costs and revenues as part of a standardized reporting system known as the UDS. More information on the data can be found at data.hrsa.gov.

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HOPEHEALTH - FIRST IN SOUTH CAROLINA TO IMPLEMENT ACCUVAX® AND ACCUSHELF®

The longstanding organization in South Carolina, HopeHealth, has become the first in the state to select TruMed® Systems, a vaccine and inventory management company, to assist them in their continued efforts to deliver safe, high-quality care to the people in their communities.

HopeHealth leverages TruMed's AccuVax and AccuShelf solutions, which safeguards its vaccine inventory, including COVID-19 vaccine supply, performs seamless transfers to sites and accurately tracks each dose from receipt to administration.

The AccuVax Vaccine Management System protects vaccines with ideal temperature control and saves time with workflow efficiencies, while AccuShelf Inventory Management streamlines inventory control for all medications and supplies throughout multiple HopeHealth clinics. HopeHealth always strives to improve patient health by providing quality primary health care services to their community. With AccuVax and AccuShelf requiring confirmation of the correct dose to the correct patient, safety is further enhanced for every one of HopeHealth's patients.

“As we continue our commitment to our patients, the AccuVax and AccuShelf units will ensure precise storage conditions for vaccines, prevent loss, and provide an additional layer of protection against medical errors. These units will be a great resource and will enhance the delivery of safe and effective care to our patients,” said Dr. Ed Behling, chief medical officer. “TruMed's products also allow us to build on our quality and safety efforts by safeguarding vaccines for effective immunizations, standardizing workflows for efficiency and safety, accurately tracking down to the dose and reducing loss and waste for cost savings.”

There are nine HopeHealth locations currently using a combination of AccuVax and AccuShelf products daily. In addition to supporting their daily patient care, AccuVax and AccuShelf are being used to support COVID-19 immunization efforts throughout SC communities. To learn more, visit www.TruMedSystems.com.

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MUSC HEALTH FLORENCE ANNOUNCES LUNG CANCER SCREENING PROGRAM

Submitted by Whitney Johnson, AGACNP-BC



Whitney Johnson, AGACNP-BC

MUSC Health Florence Medical Center is excited to announce the introduction of our Lung Cancer Screening Program. Lung cancer is the second most common cancer and the primary cause of cancer-related death in people in the United States. Unfortunately, lung cancer symptoms are often masked or overlooked until the cancer is advanced and much harder to treat successfully. The MUSC Health Lung Cancer Screening Program, in partnership with MUSC Hollings Cancer Center, has proven to be an excellent public health initiative. Health care providers have seen great success in the MUSC Health Charleston and Lancaster Divisions. The program is being offered at the MUSC Health Florence Medical Center for patients in the Pee Dee region to include Florence, Marion and other communities.

The lung cancer screening program offers low-dose spiral computed tomography for high-risk adults. The National Lung Screening Trial has shown these screening scans to decrease a patient's risk of dying from lung cancer by detecting the disease earlier than

current screening methods.

Any patient with the following risk factors is a good candidate for our Lung Cancer Screening Program:

- Patients aged 50-77.
- Have a 20 pack-year smoking history (1 pack per day for 20 years) or more and
- Currently a smoker or quit within the last 15 years.

The Program's approach to treatment incorporates a multidisciplinary team that will track high-risk and pulmonary nodule patient's disease state. Once a patient has undergone a CT scan, our team will guide them through the steps of care and intervention. Along with our screening scans, we provide smoking cessation counseling for all current smokers and work alongside the Tobacco Cessation Program to help patients at all stages of their smoking cessation journey.

Providers who wish to refer at-risk patients for the Lung Cancer Screening Program call MUSC Health – Pulmonology at 843-673-7529 or fax a referral to 843-673-7532. Our team will be happy to review your at-risk patients and provide the care needed to prevent and detect Lung Cancer.

MUSC HEALTH FLORENCE MEDICAL CENTER NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED

Submitted by John Russell, Marketing and Media Relations Manager



MUSC Health Florence Medical Center received an "A" Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade for fall 2021. This national distinction recognizes achievements in protecting patients from harm and error

in the hospital. It is also the ninth consecutive time MUSC Health Florence Medical Center has received an "A" rating from Leapfrog.

"I am proud of all our care team members who work tirelessly to ensure patient safety," said MUSC Health Florence Division CEO Jay Hinesley. "This announcement is a true measure of our successful efforts to keep patients safe and continue offering the best healthcare possible in the Pee Dee region."

The Leapfrog Group, an independent national watchdog organization, assigns an "A," "B," "C," "D" or "F" grade to general hospitals across the country based on over thirty national performance measures reflecting errors, injuries, accidents and infections, as well as systems hospitals have in place to prevent harm.

"This announcement represents the high level of care we provide to our patients," said MUSC Health Florence Division CMO Dr. Rami Zebian. "Our community can take pride in knowing that when they come to MUSC Health Florence they will be treated safely. All of our care team members deserve praise for the part they play in providing patient care at such a high level."

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade is the only hospital ratings program based exclusively on hospital prevention of medical errors and harms to patients. The grading system is peer-reviewed, fully transparent and free to the public. Grades are updated twice annually, in the fall and spring.

"An 'A' Safety Grade is a tremendous achievement, of which this community should be extremely proud," said Leah Binder, president and chief executive officer of The Leapfrog Group. "I thank the leadership and workforce of MUSC Health Florence Medical Center for its commitment to prioritizing patients and their safety, especially during these trying times."

To see the full grade details and to access patient tips for staying safe in the hospital, visit HospitalSafetyGrade.org and follow The Leapfrog Group on Twitter and Facebook.

About MUSC Health

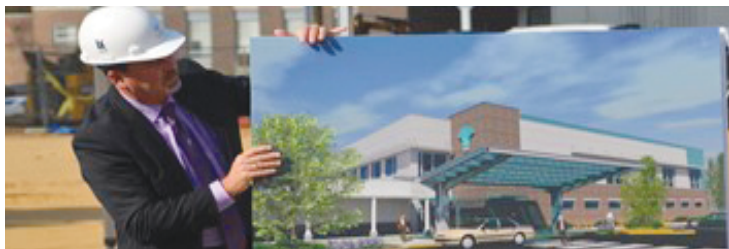
Founded in 1824 in Charleston, MUSC is home to the oldest medical school in the South as well as the state's only integrated academic health sciences center, with a unique charge to serve the state through education, research and patient care. Each year, MUSC educates and trains more than 3,000 students and nearly 800 residents in six colleges: Dental Medicine, Graduate Studies, Health Professions, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy. MUSC brought in more than \$271 million in biomedical research funds in fiscal year 2020, continuing to lead the state in obtaining National Institutes of Health funding, with more than \$129.9 million. For information on academic programs, visit muscd.edu.

As the clinical health system of the Medical University of South Carolina, MUSC Health is dedicated to delivering the highest quality and safe patient care while training generations of compassionate, competent health care providers to serve the people of South Carolina and beyond. Close to 25,000 care team members provide care for patients at 14 hospitals with approximately 2,500 beds and five additional hospital locations in development, more than 300 telehealth sites and nearly 750 care locations situated in the Lowcountry, Midlands, Pee Dee and upstate regions of South Carolina. In 2021, for the seventh consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the number one hospital in South Carolina. To learn more about clinical patient services, visit muschealth.org.



MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets of \$4.4 billion. The more than 25,000 MUSC team members include world-class faculty, physicians, specialty providers and scientists who deliver groundbreaking education, research, technology and patient care.

GENESIS HEALTH CARE HOST GROUNDBREAKING Submitted by Genesis Health Care



Howard Nettles, Director of Community Outreach and Recruiting at Genesis, sharing building plans for the Pee Dee expansion.

DARLINGTON- Genesis Health Care, a Federally Qualified Health Center serving the Pee Dee region of South Carolina, broke ground for the expansion of its Pee Dee Health Care location on Monday, Dec. 6 at 11:30 a.m. The Darlington community was invited to join the Genesis staff in commemorating this event at Pee Dee Health Care.

“We are elated to begin the expansion of our Pee Dee Health Care center,” said Howard Nettles, director of Community Outreach and Recruiting at Genesis. “This renovation will not only allow us the opportunity to better serve our current patients but will also provide us the space to continue expanding our services to more friends and neighbors throughout the Darlington region and beyond.”

Pee Dee Health Care, PA was originally founded in Darlington, SC in 1974 by Dr. Josiah Matthews. It became Genesis Health Care, Inc., a nonprofit community health center, in 2010 when Dr. Matthews and Dr. Alexander Cohen donated the practices to the community. Since that time, Genesis, under the guidance of its board of directors, has maintained its commitment to provide superior care to all members of its communities regardless of their ability to pay.

The groundbreaking was Monday, Dec. 6, 2021, will mark the start

of an expansion that has been planned in two phases. Phase one is anticipated to be completed by Oct. 1, 2022, and will cost around \$10 million, including the expansion of an additional 28,000 square feet for the site along with a new parking lot.

Phase two will immediately follow, including the movement of the site’s pharmacy, the addition of a space for ill patients and expansion of the health care center as a whole to accommodate more patients. Phase two of the Pee Dee Health Care expansion is estimated to cost approximately \$2 million.

Genesis’ Pee Dee Health Care provides a wide variety of health care services to Darlington and its surrounding community. For more information on Genesis and its services, visit www.genesisfghc.org. About Genesis Health Care, Inc.

Genesis Health Care is a nonprofit Federally Qualified Health Center, with locations in Darlington, Olanta, Florence, Lamar and Walterboro, SC. Genesis is deeply rooted in the communities in which it operates and is committed to improving the health of all individuals through prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation and education. For more information, visit www.genesisfghc.org and follow Genesis on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.



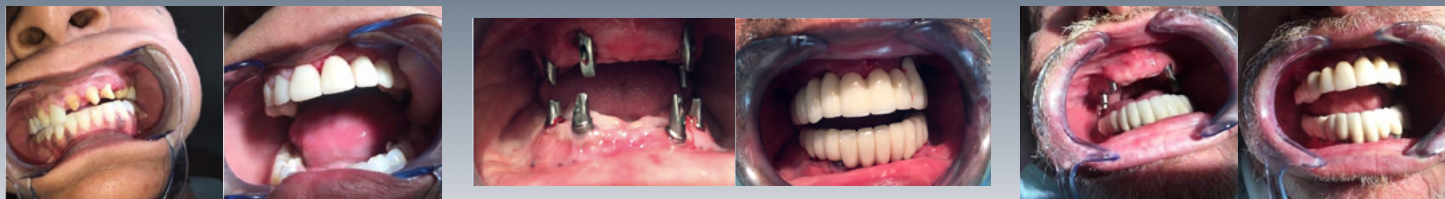
(l to r) Dr. Alexander Cohen, chief Medical Officer; Ruthie Matthews, wife of the late Dr. Josiah Matthews and T.C. Sawyer, Genesis chairman of the board breaking ground on site.



Pee Dee Dental Group
DR. CHARLES R. CONNER JR., DDS



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His practice attracts patients from all over the country to the Florence area.

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HOPEHEALTH EARNS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Submitted by HopeHealth



The American Heart Association and American Medical Association celebrate HopeHealth for commitment to prioritizing blood pressure control Submitted by HopeHealth

HopeHealth has been recognized by the American Heart Association and American Medical Association for their commitment to helping

improve blood pressure control rates among the patient populations we serve, earning silver level recognition as part of the 2021 “Target: BP” Recognition Program.

The Silver Award recognizes practices that have demonstrated a commitment to improving blood pressure control through measurement accuracy.

“Being recognized by the AHA and AMA for our efforts in the treatment and management of high blood pressure is a tremendous achievement,” said Tammy Garris, clinical data controller at HopeHealth. “The providers and staff of HopeHealth have taken on the challenge of treating hypertension in our patients through evidence-based care that includes medications, nutrition counseling and physical activity counseling. Recognition at this level, during a global pandemic and at a time when so many medical staff are overwhelmed, brings with it a renewed sense of accomplishment and purpose, something we all need after the last year.”

Hypertension high BP is a leading risk factor for heart attacks, strokes and preventable death in the U.S. In addition, there are 121.5 million U.S. adults living with high BP and less than half of those people have their BP under control – making both diagnosing and effectively managing hypertension critical. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that heart disease and stroke continue to kill more people in the U.S. than other causes.

“Hypertension is the most common chronic disease treated at HopeHealth,” said Dr. Edward Behing, HopeHealth chief medical officer. “Our partnerships with the AHA and the AMA have enhanced our ability to assess and treat high blood pressure. I am proud of the compassionate team at HopeHealth that provides excellent care for the patients who trust us with their health!”

Target: BP is a national collaboration between the AHA and the AMA aimed at reducing the number of Americans who suffer from heart attacks and strokes each year by urging physician practices, health systems and patients to prioritize BP control. The initiative aims to help health care organizations improve blood pressure control rates through use of AMA MAP BP™ evidence-based protocols and recognizes HopeHealth’s commitment to improving blood pressure control.

The program celebrates physician practices and health systems, who treat patients with hypertension, for achieving BP control rates at or above 70 percent within the populations they serve. These achievements will ultimately lead to a reduction in the number of Americans who suffer heart attacks and strokes. Learn more at [TargetBP.org](https://www.targetbp.org).

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New Locations!

HopeHealth has expanded to Pine Needles Road in Florence and recently opened a new location in Hemingway!

HopeHealth on Pine Needles Road

3380 Pine Needles Road
Florence, SC 29501

Accepting New Patients!

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HopeHealth in Hemingway

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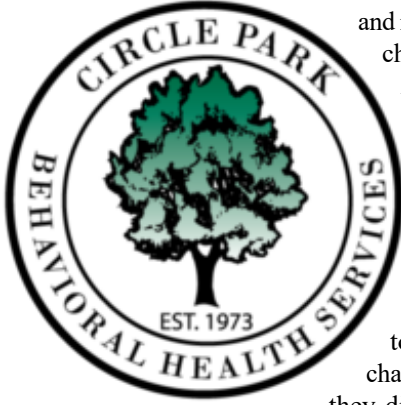
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hope-health.org

THE COST OF ALCOHOL MISUSE: IS IT WORTH THE RISK?

Submitted by Circle Park Behavioral Health Services



A new year signifies a fresh start and new beginning to make positive changes that improve our lives.

At the start of the new year, individuals feel more motivated to accomplish their goals and pursue their dreams. Lifestyle modifications, such as exercising more, improving diet, saving money and losing weight are almost always at the top of everyone's lists. These changes are so meaningful because

they directly impact our health and happiness. However, with alcohol

consumption having risen during the pandemic, it is also important to be mindful of substance use in the new year, given the many health, safety and financial risks of irresponsible alcohol use.

Alcohol continues to be the most used and abused drug in the U.S., with over 95,000 Americans dying from alcohol use every year. Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to many long-term health issues, including high blood pressure, cancer, liver disease, weakened immune system and mental health problems. Heavy drinking can also lead to injuries, accidents, violence and even alcohol poisoning that can result in death. However, excessive drinking also comes with a serious financial burden. Fines for DUIs in South Carolina range from \$992 for a first offense up to \$13,234 for a third offense, along with possible imprisonment and suspension/permanent revocation of your driver's license. If great bodily injury or death occurs, these fines

range from \$21,119 to \$52,244. It is also important to consider the financial impact of subsequent unemployment due to this offense. On an even more personal scale, an individual battling alcoholism spends between \$3,300 - \$5,500 on alcohol every year, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report. This means that an individual could spend almost \$30,000 on alcohol over the course of five years. On a much larger scale, the costs attributed to alcohol abuse add up to \$249 billion in the U.S., with 11 percent going to health care expenses and 10 percent going to law and justice costs. When it comes to underage drinking, an individual can also face fines, jail time and an alcohol prevention/intervention programs, all of which have their own associated costs. Overall, the costs attributed to underage drinking add up to around \$24.3 billion.

Given these substantial costs, drinking responsibly is an important way to watch our wallets and safeguard our health as we venture into the New Year. The consequences of these issues not only affect the individual but their loved ones, friends and family. Therefore, being committed to making smart choices is a great way to protect the safety of the community. As shared by psychiatrist Glenn Miller, "The New Year is a great time to look at the changes we would like to make in our lives and how to accomplish them. A resolution is like a promise to us to improve our lives and to make the New Year a better one for ourselves and others." Adults should exercise caution when consuming alcohol and parents must be proactive in keeping alcohol away from underage youth.

For information regarding substance abuse treatment, prevention and intervention services, call Circle Park at 843-665-9349 or visit www.circlepark.com.

Underage Drinking

ARE YOU WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE?



843-665-9349
www.circlepark.com

Developed with funding from the federal Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Block Grant (#3B08TI010048-1851).

HOW TO SUPPORT THE CAREGIVERS IN YOUR LIFE Submitted by Andrew Boardwine, communications specialist



CareSouth Carolinas was honored with the Community Hero Award by SC-DHEC for its partnership to provide COVID-19 testing and vaccinations to the community.

HARTSVILLE- CareSouth Carolina has dedicated itself to being a safe place and a health care home for its patients with the mission of, enhancing the health and wellbeing of everyone.

As soon as the COVID-19 vaccine became available, CareSouth Carolina recognized the importance of providing as much access as possible to getting shots in arms and arming those who were unsure about the vaccine with as much knowledge as possible.

The Roll Up Your Sleeves Campaign targeted those who were unsure of the COVID-19 vaccination and looked to address many misconceptions about the vaccine while offering encouragement from trusted individuals in our community, particularly those who may not have as many opportunities to the vaccine as possible.

Through videos, trusted community leaders such as pastors, providers, politicians, community advocates and many others shared why they decided to get the COVID-19 vaccine. We had providers talk about the science behind the vaccine and address many questions that have been asked frequently by patients and those considering the vaccine.

“We’ve been reaching out to the faith-based community, as well as other local and civic organizations and local delegations to make everyone aware that the vaccine is available,” CareSouth Carolina Chief of Community Health Joe Bittle said. “It’s important that we all get the vaccine and that no one gets left out. We want everyone to have access to this vaccine.” Our community outreach team began passing out flyers, doorknockers, and spending time educating those who have questions, and partnering with community organizations with one major goal in mind: To distribute as much of the COVID-19 vaccine as possible.

CareSouth Carolina Director of Social and Community Services, Marek Calhoun spoke with nationally acclaimed Listener Poet, Elizabeth Pringle to produce a work for ‘The Good Listening Project.’

In this project, Calhoun shared his thoughts on the division that has swept across the country and the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Good Listening Project began when Co-Founder Frankie Abralind combined his passion for healthcare with his hobby of writing custom poetry for people he talked with on the street in Washington, D.C. Abralind quickly learned that the gift he was giving was the listening. When thoughtful listeners hold space, people feel heard and understood, and the experience is often cathartic.

In 2018, Abralind and the first Listener Poet, Elle Klassen launched the signature Listener Poet program and began to grow the team. Today, the organization delivers healing arts programs in-person and remotely to organizations across the continent. The Good Listening Project has worked with more than 25 partners, including premier medical institutions such as Johns Hopkins and the Mayo Clinic, and have served more than 2,000 individuals. For more information, please visit <https://goodlistening.org>. In all of this, CareSouth Carolina has worked to address health disparities in our community and provide access to everyone.

Convenient Locations:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Bennettsville Center
999 Cheraw Street
Bennettsville, SC 29512
843.479.2341 | Hartsville Center
1268 S. Fourth Street
Hartsville, SC 29550
843.332.2422
843.339.5520 Chiropractic |
| Bennettsville Pediatric Center
210 W. Main Street
Bennettsville, SC 29512
843.479.1200 | Lake View Center
103 N. Kemper Street
Lake View, SC 29563
843.759.2189 |
| Bennettsville Women's Center
1076 Marlboro Way, Suite 1
Bennettsville, SC 29512
843.454.2294 | Latta Center
122 Latimer Street
Latta, SC 29565
843.627.6252 |
| Bishopville Center
545 Sumter Highway
Bishopville, SC 29010
803.484.5317 | McColl Health & Wellness Center
3080 Highway 15-401 E
McColl, SC 29570
843.523.5751 |
| Bishopville Pediatric Dental
101 Harris Street
Bishopville, SC 29010
866.815.9845 | Society Hill Center
737 S. Main Street
Society Hill, SC 29593
843.378.4501 |
| Cheraw Center
715 S. Doctors Drive Suite E
Cheraw, SC 29520
843.537.0961 | Public Employee Health Services - Marlboro County
100 Matheson Street
Bennettsville, SC 29512
843.456.7752 |
| Chesterfield Center
204 Perry Wiley Way
Chesterfield, SC 29709
843.623.5080 | |
| Dillon Center
207 E. Monroe Street
Dillon, SC 29536
843.774.4337 | |

Pharmacy Locations:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| HARTSVILLE
1280 S. Fourth Street
843.339.5530 | BISHOPVILLE
545 Sumter Hwy
803.588.7960 | BENNETTSVILLE
999 Cheraw Street
843.456.7777 |
| SOCIETY HILL
737 S. Main Street
843.378.4148 | CHERAW
715 S. Doctors Drive, Ste. A
843.865.4080 | |
| LATTA
122 Latimer Street
843.627.6261 | CHESTERFIELD
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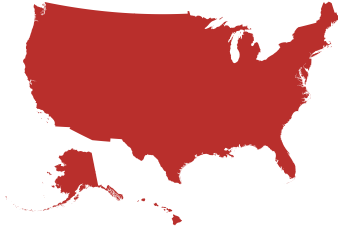
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GET THE FACTS ON HEART HEALTH

Heart Disease is the leading cause of death

for men and women in the U.S.



One person dies from heart disease in the U.S. every



36 seconds



Approximately **2 in 10 deaths** from Coronary Artery Disease happen in adults

less than 65 years old

Someone has a heart attack every

4 seconds



in the U.S.

Approx. 10% of heart attacks are fatal

Approximately

1 in 5 heart attacks are silent

- meaning the heart damage is done but the person is not aware of it

The **average age** a person will have a heart attack



men is 65

women is 72



The **American Heart Association** estimates that **48% of the U.S. population** has some type of heart disease.



Visit McLeodHeart.org for more information.

McLeod Health








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SAVE A LIFE. ACT FAST.

Knowledge is the key to helping someone survive a heart attack. It's important to be able to recognize heart attack symptoms and to act fast by performing CPR.



Know The Symptoms of a Heart Attack.

-  Pain or discomfort in the chest
-  Jaw, neck or back pain
-  Discomfort or pain in arms or shoulder
-  Lightheadedness, fainting or weakness
-  Shortness of breath
-  Nausea and/or vomiting
-  Excessive sweating



To see how to properly perform Hands-Only CPR, watch the how-to video at McLeodCPR.org.



Call 911 - Don't wait more than 5 minutes



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MUSC BROADENS APPROACH TO LGBTQ INCLUSION

An abbreviated version of an article by Leslie Cantu



Chase Glenn

CHARLESTON-A growing body of research is showing that members of the LGBTQ community tend to have worse health outcomes. As part of its mission to reduce health disparities in South Carolina, the Medical University of South Carolina is increasing its focus on providing culturally competent care to this community as well as looking inward, as an employer, at how to ensure all staff feels comfortable.

Chase Glenn, who was hired last spring as MUSC's first director of LGBTQ+ Health Services and Enterprise Resources, is a big

part of this updated focus, but he'll be the first to say that many others on campus are passionate about this issue and are leading efforts in their areas.

An example was the Culturally Sensitive Care Workshop held in October 2021. Now in its fourth year, the 2021 edition focused on LGBTQ issues.

Glenn says that personal pronouns are one example of how providers can either build or break trust with LGBTQ patients, even if they've come in for an issue unrelated to sexuality or gender – a broken leg, for example.

"If it's a broken leg and you misgender someone, and you call them by the name that they very clearly don't use, you're starting off – well, you're starting off on the wrong foot," he said. "And then, right out of the gate, you're having to repair that sort of interaction and recover. So, some of this is just really basic respect and compassion when it comes to how we're interacting with patients."

In his six months at MUSC, Glenn has been getting to know what's already in place across the statewide MUSC system as well as working on some long-term goals that date back to when he was

executive director of the Alliance for Full Acceptance. Those include getting MUSC Health back onto the Human Rights Campaign's Healthcare Equality Index and including data about sexual orientation and gender in Epic, MUSC Health's electronic medical record system.

Glenn has also applied for MUSC Health's inclusion on the Healthcare Equality Index. "The index, which grades facilities based on an array of policies and procedures related to patients, employees, visitors and community engagement, offers a road map for some areas that MUSC could still work on," Glenn said. Overall, he is pleased with how seriously hospital leaders view this issue.

"Leadership has been clear that participating in the Healthcare Equality Index is not necessarily about a certification. It's not about being able to put a badge on our website. It's really about taking us on this journey to improving the care and our work with LGBTQ folks," Glenn said.

Glenn is also waiting on a report from The Fenway Institute's National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center, which will be developing cultural competency training customized to MUSC's needs, with the goal of LGBTQ patients feeling comfortable interacting with anyone on campus, rather than being directed to specific providers who are known to be LGBTQ-friendly.

The Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is planning a virtual LGBTQ health care conference for April 7-8 targeting health care providers and students throughout South Carolina.

"LGBTQ identity is an important part of someone's health profile and knowing this information can in fact impact the care that they receive," Glenn said. "If we really are committed to providing the highest quality of care and meeting patients where they are, then this is an important part of that process."

Full article available at <https://web.musc.edu/about/news-center/2021/11/23/musc-broadens-approach-to-lgbtq-inclusion>.



At MUSC we are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion.

In the spirit of our new enterprise strategy, OneMUSC, we are reimagining with renewed energy and clarity of purpose, our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. We are committed to leveraging differences and building inclusion to create an academic health care community, which allows people to understand and be understood. As we look toward the future, we must not tire from this hard work, and we must lead the way as a model for inclusion and engagement.

We must be our best selves.

MUSC is implementing a series of strategic initiatives to eliminate health care disparities, build MUSC leadership, students, and workforce to reflect our communities, and elevate a culture of "OneMUSC".



RUBICON TAKES A LOOK BACK AT 2021

Submitted by Theresa M. Curtis, Director of Prevention Services



Pictures from Halloween Carnival

HARTSVILLE- Happy January!! We hope everyone had a wonderful, productive, and relaxing holiday.

In 2021, Rubicon was the proud recipient of a \$65,000 State Opioid Response Grant for Recovery Community Organization Services. This grant provided funds to support implementation and continuance of recovery-based initiatives and programs to prevent opioid and stimulant misuse, and to reduce the consequences of opioid and stimulant misuse in South Carolina. This allowed Rubicon to offer some great community events as well as enhance the services we provide.

In September 2021, Rubicon hosted a Recovery Day event. This fun-filled event offered food for all and games and crafting for children. We also had three great speakers who shared their journey to the path of recovery.

For Halloween, Rubicon hosted a Halloween Carnival for the community. We had crafting for children, delicious food from Chick-Fil-A and sugaRush and a couple of trauma - informed, fright-filled rooms.

Not only has the Recovery Community Organization grant allowed us to have some fun-filled events, but it has also allowed us to offer services such as a curriculum for soft-skill job-training skills, expand our ANA meetings and we are in the process of creating an on-site training room where we will offer help with resume writing and job search skills. We were also able to place billboard advertisements throughout the county as well as run radio ads.

Rubicon Family Counseling Services offers a variety of services including Behavioral Health Counseling Services, Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services, and Prevention Services. We also have a 24/7 telephone line for emergencies. We want to help make Darlington County a safer, healthier place to live, work and raise a family.

Rubicon has been serving Darlington County for approximately 45 years and remains dedicated to our mission of providing prevention, intervention and treatment strategies to strengthen and enhance families and individuals, improving their health and vitality, as well as that of the community in which we all live and work.

YOU COULD BE THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE



Do you know a biomedical scientist? Chances are you do. She could be the woman you see in the park most weekends with her two little children and their dog running around, or the man who's riding on your favorite mountain biking trails every Saturday.

Maybe she is the young woman in your 6 a.m. yoga class every Tuesday who you've never said hi to. They look just like us, and we would never know they get up each weekday to help us and our loved ones live longer and healthier lives - because they know that #ScienceWorks.

Biomedical scientists are researching ways to transform the quality and type of health care we all receive. Can you imagine a world where it's possible to find out what health conditions we are genetically at greatest risk of developing, being able to detect and diagnose them early and have safe preventative treatment and management options - all based on discoveries about our own unique bodies? Biomedical scientists can. That's what many of them are spending their careers working on, to move toward a future of "personalized medicines." The FDA has described personalized medicine as an innovative approach to tailoring disease prevention and treatment that takes into account differences in people's genes, environments and lifestyles. The goal of personalized medicine is to target the right treatments to the right patients at the right time.

This treatment paradigm, this brighter healthcare future of personalized medicine, it is within our reach - but it needs our trust, encouragement and support. Our scientists can drive this new treatment paradigm from an idea to a reality. It is not an easy road they take. Before FDA approves any personalized medicine, it must meet rigorous standards for safety and effectiveness, typically requiring extensive pre-clinical research, clinical trials and quality manufacturing development.

The research required to get to where we can go is complex and lengthy. It also may be the greatest investment we ever make. In fact, scientific research is the great hope we have for a healthier future.



Rubicon Family Counseling Services

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Counseling Services for children, adolescents & adults

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Like us on Facebook or check out rubiconsc.org

HOPEHEALTH HOSTS 24TH ANNUAL AIDSWALK

Articles submitted by HopeHealth



Aidswalk 2021

HopeHealth celebrated 30 years of serving others, giving hope and changing lives, in 2021 which made the annual AIDS Walk a special affair.

Walkers, decked out in red T-shirts gathered at the Medical Plaza the first Saturday, in Dec.,

for the AIDS Walk program. The event was the first-time walkers met at the Medical Plaza and provided additional space for information about HopeHealth, AIDS and HIV awareness, behavioral health services, health screenings and more.

The event kicked off with a moving invocation from Sonyetta Cooper and a skit by the youth improv team, Dramatic Coffee Beans, followed by words from HopeHealth CEO Carl. M. Humphries and the awareness walk around the Medical Plaza campus.

Walkers received AIDS Walk 2021 T-shirts and were treated to a to-go boxed lunch to conclude the event. Check out our Facebook album for photos of the event!

AIDS Walk serves to bring awareness about the importance of prevention, treatment, and breaking the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. In addition to T-shirts and door prizes, HopeHealth staff will provide free health screenings and information on programs and services available at HopeHealth.

HopeHealth is a nonprofit leader in providing affordable, expert health care and infectious diseases services for all ages in Aiken, Clarendon, Florence, 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.

HOPEHEALTH OPENS NEW LOCATION



Dr. Steve Reeves

HEMINGWAY – HopeHealth opened the doors on its newest community health center location on Wednesday, Dec. 1. The renovated facilities at 2266 Hemingway Highway provide primary care services to patients of all ages in the Williamsburg area with Dr. Steve Reeves. HopeHealth in Hemingway hours are Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The more than 10,000 square-foot space has 10 patient rooms and services include:

- Primary medical care
- Routine wellness visits
- Prevention and management of chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes
- Minor illness treatment (cold and flu)
- Minor/in-office surgical procedures, e.g., joint injections and cryosurgery
- Immunizations and vaccinations
- Health risk assessments
- Health screenings (blood pressure, glucose)
- Lab services

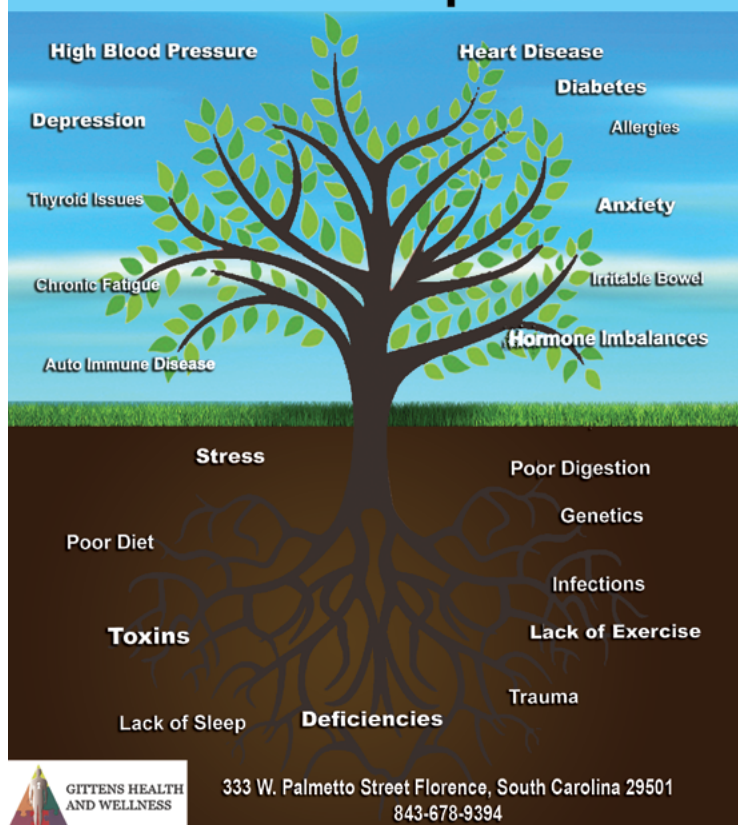
HopeHealth is a nonprofit leader in providing affordable, expert health care and infectious diseases services for all ages in Aiken, Clarendon, Florence, Orangeburg and Williamsburg counties. Our federally qualified health centers are the primary care providers of choice for nearly 60,000 patients. To become a patient, call 843-896-5896 or visit hope-health.org.



Now Accepting New Patients!
hope-health.org

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- Permanent Laser Hair Removal



Our goal at Magnolia Health Care is to bridge the gap between conventional and aesthetic medicine to bring you health and beauty. While we remain well grounded in conventional medicine, we continue to grow in aesthetic services to enhance your beauty with good health, and your good health with matching beauty. Our mission is to provide our valued patients with state-of-the-art total health and wellness solutions, combining traditional medicine, functional medicine, and aesthetics.

Be healthy, be beautiful; the Magnolia Health way.

It is our honor to introduce Wilhelmenia Patterson, Magnolia's new Physician Assistant. Mrs. Patterson is now accepting New Patients.

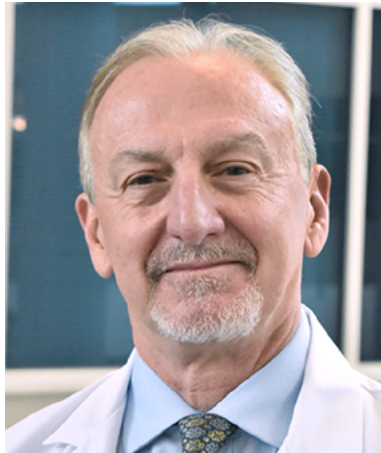


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DIABETES AND YOUR HEART

Submitted by Interventional Cardiologist, Dr. Greg May



Dr. Greg May

**Can Sugar Break Your Heart?
Can eating candy, doughnuts, cookies, and ice cream cause a heart attack?
Not quickly, but with time, if you do not keep an eye on that bathroom scale!!**

Diabetes, or abnormally elevated blood glucose, can occur during childhood due to absent or markedly diminished insulin production by the pancreas, Type 1 diabetes. More commonly in adults, diabetes is related to obesity. As a result, “insulin resistance” describes that insulin is produced but ineffective at keeping blood sugar in the normal range, Type 2 diabetes.

People with diabetes have 2-4 times the risk of heart attack and stroke compared with nondiabetics. What is the link making people with diabetes more likely to develop these potentially fatal problems?

Vascular disease, atherosclerosis or “hardening of the arteries,” refers to the progressive growth of cholesterol plaques in the body’s arteries. Coronary artery disease refers to the gradual enlarging of cholesterol plaques that can develop in the coronary arteries, which supply blood to the heart. Cerebrovascular disease refers to plaque development in arteries supplying the brain. Peripheral artery disease refers to plaques in arteries supplying the extremities, more commonly involving the legs.

Diabetics typically have more vascular diseases than nondiabetics, more heart attacks, strokes, and amputations of the lower extremities. Diabetics frequently have hypertension, elevated blood pressure, high LDL (bad cholesterol), high triglycerides and low HDL (good cholesterol).

CAD progresses faster and cholesterol plaques get much larger much quicker with poorly controlled diabetes.

Cholesterol plaque growth is a complex and not entirely understood process but is generally due to the endothelium’s malfunction, a one-cell thick inner lining of arteries. With

poorly controlled diabetes, persistently high blood sugar, and elevated cholesterol, the endothelium loses its natural ability to keep the wall of the artery healthy, and cholesterol can leave the bloodstream, go under the endothelial layer, and enter the wall of the artery. Cholesterol is perceived by white blood cells as foreign, similar to an attack from bacteria and viruses. The result leads to plaque growth (think of little mountains developing in the artery wall). As cholesterol plaques grow, with high blood sugar and high cholesterol, the inside of the artery is filled up with plaque; therefore, the usual channel for blood flow is gradually reduced. Reduced blood flow to the heart can cause chest pain and shortness of breath. Eventually, cholesterol plaques can rupture or crack, causing a blood clot. When a blood clot forms, the artery closes off, and blood flow stops. The result is a heart attack.

Diabetes, smoking, hypertension, elevated LDL (bad cholesterol), low HDL (good cholesterol), family history of premature CAD, obesity, and a sedentary lifestyle are all risk factors for CAD. Progression of cholesterol plaques can be slowed and stabilized by reducing your risk factors. Diabetes can be controlled by weight loss, exercise, and medications to normalize blood sugar. In addition, hypertension and high cholesterol respond favorably to the same.

Atherosclerosis, cholesterol plaque growth in our arteries, seems like an inevitable process as we age, but there is hope! Your decision to follow an improved lifestyle of a heart-healthy diet (at least most of the time), regular aerobic exercise, not smoking, and routine medical follow-ups for guidance controlling blood pressure and cholesterol management would pay dividends in reducing your risk in the future.

DIABETES and your HEART



2 out of 3 people with diabetes die of heart disease or stroke.¹

According to the CDC, up to **20%** of deaths from heart attack



and **13%** of deaths from stroke are related to diabetes or prediabetes.



If you have diabetes, you are **2–4 times more likely to have heart disease or a stroke than if you do not have diabetes.¹**

Smoking doubles the risk of heart disease in people with diabetes.²

ABCs of Diabetes

A for the A1C test.

The A1C test shows you what your blood sugar (glucose) has been over the last three months. High blood sugar levels can harm your heart and blood vessels, kidneys, feet, and eyes.



B for blood pressure.

High blood pressure makes your heart work too hard. It can cause heart attack, stroke, and kidney disease.

C for cholesterol.

One kind of cholesterol, called LDL, can build up and clog your blood vessels. It can cause heart attack or stroke. Ask what your cholesterol numbers should be.

Ask your health care team:

What your A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers are;

What your ABC numbers should be; and

What you can do to reach your ABC goals.

Tips to reduce your risk for heart disease.



Know Your ABCs of Diabetes
Talk to your health care team about how to manage your A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol. This will help lower your chances of having a heart attack, a stroke, or other diabetes problems.



Helping our residents & patients get back to living

IN OUR NEW SKILLED NURSING & REHAB CENTER

Community is a word that has become more important worldwide as Covid has forced us into varying degrees of isolation over the past two years. Simply put, we need each other to live and thrive. Bethea Retirement Community has captured and fostered the essence of community for senior adults from all walks of life. Seniors who choose to live or rehabilitate at Bethea find themselves feeling part of one big family, surrounded by dedicated staff and other residents who share a common goal - to nurture relationship and to create an environment of wellness.

Betha Retirement Community is celebrating the one year anniversary for its most recent expansion, the healthcare and rehabilitation center. As Director Ben Spurling has stated, "We all live our lives in pursuit of opportunities to grow, to learn, to experience moments of joy. At Bethea, we refer to these principles as 'Abundant Living'. Working toward this goal of providing Abundant Life for seniors is always a challenge, and nowhere is this truer than in the skilled nursing environment, where it's easy to lose sight of those principles focusing on the very real health needs of residents. That's why we are so excited about the Household Model, which provides us with an innovative framework that weaves the threads of Abundant Living directly into the fabric of care that we provide to residents every single day." 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.

One of these households is devoted to rehabilitation guests for short-term stays while recovering from illness or injury. The new healthcare center also contains a new state-of-the-art rehabilitation gym where seniors both within the retirement community and senior adults outside of the community referred by physician for rehabilitation can receive physical and occupational therapy.

What our Rehab Grads are saying about Bethea:

"Betha Retirement Community is the best place to go if you need to rehabilitate from an illness or injury. I stayed here in October and November of this 2021 year. I was most comfortable and very happy during my stay...The food was good, the service excellent and the staff most competent. The Community is located in Darlington, SC, just 4 miles from Florence. Registered Nurses (RN's) and other medical providers and a doctor are on staff...Everything inside and out was freshly painted and the home smelled so good. My goal was to be able to walk again. The best Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy trained professionals helped me meet my goal. I have been to many Rehabilitation Centers and they do not compare. Yes, they pushed me but not where I just could not stand it. They were all so personable...When I was leaving to go home, I was given the choice of "in home" Physical and Occupational Therapy. I chose to do outpatient therapy with Bethea as they were so good in helping me"

- Kathy Belew

When I came to Bethea, I was in a wheelchair. In the month that I have been here, I went from a wheelchair to a walker and now I use a cane. The next goal is to be able to independently walk without support. Tyler and all the physical and occupational therapists are professional and treat everyone equally...All in all, everyone was friendly and supportive. I couldn't have done rehab without the prayers of people and God working through these people to move my heart and bring me to where I am now. It is through God's strength, power, and His love that I have successfully completed treatment. I give God all the praise and glory! Thank you Bethea from the bottom of my heart!

- Kenneth Turner



Visit [BethaRetirement.com](https://www.BethaRetirement.com) or contact Jenny Doll, Director of Marketing, 843-395-4402 for more information or to schedule a tour.

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SOUTH CAROLINA BAPTIST
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MINISTRIES OF AGING

YOU CAN HELP SOLVE MEDICINE'S "ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL" PROBLEM



Have you ever been put on a treatment that just didn't work for you?

Most people like to think that our doctors will always know what treatment will work best. It turns out that all the things

that make people different - DNA, age, gender, race, living conditions - can mean "trial and error" to find a treatment that works for individuals.

The problem isn't because health care providers are overlooking data and research about what treatments might work best for you. Often, the knowledge simply doesn't exist. That's because many groups have been left out of research in the past. The result is less information about the health needs of women, Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ+ and Asian-American patients and people with multiple conditions.

That can leave your health care provider making best guesses, based on what worked for other patients who may not share the factors that make you unique. Those differences can mean treatments come with extra side effects or might not work at all. For example, because of certain genes, a commonly prescribed blood thinner, clopidogrel, does not work in about 50 percent of people with Asian ancestry.

To learn why a treatment works better in one patient than another, scientists need data - lots of data. The National Institutes of Health's All of Us Research Program is well on its way to fill that need by inviting one million people to help build one of the largest and most diverse

medical databases in existence. Participants choose what types of data they contribute, and whether they would like to receive information about their DNA, free of charge.

"We know that 'one-size-fits-all' medicine fails too many people," said Joshua Denny, M.D., M.S., chief executive officer of the NIH program. "The more than 400,000 people who have already joined the program are making it possible for researchers to better solve many medical mysteries, diagnose faster, prevent better and treat more accurately."

Protected by privacy and security safeguards, the data equips registered researchers with real-world information to study better ways to prevent, manage and treat disease, including common conditions like cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Andrea Ramirez, M.D., M.S., senior advisor to All of Us, is a practicing endocrinologist and has seen first-hand the challenges of managing patients with diabetes.

"There are so many factors that can impact what treatment will get the best results for a patient, including genetic variations," says Ramirez. "All of Us goes beyond finding the DNA information and allows researchers to study diabetes therapy in relation to participants' electronic health records, environment and lifestyle. That combination of data shared through All of Us changes the game and opens doors to answering questions more quickly."

The participants who join the research program can help make sure scientists like Ramirez won't be slowed down by the lack of data when they search for answers to the health issues that affect your family or your community.

To learn how you can become a participant and contribute to the effort to better understand how health needs differ from person to person, including your own, visit [JoinAllofUs.org](https://www.allofus.org).

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REASONS WHY MILLENNIALS NEED LIFE INSURANCE



If you're a millennial, the chances you've already invested in a private life insurance policy are probably low. The share of Americans covered by life insurance slid from 63 percent in 2011 to 52 percent in 2021 - and the most pronounced decrease has come from younger generations.

It makes sense - you're young

and healthy, and extra money goes towards the latest iPhone, smart home device or international travel. With the last 18 months forcing even younger generations to confront their own mortality, 48 percent of millennials are reportedly planning to buy within the next 12 months.

Here's why now, is the time for millennials to prioritize life insurance:

1. Save money over time.

For all the stereotypes about millennials, it's a generation of good planners who are responsible and strong forward-thinkers. The cost of a life insurance policy is largely dependent upon risk, healthy millennials are generally considered a lower risk, so buying a life insurance policy when you are young can help lock in lower rates with term or permanent insurance.

2. Buying life insurance is easier.

One of the main reasons millennials have avoided life insurance is because it has traditionally been a pain to buy. Fortunately, advances in technology have made it easier to purchase almost anything. Millennials use virtual assistants or e-commerce sites to shop for groceries and order

takeout. Same-day delivery is no longer a perk, but an industry standard that even the life insurance industry is beginning to embrace.

3. Protect your family from financial burden.

Millennials have long prioritized their careers and financial security but, as even the youngest millennials enter their mid-20s, more and more are starting families.

It has become commonplace for people to believe they don't need life insurance because they don't have any children yet. But just because you don't have dependents doesn't mean there aren't people who depend on you. Life insurance will help protect your spouse or long-term significant other with whom you own or rent a home and allows your parents or siblings to cover unanticipated costs as they grieve.

4. Consider your cosigners.

Today's graduates are strapped with record-breaking student loan debt, so it's important for millennials to consider their cosigners when shopping for life insurance.

Certain types of debt are waived in the event of an unexpected death - and that includes student loans. However, many millennials have their parents or a loved one cosign on loans, credit cards or mortgages. If that's the case, your student loan debt would transfer to your cosigner in the event of an unexpected death. A life insurance policy would help ease that financial burden in a time of grieving.

Millennials are among the most educated and knowledgeable generations in history. They're health conscious, financially conscious and socially conscious. Yet, life insurance has been overlooked because the industry has made things too complex, too confusing, and too inconvenient.

COVID has raised awareness about the important role life insurance plays in families' financial security, so it's time for millennials to consider getting life insurance sooner rather than later.

"Helping People Make Better Financial Decisions"



Quentin Williams, Agent
 Quentin Williams Insurance & Financial Group
 Telephone: (843) 694-9252
 que.williams03@gmail.com
 SC Lic#536835

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Mission

To make a difference in your life by helping you achieve financial security and independence today - and for generations to come.

Vision

To be your company of choice - through integrity, trusted relationships and financial strength.

Values

We hold ourselves, the relationships we build, and the products we deliver, to the highest standards of quality. These values represent the core of who we are and what we do, every day

Stay Connected:



SENIOR CENTER CELEBRATION

Articles submitted by Donna Tracy, Lake City public information office staff



Members of the Lake City Senior Center participate in caroling during their Christmas celebration

LAKE CITY-Members of the Lake City Senior Center gathered in December for their 2021 Christmas celebration.

With a light-hearted and spirit-filled medley of caroling from the “Keenagers,” gifts, and luncheon by Just Ruby’s, the seniors enjoyed the return of the annual celebration that was

cancelled last year due to COVID-19.

“We take all the precautions we can to keep our seniors safe,” said Cynthia Mallette, Senior Center director. “This year we installed an air-filtration system that sanitizes the air and allows us to continue gathering in celebration of the season.”

The afternoon program included: Mistress of Ceremony, Cynthia Mallette, Organist, Elijah Hamilton, greetings from Mildred Brown, invocation by Minister James Campbell; singing by Minnie Brown and Ronnie Wallace. A Christmas message from Evangelist Willie Mae Anderson, wife of Lake City Mayor Lovith Anderson Jr., Remarks from Lake City Mayor Lovith Anderson Jr., and Florence County Councilman Jason Springs.

“This community has a rich history,” said Mayor Anderson. “But that doesn’t necessarily mean in houses and land. We are so rich in spirit.” “The Lake City Senior Center, Christmas celebration is a wonderful opportunity to get together with one of our most-precious age groups,” said Springs. “The celebration provides for great camaraderie and allows us to remember the reason for the season. It’s always one of the most looked-forward to events of the year.”

Lake City Senior Center membership is open to all residents of Lake

City and surrounding areas ages 55 plus. Membership dues are \$35 per year which includes an access to all programs such as trivia, classes, health screenings and information, and social events, crafting space, a computer lab, exercise room, nutrition program and more. A \$125 lifetime membership is available for that age 70 and older.

For an application or more information about joining the senior center, visit the center at 198 South Acline Street, or call 843-374-2432.

THE ANNUAL GIVING BACK EVENT



Members of Carver High School Alumni Association and church volunteers distribute hams and turkeys at Greater St. James AME Church in Lake City in Dec. The annual community event is sponsored by Carver High School Alumni Association and the Wilson Law Firm of Columbia.

LAKE CITY-Members of Carver High School Alumni Association and church volunteers distributed hams and turkeys at Greater St. James AME Church in Lake City Dec. 20. The annual community event is sponsored by the Carver High School Alumni Association and Joseph Wilson of the Wilson Law Firm of Columbia.

For the last 15 years, Wilson and the alumni association have held similar events in Lake City. Wilson said the giveaway is based on the orientation alumni received at Carver High to, “not only to try and be personally excellent, but also to share whatever gifts we’ve had with others. Every year we try to give back and keep the Carver flame alive.”

Carver High School was established in 1954 as a segregated school for black students of Lake City and surrounding communities. It later became the integrated Lake City Junior High School and is now a junior high school named for Carver High School alumnus Dr. Ronald E. McNair.



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5 WAYS TO CELEBRATE DIVERSE ARTS AND CULTURE



No matter where you live, there are plenty of opportunities to celebrate the culture of diverse communities, if you know where to look. To show your support for multicultural artisans, performers and businesses, here are a few ideas to get you started.

1. Check out diverse artists in your neighborhood - and online

Do an internet search for art galleries in your area that showcase artists of color, then go and look at the work these artists are creating. You can also search for art fairs and festivals nearby that showcase multicultural artists and crafters that you can patronize. These kinds of events make for a great family outing, and you can usually find beautiful art, handcrafted gifts and home decor items.

Many websites that sell artisan crafts will also highlight their minority-owned shops. Search the site or contact them to ask where you can find these artists to view their amazing creations.

2. Support arts programs for kids

Supporting local schools as well as extracurricular programs that provide kids with opportunities to express themselves and explore their own heritage will have a positive impact on the future of art and culture in

your community.

You can help by volunteering, donating or simply being there as an advocate - attending events and applauding the efforts of kids and their educators.

3. Notice companies that actively celebrate minority-owned businesses and diverse cultures

Companies large and small are increasingly aware that consumers today want to support causes they believe in, as well as those that encourage artistic and cultural expression from people of color. This awareness is inspiring all kinds of initiatives to encourage the work of artists from diverse backgrounds.

4. Buy from minority-owned businesses

More companies than ever before are highlighting entrepreneurs of color, making it easier to find products that are created by multicultural entrepreneurs. Next time you shop, search for minority-owned businesses online, or look for categories like multicultural products from major retailers' websites.

5. Champion ethnic restaurants

Another great way to tap into the culture of your own heritage - or others - is to visit local restaurants that introduce you to foods and traditions from a myriad of cultural backgrounds. Some of these venues also host music performances or art exhibitions that add to the richness of the experience dining there. Supporting minority-owned and ethnic restaurants also helps all people in their surrounding communities.

Encouraging and participating in artistic and cultural events in your area, plus buying from minority-owned businesses, shows your support, celebrating these efforts and helping these artists and businesses grow for years to come.



1 Serving | 30 Minutes



An Old Fashioned *Holiday*

INGREDIENTS:

Roseberry Simple Syrup

- 10 oz. water
- 3 tsp. sugar
- 10 cranberries
- 2 stems of rosemary

Cocktail

- 1.5 oz. rye whiskey
- 3 oz. Roseberry Simple Syrup
- 1 dash of orange bitters
- 1 oz. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- mint, cranberries & orange twist for garnish

Directions:

1. Combine water, sugar, and cranberries in a small sauce pan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat. Stir until sugar dissolves. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Strain and discard the solids. Refrigerate until ready to use. Let the 3 oz. you will use for your cocktail stand for 5 minutes until ready to use.
2. Combine whisky, Roseberry Simple Syrup and orange bitters in rocks glass. Stir with cocktail spoon.
3. Add ice (large cube if available) and garnish. Enjoy your cocktail!



Ija Charles paints "Living the Dream."

NEW YEAR, NEW GALLERY
SHOWS IN LAKE CITY!

ARTWORK AWAITS

Submitted by Lake City
ArtFields Collective



"Witness: Kathmandu" by Noah Scalin.

Get your fill of arts and culture in Lake City! Although its small population and rural location might not scream, "arts mecca!" there is a lot to see during a visit to Lake City's three downtown galleries.

TRAX Visual Art Center currently features solo shows from Columbia, SC artist Ija Charles and Richmond, VA artist Noah Scalin.

The artwork in *Canvas of Life*, by Charles, ranges from portraits of ordinary people to a diverse sampling of symbols from our day-to-day culture.

"My work is often colorful, character driven, and whole hearted to help paint positive vibes on our canvas of life," Charles explained.

In *Signal to Noise*, Scalin utilizes stickers and images of mass produced consumer goods to create collages and paintings. Scalin asks the viewer to rethink

the items that are normally taken for granted or overlooked in our lives.

"[My work] is about reorganizing the noise of American culture into recognizable signals," Scalin shared.

Virtual Realities, on display in Jones-Carter Gallery features artwork from Knoxville, TN artist Denise Stewart-Sanabria. Her *Drawings on Plywood* are part of a series concentrating on the large-scale representation of contemporary people.

"I prefer to use the medium of drawing with charcoal on large sheets of plywood in order to take advantage of graphic monochromatic impact," Stewart-Sanabria said.

TRAX Visual Art Center, Jones-Carter Gallery, and Crossroads Gallery are open each week Tuesday-Saturday from 11AM-5PM. Admission is free.



"People #4, 5, 6" by
Denise Stewart-Sanabria.

**Happy
NEW YEAR**

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SKILLS FOR SUCCESSFULLY TURNING IDEAS INTO REALITY



People across the world have tackled immense challenges since the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic, from social isolation to financial burdens, in a distanced and digitally enabled world. As a result, many important projects were put on hold. But at the same time, many people took

the opportunity to make bigger and better plans - and are ready to make these dreams a reality.

In a recent global survey conducted by Project Management Institute, nearly four in five consumers, 79 percent said they consider 2021, to be a do-over. An even greater number, 86 percent, plan to work harder this year to bring their ideas to life.

“The pandemic disrupted countless 2020 plans, but many leaders and innovative thinkers used the time wisely to map out their next moves,” says Mike DePrisco, chief operating officer for PMI. “As more communities and organizations across the globe cautiously turn to recovery and revival, teams are increasingly focused on turning their stalled projects into reality.”

But turning ideas into reality doesn’t come easy. Whether you are looking to level up in your career, kick-start a new project or create a completely new business, PMI outlines the power skills you need to continue advancing.

1. Communication

Effective communication maximizes success and minimizes risk. It involves not only conducting outward-bound communication, but also listening, taking feedback, understanding nonverbal cues and interpreting what is meant versus what is said. In a team setting, communication helps team members stay on the same page as they work toward success.

2. Empathy

Empathy allows team members to build greater trust and connections - with each other and with other stakeholders - by helping them understand the wide range of people and work styles they encounter. Empathy also strengthens teams by helping team members feel appreciated and heard.

3. Collaborative leadership

A collaborative leadership style is more effective in inspiring and bringing team members together in pursuit of a shared vision and common goals. Collaborative leaders recognize that each member of the team has something to contribute - in executing a plan and in helping shape objectives.

4. Innovative mindset

An innovative mindset ensures teams are applying new ideas and fresh perspectives to how they organize work and address the myriad obstacles that emerge when turning ideas into reality. An innovative mindset also allows teams to remain agile and pivot more quickly in the face of challenges.

5. Purpose-driven goals

Having a for-purpose orientation helps minimize risks and ensures the organization’s values and commitment to social good are infused in all aspects of project design and implementation. Clear goals also empower change makers to use their skills to bring about positive social change within teams, companies and communities.

To learn more about these skills and effective project management visit PMI.org/Make Reality, a virtual hub of inspiration with the tools you need to get started on your next big, bold idea. Find support and inspiration from change makers across the globe turning their ideas into reality; determine your change maker persona and view PMI courses that help you take your project or idea and Make Reality, such as KICKOFF, a free, 45-minute digital course and toolkit that guides learners through the basics of project management with bite-sized content and downloadable templates they can quickly implement on the job.

SOURCE OF SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS IN THE PEE DEE by Adalia Ellis

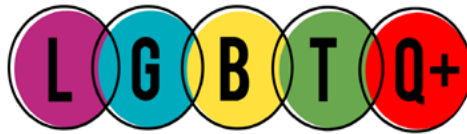


left to right: Quantesa Davis, vice chairperson, Kristen Lowe, chairperson and Lance Weldy, secretary

Pee Dee Equality is an organization dedicated to promoting the rights and support of LGBTQ+ individuals in the Pee Dee region. The organization is the only one of its kind in the area and serves seven counties and two universities. Kristen Lowe, spokesperson for the organization, says, "As the population of Florence continues to grow, we want to be equipped to serve all communities in our area. If a business or place of worship has questions, or lacks the resources, we want them to know they can turn to us." As Pee Dee Equality becomes a recognized resource for those who identify as LGBTQ+ they want to be able to recommend professionals such as lawyers and doctors that are LGBTQ+ inclusive. Their

work will include training for those people in town who do not have the knowledge or experience to provide services and care to the LGBTQ+ community. "We want everyone to have the tools they need to succeed. We believe our diversity is the key to our success."

In addition to being easy to find for services, Pee Dee Equality's mission is to provide equitable access to housing, medical care and education and to address inequity in Florence's social, economic, political and justice systems. While meeting the needs of the target community, they also aim, "to cultivate a community that supports, includes, and respects lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,



queer, intersex, asexual and non-binary individuals and families. The vision is a unified LGBTQIA+ community whose voices and needs are amplified to create deeper understanding and acceptance within Florence, Florence County and the greater Pee Dee region of South Carolina."

The need for such actions are clear when one understands the challenges that face

LGBTQIA+ individuals such as; less access to health care and affordable housing, higher rates of suicide and depression an high rate of homelessness and many governmental, municipal and businesses don't have non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity. Lastly, South Carolina is one of three states without a hate crimes law.

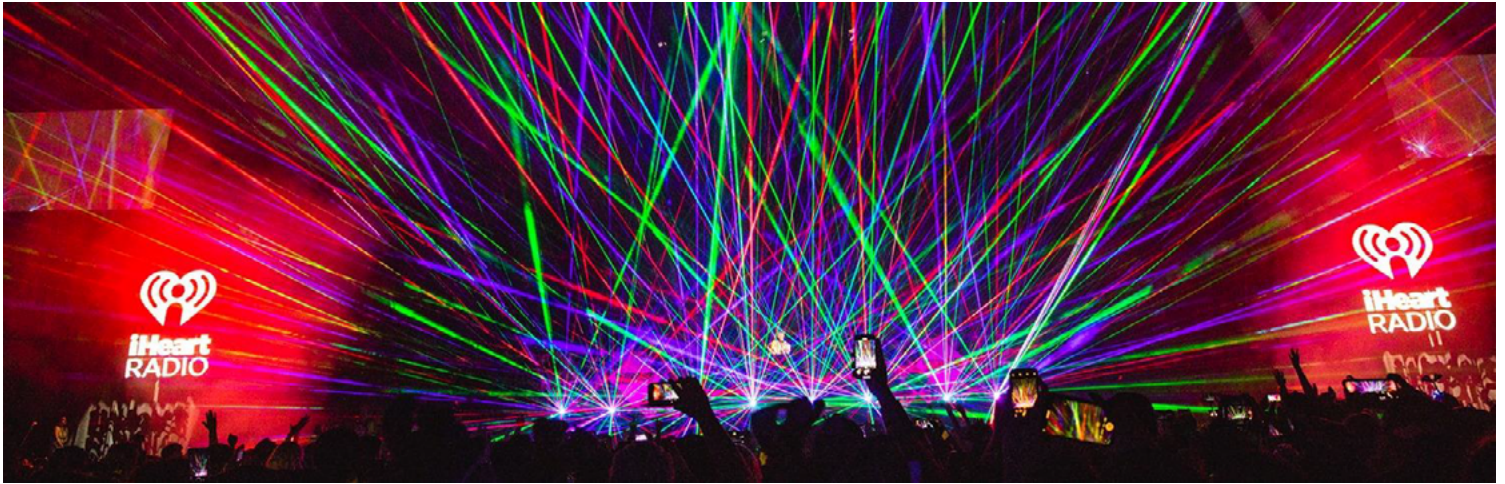
Support of Pee Dee Equality's mission can be monetary by donating to their fund: easterncarolinacf.org/funds/info/pee-dee-equality-fund or mail a check to the Eastern Carolina Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1615 Florence, SC 29503 with Pee Dee Equality named. People can also follow them on Facebook and Instagram so they can stay up-to-date on events and ways to be of assistance. You can also volunteer for their events and show interest by emailing them at peedeequality@gmail.com.

Lowe encourages you to join them in their efforts, "We need allies! You don't have to be LGBTQ to join us. We welcome all and highly encourage participation of LGBTQ allies and family members. We have a big vision that will only be possible with your help."

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FOUR WAYS DRIVING COULD CHANGE IN 2022

Our driving habits and relationships with our cars have made many unexpected turns throughout the pandemic - from driving every day, to the closure of many public places, leading Americans to leave their cars in park for quite a while. Since then, we've seen driving increase, but we are still not driving as much as we used to.

Despite these changes, the Hankook Tire Gauge Index found that Americans appear content with their current driving habits, with only about 1 in 4, 23 percent saying they want to change how much they currently drive. However, here are four ways we can expect driving to change, or not, in the new year.

Continuously shifting driving patterns

With the continuation of remote or hybrid work, and various other factors, most people, 78 percent are driving less than 200 miles per week. But things could shift as we head into 2022. Just over half of Americans, 51 percent, expect to drive the same amount. Of those who do expect a change in their driving habits, it's fairly split on whether they expect to drive more often, 23 percent or less 26 percent. For what it's worth, younger generations seem to think they'll hit the road more frequently.

The daily drive remains

Nearly two years of remote work hasn't made anyone nostalgic for the morning commute. Even with fewer drivers on the road, Americans still largely agree, 69 percent, that they prefer to not drive during rush hour. And while it may still be less often than they were two years ago, 44 percent expect they'll continue commuting the same amount in 2022.

Driving provides for a bit of a break

Whether working or learning from home or spending the day in the office, Americans like to break up the day with a drive. Hankook found taking a drive continues to be a popular way to relax and visit with friends, and most people expect that the amount they drive for fun or leisure, 53 percent will stay the same in the New Year. So, choose your favorite album and buckle up for a drive to nowhere in particular!

Car travel could continue to increase

One thing is certain, people prefer to travel by car. Americans are 36 percent more comfortable traveling long distances by car, versus planes, compared to this time last year. This is fueled by an increasing number of travelers switching from public transportation and ride share services to driving their own vehicle to avoid close contact with others during the pandemic.

And while it's impossible to know what 2022 will bring for the road ahead, it's safe to say we can expect our driving patterns to continue shifting gears.

Did you know, people are happy to jump in the car to socialize, attend an event or see someone special? Fifty-four percent expect to attend more social events in 2022.

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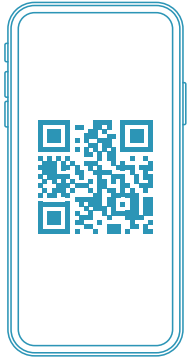
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- Martin Luther King Jr.

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