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# DIVERSITY WORKS

OCTOBER 2022 VOLUME 12 ISSUE 4

*"For All of Us"*



**COVER STORY: 40 & 41 HELP 4 KIDS FLORENCE**  
(Cover photo by William "Cash" Stukes, At Your Service Media)



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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



*Glaceria Brown Mason*  
Editor

Greetings Diversity Works Readers!

As we step into fall with brisk air and orange, red and goldenrod leaves beginning to fall, we do so with the intention to further a better community where diversity, equity and inclusion has a place. Welcome to the final edition of your favorite quarterly magazine, Diversity Works! We are thrilled you've chosen to follow and read with us, some of the best content in the Pee Dee. We are excited to again share with you timely news and information to carry your eager reading eyes through the next three months. As we experience

a change in seasons, I am reminded of celebrations of harvest, Thanksgiving, the December holiday season and the anticipation of the coming New Year! I invite you to join me, with your favorite beverage, your most comfortable seat, snuggled with the warmest throw and take in the new stories to be found on the next several pages. As a prelude, allow me to share what's in store in this fourth quarter issue. Of course, you'll find our recurring sections on business, education, diversity in spirituality, finance, lifestyle and health, however, the difference each quarter is the content. As we raise your level of awareness of the great things happening in and around the Pee Dee, we hope you share the pride of our individual and collective growth as a community. If that weren't enough, Diversity Works' recurring sections are complimented by this quarter's special section, with featured stories on breast cancer awareness, bullying, caregiving, crime prevention, disability employment, domestic violence and hunger and homelessness. Be assured that interesting articles await, and I know you're eager to dive in!

Maybe you've read about your colleagues, neighbors, employer, alma mater or local-area schools and organizations in previous issues, however as etched on the tombstone of the late Frank Sinatra, "the best is yet to come!" In our business section, get acquainted with Chief Executive Officer C. Gregory Robinson who has taken the helm at the Florence County Economic Development Partnership and learn the exciting current and future development plans to move Florence, Full Forward. If the current and future plans for the area's progress excites you, great! Read further to find ways to support the next generation of small business owners, creating entrepreneurs at an early age has long-term implications for our society and community. Higher wages help to raise the standard of living within communities. Read how the City of Lake City has approved increases in salaries of certified public safety staff. Higher wages can lead to the American dream. Read how the City of Florence and Lake City are making strides of home ownership within their cities by launching a plan to transform unused city property into affordable homes. That's progress! Although we salute our Veterans every day, their national day is fast approaching. Read about the value our Veterans bring to the civilian workforce. As you read, don't miss Dr. Nika White's instruction on five ways to get employees invested in DEI, it really does work for all of us! Charity begins at home, join in the collective thank to President Cameron Packett of the United Way of Florence and the participating local businesses and volunteers for hosting the annual day of caring which helped local nonprofits devote more resources to those they serve. Additionally, we look forward to and thank Honda as they launch their annual charitable funding cycle. Heads up, don't miss the deadline, find out more on page 18. Every town needs solid legal representation, and the Pee Dee is no different. Congratulations to Finklea, Hendrick & Blake, LLC, voted the Best Law Firm for the fifth year in a row by the Florence Morning News. The area is fortunate to have options when it comes to legal representation. Learn what missteps to avoid and how to get the compensation you deserve from the articles by the Jebaily Law Firm, our third quarter lead cover and the Law Offices of Linward C. Edwards II.

Mark your calendars and get your tickets for the annual United Negro College Fund Mayor's Masked Ball and start your December off with an elegant evening for an exceptionally good cause in support of education, because "A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste."

A better educated workforce adds to the quality of life of any community, the Pee Dee area continues to make big strides in education. The Marion County School District is cultivating excellence as their superpower with six new priority areas to move them forward and, they're also hiring great teachers. Read how you can apply today. In Hartsville, we give major kudos to the Butler Academy is a participating in the U.S. State Department's Teachers of Critical Language Program, made possible by a competitive award by the American Councils for International Education. The Butler Academy was among 19 schools nationwide to receive this award and will host Mandarin Teacher, Wanlin Lin for their language immersion program. DW never tires of congratulating fellow South Carolinians. As you complete the various sections, you too will find many opportunities to congratulate individuals, schools or businesses on their achievements. May success always be yours.

Be aware that FMU is undertaking fall construction and expanding its programs while being listed among the great colleges to Work For. You'll also find interesting that FMU has been designated as the first university in SC with the classification as a professional doctorate university. Beaming yet? Well, you may also find Pee Dee pride worthy that Claflin University has ranked ninth by U.S. News & World Report among the best HBCU! As if that weren't enough to bring a smile, learn how BC/BS of SC has partnered with Benedict and Claflin to invest full scholarships for four students through their BlueScholars Program, as well as so much more education news and success. Get the details inside.

Our fourth quarter cover story raises awareness about the food insecurity of the children in our area. Read about the origins of Help for Kids Florence and how Diane Welsh and the team of dedicated volunteers and your generous donations help keep kids fed on weekends. In our financial section, learn how ABB advances with two new team members, McKayla Smith and Rusty Prince. Continue completing Diversity Works' sections and gain useful information on how to become financially healthy and take away sage investing tips to benefit us all.

Practical Purpose Solutions shares advice on staying hydrated to sustain your health while MUSC physicians share life-saving procedures as well as advice on when to go and when not to go to the emergency room. As you continue to be proactive about your health, read the most informative articles in our health section. Be informed that CareSouth Carolina breaks ground in Cheraw for a new facility. and congratulate MUSC Marion's new Executive Director Shemetra Swaringer.

You'll enjoy the story of how Lighthouse Ministries selected and honored its 2022 Good Neighbor, Retha Salters Brown. Also find stories on the importance of young adults securing life insurance and planning final arrangements. Certainly, every section you find in Diversity Works is full of interesting and useful stories. Ads included from our loyal local business advertisers share employment announcements or services that we encourage you to support, as they are a part of our community and provide a valued service.

As the final 2022 edition, the Diversity Works staff hope you've enjoyed the content included during the year. Perhaps an article inspired you to act, learn, grow or you became more enlightened, either way, we're glad you experienced it with Diversity Works. To our loyal business advertisers, we sincerely thank you for supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in your workplace and in our magazine. We encourage the knowledgeable Diversity Works reader to support our advertisers, buy local because they provide a valuable service to the community. Keep coming back for more great content. On behalf of the Diversity Works Team, we wish you a safe and happy holiday season and best wishes for the New Year! Happy reading....

Be well and be safe,  
Glaceria Brown Mason  
Editor

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## FLORENCE COUNTY WELCOMES CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

by Glaciera Brown Mason



Chief Executive Officer C. Gregory Robinson, Florence County Economic Development Partnership

Economic development is defined by the programs, policies and activities that improve a community's quality, standard of living and well-being. The right mix of business and industry meticulously carved together have shown to be a "win-win" in cities across America. How fortunate for the City & County of Florence and its residents to welcome its new Chief Executive Officer, Gregg Robinson to lead the Florence County Economic Development Partnership (FCEDP).

The FCEDP has a strong vision and mission to develop a strategic plan and implement a strategy that will enhance the quality for life of all. A stronger industrial payroll that raises the standard of living of the population and specifically working with minority leaders will ultimately create a stronger base and a quality educated workforce. The FCEDP's objectives are to generate, retain and grow business, jobs and investments; to organize and promote infrastructure development; to market Florence County; to target, develop and utilize systems and to develop and foster public/private partnerships. The FCEDP has begun the process of developing a new strategy that will address issues impacting the workforce, product delivery and speed to market. Ultimately, growing the community at large.

Our new chief executive officer is a native of Kingstree, SC, who has proud roots in the Pee Dee. With a family history in development and sales, the importance of education and hard work was impressed upon him at an early age. His father was a real estate developer and his mother, a small business owner on Hilton Head Island. Robinson grew up in a rural community at a time when the island had no hospital. Later, both he and his brother worked together in the International Division of the SC Department of Commerce. Today, they have successful careers in industrial development.

Since coming to Florence, Robinson has held audiences with the Florence Mayor, County Council and many other city leaders including the Chamber Annual Luncheon as guest speaker. Having had the opportunity to meet him, I found him to be personable, articulate and poised, well adept, and knows his field. He brings these qualities, a distinguished career and the experience of leadership to our community. Robinson's résumé is impressive and offers high hopes for Florence County's long range economic development. As a SC Certified Economic Developer, Robinson shares this most prestigious designation among economic development professionals. With the knowledge and training to utilize best practices to accomplish needed goals, Robinson understands that "without a solid foundation of utilities, you cannot develop roads, water, sewer, gas and now broadband which is paramount to the growth of our region and state."

Further, Robinson shared how more infrastructure drives the need for quality development. "Florence County is the HUB of the Pee Dee with location, affordable utilities, quality labor and access to quality medical care. We have solid educational opportunities with FMU, SiMT, FDTC and now the Continuum. Though, in a thriving community, this is what sets us apart in the region and state and allows us to be more successful."

The Florence County Council is critical to the development of our county. Without the leadership of the county council, economic development doesn't get done. Their leadership to pass and fund a \$22 million-dollar industrial bond to fund land acquisition and infrastructure is a critical next step to the economic development strategy of the county.

Our county council is 'pro-business,' and the results of how well we work together and with all nine municipalities will be evident to prospective new business and industry leaders.

Robinson said, "We truly have a great recipe for development. If we continue to grow the base of manufacturing, we will continue to see better opportunities for lifestyle changes. Recreation, restaurants, and 'things to do,' become easier for the community to fund. Tourism thrives too, as people will want to be in the community. More residential opportunities develop and most importantly, better, more affordable options for housing. This also will allow for more flight availabilities at our airport and better road systems as a result."

Of the leadership role he plays, Robinson enjoys the development aspect and the ability to impact families by raising the standard of living of all people. SC ranks number one in foreign direct investment (FDI), in the U.S. Robinson says, "We need to be inclusive on all levels to recruit quality international companies from around the globe. Diversity makes us stronger in all aspects of economic development and in life. With a diverse population, Florence County needs to understand and evaluate the major needs of the minority population, education, housing, access to medical care and food deserts in rural areas of the county." He continued, "We need to establish and plan for industrial parks throughout the county to benefit those in rural areas or those with limited transportation. You're a better person, parent and friend with more money in your pocket and a sense of purpose with a quality job and company." He attributes his sense of satisfaction in his work from meeting people who have moved into town or recently received a promotion in a company that he has helped recruit.

With a hands-on leadership style, Robinson articulates that, "there is nothing more impactful than being part of changing the trajectory of someone's path in the workforce. Better jobs equal a better quality of life." He reminds us, "to always remember that there are real families and future generations affected. If we raise the per capita income, we allow for a stronger base for small business," which ultimately benefits everyone.

To promote Florence and attract more business and industry, Robinson and his team are working with the SC Department of Commerce (SCDOC) and Regions Development Office (NESA) to market Florence County to the world by embracing SCDOC's foreign offices and educating consultants and site selectors that we have the right location for business. "Our 'pro-business,' environment is second to none and we need to share that with everyone," emphasized Robinson.

When asked about the bird's eye view of what's to come, Robinson says, "growth and opportunity exist right now, with new parks and buildings coming on the market in the next 18 months. The new Florence County Industrial Park East with an existing industrial pad, the Pee Dee Commerce City West with a new 117k square foot building under construction and Florence County South at Scranton, all provide immediate targets to be successful. The best is yet to come!"

Please join Florence County's efforts of committing and focusing its efforts and initiatives in furthering a multi-dimensional economic development strategy where all citizens benefit. To learn more and to support the efforts of the FCEDP visit [www.fcedp.com](http://www.fcedp.com) and join Florence County Progress, the private sector arm of the FCEDP.

# HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION OF SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS



(BPT) - In school, students are learning new skills that will help them achieve their dreams. For a growing number of them, these dreams include owning their own business. Small businesses are an important part of the American economy and have accounted for two out of every three jobs added in the past 25 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Investing in budding entrepreneurs today will help create strong small businesses in the future.

One way students learn about what it's like to be a small business owner is through Junior Achievement, an organization that works to provide school-aged children with lessons in financial literacy, work and career readiness, and entrepreneurship. Because Junior Achievement educators directly work with students in communities across the country, they have unique insight into ways to support the next generation of small business owners.

In fact, according to a Junior Achievement survey, nearly nine out of 10 (86 percent) teens indicated they had some level of interest in starting

their own business. These students may decide to start their own business after graduation or bring their entrepreneurial ambitions into their college endeavors.

Schools provide important lessons about the skills and drive needed to own a business, but learning doesn't stop when the last school bell rings. Role models in the community can also significantly make a positive impact in forging a path for future small business owners.

## Engage kids

If you have children of your own or friends with children, ask them about their entrepreneurial interests. Tell them about your reasons for supporting small businesses and take them to these stores in your community. Oftentimes the owners are present, and if they aren't too busy, are happy to discuss their experiences.

## Mentor and hire interns

If you own a small business yourself, consider hiring students and interns. This can help you during busy seasons while also exposing young adults to what it's like to run a small business. If developing a hiring program like this doesn't work for you, consider being a mentor instead. Your local businesses and colleges would love volunteers and you'll feel good about making a difference.

## Start an entrepreneurial project

Whether part of a school assignment or just for fun, consider ways children can get a taste of what it's like to own a small business by choosing an age-appropriate project you can assist them with. You might help young kids run a yard sale or lemonade stand. Adolescents might start an online storefront for their arts and crafts, or perhaps for their tutoring or childcare services. Whatever the project, talk about goals, budgeting, customer service and other important components of a good business plan.

The future is bright as the next generation of small-business owners are learning important life skills and dreaming big. With these steps, you can help ensure their early visions empower them in the future.

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**LAKE CITY INCREASES CERTIFIED PUBLIC SAFETY BASE SALARIES** *Articles/Photos Submitted by Donna Tracy, public information officer*



Carlos Aponté is one of Lake City's newest public safety staff members and is currently attending the academy to become a certified firefighter. The City of Lake City Council passed a resolution September 13, to increase all certified public safety salaries

**LAKE CITY, SC** – The City of Lake City Council members approved a resolution September 13, that increases the base salaries of the city's certified public safety personnel to \$41,500.

"The city recognizes the value of our certified safety associates who are essential members of our community and our Lake City family. We want to show respect for them and what they do," said William A. Hall, city administrator.

Hall explained that the city increased the salaries to "remain competitive, help retain current staff and entice other firefighters and police officers to make Lake City their home."

Public safety salaries include:

- Free medical insurance
- Free dental insurance
- Free vision insurance
- Free life insurance
- 15 paid 12-hour holidays
- Short-term disability
- Paid training
- Tuition assistance

- Police Officer Retirement System
- 40 percent towards family insurance coverage
- Up to \$15,000 toward purchasing a Lake City home

In addition, staff receive a one percent of annual salary payout in December and start earning vacation and sick time from day one. Police officers also receive a take-home vehicle.

The pay increases go into effect this week and will set the lowest base salary of certified police officers at \$41,500. However, Police Chief Jody Cooper and Maj. Patrick Miles, director of operations, will not receive the \$5,000 increase.

"We agreed that our current officers and future candidates would benefit more from the pay incentive," said Cooper.

The salary of certified firefighters will also begin at \$41,500 based on certifications and experience.

"We're not just an employer. We are a small municipality, but we have a lot to offer in our community. We currently have a few openings in public safety, and we want the best to come to Lake City to build a career and be family with us," said Hall.

Lake City is a community of 6,000-plus residents who invite you to live – work – play – and visit in the southern part of Florence County.

**LCPD REMEMBERS LT. JOHN STEWART**



Lt. John Stewart

**LAKE CITY**– The officers of the Lake City Police Department have been wearing bands across their badges since September, in remembrance of Lt. John Stewart who was killed on duty one year ago.

Stewart, originally from Passaic, N.J., called Lake City his home and was an officer with the City of Lake City Police Department for 13 years. He served as a criminal investigator with organized crimes and narcotics and had earned his dream assignment to the U.S. Marshals Task Force shortly before his death.

"His physically large stature was only diminished by the love he had in his heart for this profession," said Lake City Police Chief Jody Cooper. "He was a police officer and demonstrated at every service call the highest level of professionalism, compassion and empathy for his community. Stewart's approach to each call for assistance from the community was that of a 'Peace Officer.' His big-brother approach and demeanor allowed Stewart to be a person you could rely on and respect when you were having a bad day or wanted an honest opinion."

Although absent from sight, Stewart will forever be in the hearts of the Lake City Police Department.

"We love you brother, and don't worry, ... we will take the rest of your calls."

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Be Aware  
Be Ready

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Florence County Emergency Management

1221 Justice Way P.O. Box 278

Effingham, South Carolina 29541

Main Office Telephone: 843-665-7255

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



# LAKE CITY LAUNCHES NEW HOMES PROGRAM Article/photos submitted by Jonathan Laster, public information officer



City Administrator William A. Hall (left) and Deputy City Administrator Joseph Cooper (right) look on as Mayor Lovith Anderson, Jr. (center) signs the affordable housing resolution. The resolution launches a plan to build affordable homes in the city into action.



City Administrator William A. Hall (left), Mayor Lovith Anderson, Jr. (center), and Deputy City Administrator Joseph Cooper (right) present the signed resolution. The resolution launches a plan to build affordable homes in the city into action.

**LAKE CITY**— The City of Lake City Council passed a resolution August 9, that launches a plan to build affordable homes in the city.

The plan will transform unused city properties into five new, three-bedroom homes for middle-income families.

“They are ordering all the supplies in bulk so we can keep the homes costs in the \$90,000 range,” said William A. Hall, city administrator. “In addition, building five homes at a time will give a greater positive impact on the community.”

The city plans to break ground this fall on the \$400,000 project to provide affordable housing using American Recovery Act funds. Construction of the homes is expected to take about three months once started but is dependent on supply issues and weather delays, according to Troy Wade of Wade Development Group.

The project will begin with five new three-bedroom homes built on existing city property which will be sold at around \$90,000 once completed. The goal is to continue the project with another five homes at a time as long as appropriate city properties are available.

“This is the perfect opportunity to move the city forward in building new homes,” said Hall.

The first homes to be built will be located at:

- 421 Carver Street • 423 Carver Street
- 380 Moore Street • 582 Moore Street
- 588 Moore Street

The city has partnered with local realtor Karon Epps of EME Realty and loan officer Mark Vancil of Finance of America Mortgage to help potential homeowners through the purchasing process and qualifying for a mortgage with a credit score as low as 580.

For more information about the homes, contact Karon Epps at 843-373-2164. For information about other Lake City projects, visit [LakeCitySC.gov](http://LakeCitySC.gov). Lake City is a community of 6,000-plus residents who invite you to live – work – play – and visit in the southern part of Florence County.



This render shows what the new houses will look like. The first homes to be built will be located at 421 Carver Street, 423 Carver Street, 380 Moore Street, 582 Moore Street and 588 Moore Street.

**LAKE CITY SC**  
  
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Your Career  
Starts...  
**HERE!**  
... at the  
City of Lake City



**Come join our family**

Visit [LakeCitySC.gov](http://LakeCitySC.gov) for application & information



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& Firefighters**

**\$41,500**

and up based on certification and experience

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- Tuition assistance
- Police take-home vehicle
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- 40% towards family insurance coverage



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# MEET CHANDRA GRAHAM - EXPERIENCE, LEADERSHIP, PROFESSIONALISM AND COMPASSION

Submitted by Chandra Graham



Chandra Graham

I am Chandra Graham, a Democratic candidate for Probate Judge of Florence County. I worked in the office of the Probate Judge in Florence County for eight years, received exceptional training and later managed and trained a strong team of committed public servants. I understand well that excellence in service to the people of Florence County can only be achieved through a knowledgeable, well-trained, committed team – leadership and staff. The team must also be sensitive to the families they

of knowing a family has been aided during one of their most emotionally charged and challenging periods. My eight years of probate court experience, leadership skills, professionalism and compassion align with the office. I pledge that if elected, I will return stability, accountability, commitment and service to the office of Probate Judge of Florence County. Election is Tuesday, November 8 and polls open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**I am with the people!**  
**For the people!**  
**Ready to serve the people!**

More information: This judgeship is the only judgeship that is chosen by the people. This office covers all of Florence County and its municipalities (Lake City, Johnsonville, Coward, Olanta, Pamplico, Quinby, Scranton and Timmonsville).

have an opportunity to serve.

I was born and raised in Florence County. I am the daughter of Dorothy Tindal Graham and the late Harold Graham, Sr. My parents taught me to work hard and take nothing for granted. Because of them, I have a strong work ethic, a strong religious faith and a commitment to public service. I have one daughter, Detria LeShay, who is a public-school teacher. I am a graduate of Wilson High School, Limestone University (BS Business Administration/Psychology minor) and Webster University (MBA). A recent graduate of Leadership Florence, Class of 2022, I also completed the Project Management Professional course with Florence Darlington Technical College.

I understand the intricacies of Probate Court and the satisfaction



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**2022**  
ELECTION

**CHANDRA**  
**GRAHAM**

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## FOUR SKILLS VETERANS BRING AS TEAM MEMBERS IN CIVILIAN CAREERS



(BPT) - Each year, the U.S. military generates thousands of professionals with highly specialized, transferable skills. Beyond technical and operational expertise, every service member gains skills that help keep teams afloat and foster cohesion and productivity, serving them well in their civilian careers.

It's important to recognize the value of these skills that veterans bring to businesses and organizations that employ them.

To help you understand the value-add veterans are to the businesses and organizations that hire them; are four skills former service members bring to the table.

### 1. Adaptability

If you ask a veteran what they 'did' on active duty, the answer will be impressive. During their time in the military, service members experience continuous on-the-job learning, constantly gaining new skill sets and specialties within new teams and environments. As agile, resourceful learners, veterans can pivot on a dime, bringing tenacity and personal initiative to every challenge.

Cybersecurity, cloud administration and cloud application development are quickly evolving fields that require adaptability, which former service members have in spades. This adaptability allows veterans to thrive in an environment of constant flux and can bridge critical knowledge gaps that drive new solutions to business challenges.

### 2. Resilience

Resilience is part of any service member's training. Military service

members know how to complete the mission set before them, whether it's deployment to crisis areas, moving families to a new base or country, sacrificing holidays and time with loved ones, or enormous physical and mental challenges.

A veteran's experience in overcoming obstacles and "staying on target" served them well during their military service and will continue to serve them as civilian and private sector professionals, particularly as the work environment and customer needs continue to evolve.

### 3. Teamwork

Teamwork is a critical skill in the military because members must operate in unison for the mission to succeed. This "stronger together" mindset cultivates a deep understanding of the value each member brings to a team and how to facilitate trust to develop cohesion.

Veterans know how to join, develop and empower a team to operate as a unit. These interpersonal skills allow former service members to work productively and establish trust with different groups and personalities, fostering collaboration and teamwork.

### 4. Leadership

Adaptability, resilience and teamwork are all skills that ultimately make veterans agile, thoughtful leaders on any team. While the pressures they face on active duty are very different from those they'll face in civilian life, veterans can be relied on to bring decisiveness and poise to even the most stressful environments.

Former service members are steady, focused and equipped to make tough decisions in some of the most stressful situations. As crisis managers, they know how to manage stress, deescalate and provide balance in a challenging environment. This advanced degree of "grace under pressure" allows former service members to push through when a project doesn't go according to plan, find a solution and lead a team to success.

These are just a few of the core skills veterans bring to their jobs outside of military service.



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# PAIRING ACTION, WITH A PLAN, EQUALS PROGRESS! Submitted by the City of Florence



408 Johns Street Demolition Progress



112 East Liberty Street - Before Demolition

Florence City Council and city staff have worked diligently to reinstitute neighborhood planning, so all city neighborhoods are places that demonstrate vibrance and growth. The city recognizes that issues within the community such as illegal activity, neglectful property maintenance and vacant and abandoned structures must be acknowledged and improved for these areas to prosper.

In an effort to establish a revitalization plan that addresses these issues and concerns that residents believe to be impediments to neighborhood vitality, the Neighborhood Action Plan was completed in January 2013, followed by the birth of the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy in 2014. The Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy focuses on the stabilization and redevelopment of the three residential neighborhoods surrounding the downtown area – East Florence, North Florence and Northwest Florence.

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (H.R. 1319) into law, providing \$350 billion in emergency funding for state, local territorial and Tribal governments to remedy rising costs and falling revenues. The City of Florence received almost \$8 million in Rescue Plan funding and City Council approved a spending plan for these funds. On January 10, 2022, City Council passed Resolution 2022-02 to allocate \$500,000 of American Rescue Plan Act Funds to demolish abandoned and blighted homes within city neighborhoods.



1102 Harmony Street – Before

The city's Codes Enforcement Department and the Community Services Department collaborate to achieve set goals for this project. Project goals consist of reducing crime, promoting health and safety, beautifying neighborhoods and establishing future long-term development within city neighborhoods. In striving for these goals, the city will seek to remove potential structures utilized for illegal activity, eliminate potential fire hazards prone to vagrant activity and infestation and enforce code compliance accountability for property owners.

Contractors began demolition work on August 3, 2022. To date, the removal of four homes is complete and more are underway. The first group of houses included 408 Johns Street, 1102 Harmony Street, 112 East Liberty Street, and 101 East Roughfork Street. Code Enforcement will provide community services with an ongoing list of abandoned properties within the city limits of Florence. Community Services will immediately work with the property owners identified as “voluntary” related to the interest in having their properties demolished. Any remaining structures that are not considered “voluntary” will be addressed through the demolition process outlined in the City of Florence Code of Ordinances. Properties for potential demolition provided to the Planning Department will be submitted, reviewed and approved by the local Historic

Commission.

Selection for demolition and removal of deteriorating structures is based on general priority levels in which the repair cost is more than 50 percent of its value. A further ranking of a low, medium or high priority is defined as the following: high priority to include criminal/nuisance activity or dangerous structures, medium priority to include significant public nuisance or CDBG areas and low priority to include general public nuisance structures. Planned neighborhood stabilization buildings and activities located near schools, churches, daycares, parks or other community-centric locations may heighten priority levels.

Healthy neighborhoods are vital to creating communities of lasting value. The City of Florence acknowledges that extending its positive transformation outwardly to the surrounding neighborhoods is in the best interest of its citizens and the long-term economic health of the municipality. Doing this ensures that all city residents have an opportunity to share in the growing prosperity of the Pee Dee region. Pairing an action with a plan produces progress that creates a quality of life that potentially attracts new and expanding industries to locate in the community, keeping Florence, Full Life, Full Forward.

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# UNITED WAY HOSTS ANNUAL DAY OF CARING

Submitted by United Way of Florence



A team member from Otis Elevator re-painted the porch furniture at Durant Children's Center.

generous sponsors."

The day began with a breakfast kickoff at First Presbyterian Church, with catering provided by Pee Dee Food Service. Speakers showcased the positive impact from last year's Day of Caring.

This year's projects included painting, yard work, construction, repairs and supply drives, among others.

Gold-level sponsors include Assurant and Pepsi of Florence. PGBA served as a silver-level sponsor. Bronze-level sponsors included Field



Troy Hodge with First Citizens Bank worked to cut back shrubbery at Pee Dee Speech & Hearing.

"Assurant's purpose is 'Helping People Thrive in a Connected World,'" Bass said. "Day of Caring is valuable to Assurant because it allows us to put our culture into action and see firsthand the impact we make on others through United Way."

Participating companies also included Anderson Brothers Bank, Central United Methodist Church, Circle Park Behavioral Health Services, City of Florence, Crescent Advisory Partners of Raymond James, Duke Energy, Field Fastener, First Citizens Bank, First Reliance Bank, Florence County, GE Healthcare, Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Junior League of Florence, McCall Farms, Otis Elevators, Pepsi of Florence, PREIT, Raldex, Recruiting Solutions, SPC Credit Union, Staybridge Suites, The Continuum, Thermo Fisher, Webster Rogers LLP and WestRock.



Thermo Fisher trimmed the shrubs

More than 200 volunteers participated in United Way of Florence County's annual Day of Caring on Friday, September 16, completing more than 60 projects for 16 local nonprofit organizations.

Cameron Packett, president of United Way of Florence County, said the work completed will allow local nonprofits to devote more resources to the publics they serve.

"The annual Day of Caring brings our community together to help nonprofits so they can better serve those in need," Packett said. "We're grateful to those who joined this important effort and, as always to our

Fastener, First Reliance Bank, HopeHealth, McCall Farms, Orr Company Inc., and Webster Rogers LLP.

"Pepsi has been heavily involved with United Way's Day of Caring for many years, from catering the kickoff breakfast to providing the t-shirts," said Tammy Hicks, executive assistant and pricing coordinator for Pepsi of Florence. "We are dedicated to making this event as successful as possible because it does so much good for the community."

Nikkoya Bass, operations manager at Assurant, said the Day of Caring reflects her organization's central mission.

"Assurant's purpose is 'Helping People Thrive in a Connected World,'" Bass said. "Day of Caring is valuable to Assurant because it allows us to put our culture into action and see firsthand the impact we make on others through United Way."

Participating companies also included Anderson Brothers Bank, Central United Methodist Church, Circle Park Behavioral Health Services, City of Florence, Crescent Advisory Partners of Raymond James, Duke Energy, Field Fastener, First Citizens Bank, First Reliance Bank, Florence County, GE Healthcare, Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Junior League of Florence, McCall Farms, Otis Elevators, Pepsi of Florence, PREIT, Raldex, Recruiting Solutions, SPC Credit Union, Staybridge Suites, The Continuum, Thermo Fisher, Webster Rogers

LLP and WestRock. Local nonprofits that were positively impacted include Boys & Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee Area, CARE House of the Pee Dee, Children's Cancer Partners of the Carolinas, Chrysalis Center of Circle Park, Florence Area Literacy Council, Florence County Disabilities & Special Needs, Foster Care Clothing Closet, Lighthouse Ministries, Pee Dee Area Council BSA, Pee Dee Coalition, Pee Dee Speech & Hearing, Senior Citizens Association, Tenacious Grace, The Salvation Army, United Way of Florence County, Youth Mentors of the Pee Dee.

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# FIVE WAYS TO GET YOUR EMPLOYEES INVESTED IN DEI

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** - Imagine this: you and your team just got back from a life-changing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training. Now what? Folks have gone back to their offices, closed their doors, and hopefully, someone on the DEI Council will integrate the learnings somehow.

If we approach DEI experiences like trainings, sessions and conferences as one-off events where, “someone else will integrate it,” we leave powerful learning and opportunities on the table. Building an inclusive, equitable workplace that works for everyone involves

everyone’s participation. If you’re struggling with getting folks to have an interest in DEI, here are five ways to get your employees invested in diversity, equity and inclusion.

## 1. Encourage employees who aren’t DEI professionals to participate in events and trainings

For someone working in a department unrelated to DEI, it can be challenging to convince them why they should care. It’s not their area of expertise, and perhaps, from their perspective, DEI doesn’t seem to affect their department or work relationships.

As a person in leadership, think about how you can encourage folks who don’t engage with DEI to give it more serious consideration. I recommend inviting them to attend DEI seminars, training or conferences—even if they don’t think it’ll be relevant.

Part of getting folks invested in DEI is raising awareness that everyone benefits from a more inclusive and equitable workspace. By encouraging employees who don’t typically attend these sessions to go and explore, we’re inviting them to take ownership over their education and to use that knowledge to better their department.

## 2. Use the divide-and-conquer method to increase engagement in DEI experiences

If you and your team are attending a DEI conference or training, try dividing up and having each person go to a different session. The benefit of splitting up is that you increase the knowledge collected by each individual who will then return to the group with new ideas and concepts—resulting in a whole body of learnings that’s greater than the sum of its parts.

What dividing up also does is it gets individuals to engage with the work without the protective cocoon of colleagues. DEI is inherently personal. Our personal identities show up differently depending on the rooms, people or places around us.

What one colleague will experience in a conference room will be different from another. The divide-and-conquer method will increase your team’s engagement with DEI, put the philosophy into context, and encourage group conversations when the event is over. Plus, consider asking those who attended these sessions to start projects that champion DEI in their respective departments. As we’ll see in the next point, doing the work of DEI shouldn’t be the sole responsibility of those working in the HR or DEI departments.

## 3. Make engaging in DEI work a paid opportunity

One of the biggest faux pas that organizations make is they don’t compensate employees for choosing to be on an employee working group (ERG), business resource group (BRG), or DEI council. This is not extracurricular work. This is business-critical work and should be compensated.

For a lot of the people leading ERGs, BRGs or DEI councils, the assumption is that these individuals have a passion for the work and that they’re inherently equipped to do it. However, there’s a difference between having the will and having the skill.

Paying employees to do what is mostly considered, “voluntary work,” should be a priority, perk and part of your business’s budget. Being paid for DEI work motivates employees and can improve the quality of the initiatives they bring to your organization.

## 4. Invest in a DEI resource library

For some people, conferences and in-person meetings are not the best way to learn about DEI. Part of the beauty of embracing diversity is understanding that people learn differently.

There are many ways to gain knowledge about the topic and we as business owners and leaders have to be sensitive to the learning styles of our staff. One way to engage those who prefer to learn about DEI in privacy is to invest in a company resource library with physical, digital, and perhaps audiobooks. This resource library should be widely available, updated frequently and easy to access.

While one employee may show amazing enthusiasm in a session, another may wish to read privately on their own to develop an opinion or gain knowledge. Although person one may give leadership instant gratification for their participation, don’t forget that some people may not outwardly express their interest in the topic, and that’s perfectly fine.

The goal is to create as many avenues for engagement as possible—whether that’s reading a book during an employee’s lunch break or engaging in a learning circle (which we’ll talk about next), we want employees to learn, reflect and develop their own interest in the work.

## 5. Host learning circles to reflect and share knowledge

One of the most powerful ways to process DEI information, especially after a formal experience, is to host a learning circle. Learning circles are intimate group conversations where attendees and others can process the information they learned in a safe and brave space.

Oftentimes, learning circles are the only place where some employees can share their honest thoughts about a certain topic. It’s in those moments of critical reflection that we move from philosophy to action. We begin to strategize on how to apply what we learned in a DEI experience. The work of generating ideas for a more diverse, inclusive and equitable workplace is no longer placed on the shoulders of a few. The responsibility is divided among many and that’s a good thing for a business dedicated to DEI.

### Final thoughts

It’s not easy to convince someone who isn’t passionate about DEI or doesn’t think it applies to them to get engaged in the work. By investing in the right ways, your business can enjoy the benefit of a renewed interest in the topic.

Encouraging employees to attend DEI events, paying them for their participation in working groups, investing in a resource library and hosting learning circles are all ways to invest in your employees.

We have to get more sophisticated about not simply asking people to be a part of the experience and then allowing that moment to end. How can we further our experiences to put the learnings into practice? It all starts with investing in our employees and developing a company-wide interest in DEI—one valued employee at a time.



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# THE GREATER FLORENCE CHAMBER HOLDS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON

Submitted by the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce



Gregg Robinson

The Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce held its Annual Membership Luncheon on Wednesday, September 21, at the Florence Center. The audience of more than 525 business and community leaders heard Gregg Robinson, CEO of the Florence Economic Development Partnership share current programs and projects that the organization is undertaking to bring significant economic development to Florence County. His program highlighted the need for everyone in all businesses to be partners in our future efforts to bring growth to the county.

Robinson, who has nearly 30 years of experience in economic development, started off his speech highlighting the growth Florence County has experienced and credited its growth to the visionaries who saw a vision for Florence County and worked toward it.

"Florence is standing on the back of a lot of visionaries," Robinson said. "It is about cathedral thinking and building blocks for the future generation to stand on. Even knowing that we will never see the chapel finished, it is always about creating that foundation of success."

Robinson said he observed that family is the core in Florence County. "That resonates with prospective manufacturers," Robinson said. "Prospective manufacturers notice how important the family unit is and can see the company growing for generations to come."

Robinson said the leadership in Florence was phenomenal and the legislative delegation had the ability to deliver and handle every infrastructure need Florence has.

The private sector was another area that received praise. Robinson

said the private foundation is often forgotten, but Florence County does well in its partnerships with private sector foundations.

He mentioned the Dr. Bruce & Lee Foundation, the Eddie Floyd Foundation, the Darla Moore Foundation and the School Foundation, which is the largest in the state and the Eastern Carolina Foundation.

Robinson said the private sector partnering with the governmental side is what sets Florence apart in the Eastern Region and the community will grow as a result.



James Marvin Owen

The Chamber's 2022 Businessperson of the Year award was presented by Wells Fargo Bank. The award recognizes an individual who has made enduring and outstanding contributions in the field of business. Amber Sellers of Wells Fargo presented the honor to James Marvin Owen.

Owen is President Emeritus of ACS Technologies and serves on the Board of Directors. He was named President of ACS in 2008, and under his leadership the company became a national leader in information management solutions and software for churches. He also serves on many civic boards and non-profit committees in the Florence community.

Chamber President, Michael Miller said, "Again, the Chamber is delighted with the Businessperson of the Year Nominating Committee's decision to present Marvin Owen as this year's recipient. His leadership and commitment to business and community reflects well for those that have received the award in the past and should inspire those who will likely be honored with the recognition in future years."



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# PURSUING AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT COMPENSATION

Submitted by the Office of Attorney Linward C. Edwards II, LLC



We at The Law Offices of Linward C. Edwards II, LLC in Florence, South Carolina, understand the pain you may be going through. Whether it's a slip and fall, car accident or some other wrongful injury, you may need legal counsel and we are here to help you through your ordeal.

If you have suffered an injury due to the carelessness of another party, you may be able to recover compensation through a personal injury lawsuit. We can help you negotiate for a settlement that accurately reflects the total damages of your accident.

## The Compensation You Deserve

Depending on the circumstances surrounding your injury, you may be able to recover damages, including, but not limited to the following:

- Past and future medical bills
- Lost wages
- Pain and suffering

If you've been injured in an accident, we can help you determine whether the negligence of another individual or entity is at fault for your injuries. In some cases, more than one person may be liable; in other personal injury lawsuits, such as those involving defective products, a manufacturer, rather than an individual, may be named as the defendant. To make sure your right to compensation is protected, it is important to find an experienced personal injury lawyer who can investigate your claim and help ensure all liable parties are held accountable.

The Law Offices of Linward C. Edwards II, LLC is dedicated to helping injury victims like you throughout Florence and Dillon obtain justice and the compensation rightfully owed to you when you have been needlessly injured by another's negligence or recklessness. We perform a proper investigation and develop a strategy tailored to your medical records, the facts of your individual case and the limitations that you may have for the remainder of your life. We will work to bring a swift resolution to your claims. However, we treat every case as if it is going to trial to ensure that you receive the maximum value possible.

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# HONDA AND THE HONDA USA FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL CHARITABLE FUNDING CYCLE LAUNCHES

Submitted by Honda



**HONDA**

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Honda USA Foundation

TORRANCE, Calif. and MARYSVILLE, Ohio- Honda and the Honda USA Foundation announced the opening of its annual funding cycle for eligible nonprofit organizations and schools based on the company's long-standing commitment to give back to the communities where its associates live and work. Applications for funding will be accepted now through the deadline of October 31, 2022, with awards to be announced in spring 2023.

Honda and the Honda USA Foundation provide funding to national and local organizations that provide support to communities located near Honda operations and align with the company's five strategic CSR pillars of Education, Environment, Mobility, Traffic Safety and Community. Funding is available through both corporate and the company's Foundation.

Funding opportunities from Honda will be available in all five pillars, with a renewed focus on support for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) in the Education pillar.

Funding available through the Honda USA Foundation will continue to support three of those pillars: Environment, Mobility and Traffic Safety.

The funding cycle is part of a new approach to Honda CSR activities initiated in 2021, based on the five-pillar strategy to drive change within local communities. Through Honda and the Honda USA Foundation, the company has increased its philanthropic investment to better align with Honda being a company society wants to exist.

To learn more about funding opportunities and eligibility criteria, please visit: <https://csr.honda.com/community/honda-giving/>.

About Honda Corporate Social Responsibility and the Honda USA Foundation

For more than 60 years in the U.S., Honda has been committed to making positive contributions to the communities where its associates live and work. Honda's mission is to create products and services that help people fulfill their life's potential, while conducting business in a sustainable manner and fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. Advancing its corporate social responsibility, Honda and the Honda USA Foundation support this direction through giving focused on education, the environment, mobility, traffic safety and community.

Learn more at <http://csr.honda.com/>.

## Honda's Commitment to Inclusion & Diversity

Honda is committed to advancing inclusion, diversity and equity within the company and in communities across America. This includes both Honda's longstanding efforts as well as new actions the company is taking to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce, advance the diversity of its dealer and supplier networks, provide educational opportunities to marginalized communities and support diverse organizations, among other efforts. One example is the special relationship Honda has with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), forged through more than 30 years of support that has impacted the lives of over 200,000 students, including over \$14 million in grants to HBCU education programs and facilities improvements.

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**HOW A SMALL NON-PROFIT  
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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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## IF YOU ARE INVOLVED IN AN ACCIDENT, DON'T FALL FOR THESE MISSTEPS

*Submitted by Jebaily Law Firm*



Did you know that it is a crime in South Carolina if you leave the scene of an accident too early? The law requires that you stop if a crash causes property damage, injury or death. If your accident checks any of these

boxes, the law requires that you stop. You may only leave if law enforcement gives you an OK to go or if you are transported to a hospital for medical care.

### 1. Leaving out law enforcement

No matter how minor your accident may feel, it is best to always call law enforcement. Start by calling 911 to see if you need medical attention. The police can be the first post-accident witnesses to provide a police report. Law enforcement must be called for injuries, deaths and property damage, so you must obey the law.

### 2. Leaving without photos

For accidents, a picture can be worth so much more when it is time to discuss the severity of an accident or injury. Take pictures of the scene before your car is moved or towed. We encourage you to get at least four exterior shots, interior shots, and shots of the surrounding scene. Remember to take photos of both cars and focus on the details. Remember to take photos of glass, debris, skid marks and more.

### 3. Leaving out the details

Are you paying attention to the surroundings of the accidents? Now is the time to take notes. You may need them in the future. Think

about your actions as the driver. Did you obey the traffic laws? Now, consider the other driver. Did you notice anything that concerned you about their behavior? From intoxicated driving to speeding, each of these details matters.

### 4. Leaving out a lawyer

If you realize that you need a lawyer after an accident, don't ignore the recommendation. An experienced lawyer can help you make the right steps after your accident to help you receive the proper compensation. Contact our experienced accident lawyers today to avoid missteps. We discourage you from handling legal matters without representation.

For a full list of other post-accident recommendations, visit our website. We also share handy items to keep in your car in case an accident becomes a part of your day.

### Contact Our South Carolina Car Accident Lawyers Today.

A car accident can leave a lasting impact. We're here to help. If you are hurt in a car accident, we can provide support for a wide range of cases. Contact the experienced car accident attorneys at Jebaily Law Firm today for help with rear-end collisions, T-bone collisions, sideswipe accidents, head-on crashes and rollovers. Reach out now for a free, no-obligation consultation.

### About Jebaily Law Firm

Jebaily Law Firm is one of South Carolina's long-established and well-respected legal practices. With offices in Florence, North Myrtle Beach and Myrtle Beach, SC, we are trial lawyers focused on plaintiff litigation in personal injury, workers' compensation, social security disability and criminal defense. Established in 1969, we have more than 100 years of combined legal experience in protecting the rights of clients and advocating for the safety and well-being of South Carolina citizens.



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# VOTED "BEST OF THE PEE DEE" FOR 2022 Submitted by Finklea, Hendrick & Blake, LLC



**Our clients are the foundation of our success.  
Thank you for your vote and business!**

Finklea, Hendrick & Blake, LLC is proud to announce that we have been voted as Best Law Firm in the Morning News' 2022 "Best of the Pee Dee" Contest! It is an honor and a privilege to be recognized for the fifth year in a row by our clients and community! Thank you for this humbling honor and your votes! In appreciation for the recognition, our firm would again like to give back to the community that has embraced our vision for delivering superb legal representation at affordable rates in a timely and professional manner. In celebration and appreciation of being voted Best Law Firm for a fifth year in a row, this year we will donate \$5,000 to five groups of

charities for a total of \$25,000 during this voting cycle!

Finklea, Hendrick & Blake is committed to exemplary representation of our clients by hiring experienced staff members that excel in their practice areas to make each case run as smoothly as possible. Additionally, our firm utilizes what most in the industry would consider the best legal software available. This technology combined with a competent staff allows us to deliver legal services in a timely manner and at an affordable price.

Finklea, Hendrick & Blake has grown from one attorney and one staff member to six attorneys and twenty-one staff members. The

firm's first office began at 814 West Evans Street in Florence and has expanded into buildings, 816 and 820, on West Evans. FHB opened its first satellite office at 2554 E. Hwy 76 in Marion in 2017. A second satellite office was then opened at 101 South Main Street, in Hemingway in 2020.

Finklea, Hendrick & Blake is a local firm that supports many endeavors within our community. All of our attorneys work and live in the Pee Dee area making it easy for one-on-one client interaction. Our attorneys are always available to meet with clients, unlike some firms with no real presence or connection to the Pee Dee. Finklea, Hendrick & Blake has a rich history of supporting local charities and events.

Again, we would like to thank all of the friends and family of FHB for voting us as "The Best Law Firm in the Pee Dee." We are honored that our clients have acknowledged the level of services we provide, and especially want to thank and recognize our staff for their immeasurable contributions to our success.

Thank you, Pee Dee, for this recognition! We look forward to continuing to serve you!!



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# ARE YOU AT A SPIRITUAL CROSSROADS?

by Robin Lewis



**HEMINGWAY**-Have you felt it? Many people today are at a spiritual crossroads. I want you to imagine with me the whole of the world. Can you imagine your view from space where you can see the earth all blue and white, hanging among the stars? The astronauts of the Apollo 8 mission that first saw the “earth rise” through the window were not expecting it. They said it felt like they could reach up and touch the face of God. Can you imagine how that must have felt to feel so close to God among all those billions of stars in the universe?



Imagine now that we are zooming in closer. Can you see people? Families in their homes, some are living on the street, some are in hospitals, some giving birth to new babies and some are in funeral homes, saying goodbye to family members or friends. Can you see families cooking and eating, children and babies that need holding, others who are hurting or lonely? Imagine God who created all this and each of us and called it all very good. Imagine watching God watch each person with eyes of love, focused on each and every single individual, from young to old.

Now imagine one more thing. The crossroads where we find ourselves positioned at in time. We have been positioned “for such a time as this” and the direction we choose will determine our future life.

Can you see all the tumultuous and scary things happening on the planet? Things like COVID, cancer, wars, inflation, riots and unrest. These are all ground-level things that happen here on Earth, and the voices of these things are loud and shouting to get your attention.

Where you focus will determine your level of faith, your mental and emotional state, your outlook and attitude and your life pursuits. So, if you are focused on things at ground level, your spirit and soul are guaranteed to shrink and become weak and afraid. That can make you turn in a wrong direction. But if you learn to embrace your faith and focus on God who is higher, stronger and whose love strengthens you in your spirit and soul, then you are getting equipped to fight your giants and win.

Either we will focus on what we trust, or we will focus on what we fear. Now, you might say, “but I don’t walk in fear,” but I know it’s the enemy’s favorite weapon. He likes to masquerade fear as worry, fretting, anxiety, health problems and stress. If you’re dealing with these things, you’re already in a battle.

When the negative has our attention, the enemy can then lead us in fear until it becomes a stronghold inside our minds, making it difficult to see anything that is above ground level. The enemy wants you looking at the size of your giants, not the size of your God. He wants you to put your trust in earthly things like money, food, gas, doctors, lawyers and the government. But you weren’t created to put your trust in things that leave you depending on your own strength or on others to provide for you.



You and I were created to depend on God and His “above Earth ability” to do anything we need supernaturally. We were created to walk with him in an intimate relationship where we aren’t just trying to survive earthly things, but where we are changing earthly things and thriving!

We are all at a crossroads in time, and the direction we choose today, this week or this month, will direct our life for a long time to come. The choice before you is this: Will you walk in fear, focused on and reacting to earthly things... Or will you turn in the direction that leads you higher in faith and deeper in your relationship with God? This crossroads is where love and fear meet. It’s time to embrace your faith in Christ and go higher.



I can hear the Lord say, “You have plateaued, and you are going to have to make a choice. You’re either going to have to go up or you’re going to have to go across. How you respond to me,” the Lord said, “is how you will find your journey ahead and off of the plateau. Don’t choose being

comfortable on the plateau. Choose either to find the bridge across the ravine, or to go up to higher heights so you can see your path in a new way. Choose not the plateau where you are presently standing, or you will not find the prosperity that I have for days ahead.”

Our calling is to go higher. Our calling is to walk with him, knowing his heart so well that we are able to stand firm no matter what comes our way because we are depending on God and His strength flowing through us.

Psalm 18:31-34 says, “Could there be any other god like Yahweh? For there is not a more secure foundation than you. God, you have wrapped me in power and made my way perfect. Through You, I ascend to the highest peaks, able to stand strong and secure in you. You empower me for victory with your wraparound presence.”

We truly are at a crossroads, one like we’ve never faced before! We must learn to hold onto our faith, embracing it no matter what comes. So, ask yourself these questions:

- 1. Do I have others traveling with me who will strengthen me in my relationship with God?**
- 2. Am I being trained where and how I need to be?**
- 3. Do I know what to do when fear, stress or anxiety rise up in my life?**

Who knows what depends on your faith in the future? Earthly things are not going to get better unless we step into WHO we are in Christ. Our God is above all earthly things and can supernaturally strengthen us to walk with him and do exploits and miracles just like Jesus did. No more messing around presenting a life with Christ as something optional and possibly beneficial. Isaiah 7:9 says, “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

God is ready to help us stand. Join the Embraced Faith Inner Circle for women that launches October 4. Find out more at [www.EmbracedFaith.com](http://www.EmbracedFaith.com). Our Decree: WE WILL BE IN OUR GENERATION THE WOMEN WHO EMBRACE FAITH AND STAND FIRM ON THE NAME OF JESUS!

## CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE IS OUR SUPERPOWER!

Submitted by Dr. Kandace Bethea, superintendent



Dr. Kandace Bethea

**MARION** - Cultivating Excellence is our SUPERPOWER! Marion County School District is doing great things for the 22-23 school year! With the implementation of a new district Strategic Plan “Cultivating Excellence,” the district has six priority areas or “drivers” that will push Marion County School District forward; especially focusing on increasing access and opportunities to provide innovative, effective and relevant educational services to students, staff and families.

During the 2021-2022 school year Marion County School District observed academic growth on assessments required of our students throughout the school year. As we continue to make positive strides, we acknowledge the necessity for continued academic growth. To support student growth, our Instructional Leadership Teams are working actively with teachers through instructional coaching, monitoring data and using the data to make daily informed instructional decisions. Teachers participate in weekly common planning activities and evidence-based PLCs to promote teacher-driven, student-focused practices. We are confident that continuing this level of support will lead to significant student growth and achievement. This year the district has transitioned from using the Measures of Academic Progress or MAP assessment to using I-Ready. I-Ready will keep our teachers and administrators better informed of student growth, continued progress and areas of student challenge so targeted individual and small group instruction can better meet their learning needs in the classroom.

To continue to meet the needs of the diverse learners in Marion County School District, we continue to explore ways to best challenge our students and prepare them for their next steps.

We are pleased to announce for the 2022-2023 school year the expansion of our partnership with Florence Darlington Technical College. The expansion offers additional academic and workforce training opportunities to the students in Marion County School District. Students from both Marion and Mullins High School have access to these new options as well as the programs traditionally housed at the Academy for Careers and Technology. Machine Tooling, the Early Childhood Certificate Program, and a Medical Terminology program are all new options offered in partnership with Florence Darlington Technical College. The Academy for Careers and Technology is also a new home to a state approved Firefighter Certification program. Already, the programs at the Academy for Careers and Technology have seen enrollments double from this time last year. We are aware, there is a great demand for students graduating with workforce ready skills. Our local economy and businesses desire graduates that are ready to enter the workforce with certifications and real-life experiences to support their success in the workplace. We are excited to continue to offer and expand those opportunities for students here in Marion County School District.

Students also continue have access to options such as the Early College Program and Dual Credit offerings and other traditional program offerings at the Academy for Careers and Technology. We’re excited to watch these expansions and offerings for the students in Marion County grow. For a complete listing of programs at ACT visit you can visit <https://www.marion.k12.sc.us/Page/35>.

North Mullins Primary School is now the home to MCS D’s Montessori Program serving students in grades kindergarten through grade five. Montessori is another opportunity the district is growing to meet the various learning needs of our students.

Montessori is a method of education that is child-centered with an emphasis on hands-on learning and uses specialized learning materials and has a unique classroom environment. Students have personalized work plans and learning goals based on their interests, needs and abilities. We’ve seen expansion and growth of our Montessori program over the last five years and the students enrolled continue to perform well on standardized and district assessments.

MCS D introduced FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition in Science and Technology) LEGO Leagues that introduce science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) through fun, exciting hands-on learning. Participants gain real-world problem-solving experience through a guided, global robotics program, helping today’s students and teachers build a better future together. We will have two teams participating in the FIRST LEGO League Challenge competition. The fourth and fifth grade team at McCormick Elementary School in Mullins and a sixth through eighth grade team at Creek Bridge STEM Academy in Centenary. As the students work with this season’s theme of Super Powered, they will explore where energy comes from and how it is distributed, stored and used. Our robotics team members will be working to reimagine and innovate for a better energy future through critical thinking, team work and coding skills.

This year, as part of the state’s Palmetto Project, the South Carolina Department of Education will partner with Marion County School District and many others across the state to offer LETRS Training to our K-3 teachers and principals. LETRS professional development is job-embedded and based on the science of reading and provides the tools to improve teacher literacy practices. Training teachers and administrators in literacy instruction is imperative to see achievement in the district improve as we continue to feel the effects from Covid, virtual instruction and many new teachers in classrooms.

The summer of 2022, brought much to look forward to for the 22-23 school year. Creek Bridge STEM Academy has been awarded \$14,000 in grant funds to use for STEM and Project Lead the Way. They were chosen as an expansion partner with the Original Six Foundation as an after-school site location. Creek Bridge STEM Academy is also pursuing STEM Accreditation through Cognia, a rigorous process, ensuring quality STEM implementation school wide. The Johnakin Middle School Beta Club represented and placed at the National Beta Convention in Nashville, Tennessee in June after winning at the state convention earlier this year in Myrtle Beach. We have numerous clubs and athletic teams volunteering in schools, in our community, supporting national advocacy groups and maybe even a team or two on their way to district or regional championship.

Marion County School District received Cognia Accreditation in June 2022. Cognia, a nonprofit organization that provides quality assurance for schools, school districts and education service providers. Cognia, formerly AdvancED, nationally recognizes districts that meet rigorous standards that focus on productive learning environments, equitable resource allocation that meet the needs of learners, and effective leadership. Earning accreditation from the Cognia Global Accreditation Commission means the system and all of its schools are accredited, and that Marion County School District is recognized across the nation as a school system that meets Cognia Standards of Quality and maintains a commitment to continuous improvement.

Marion County School District students and staff are ready for an excellent school year. This year, “Cultivating Excellence is our Superpower”!

You can reach Dr. Kandace Bethea, Superintendent of Marion County School District at [kbethea@marion.k12.sc.us](mailto:kbethea@marion.k12.sc.us).

# HIRING GREAT TEACHERS

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#CultivatingExcellence

## MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD HAS ALL THE ESSENTIALS FOR A PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL YEAR

(BPT) - As children across the country head back to the classroom this fall, one important item that shouldn't be forgotten from the to-do list is making sure they have health coverage. Studies have shown that academic performance and health insurance go hand in hand. Children who have health coverage miss fewer classes and perform better in school than those who are uninsured. But health coverage doesn't just benefit students. Fewer missed days of school also mean fewer missed days of work for parents. With health coverage, children can get the routine and emergency care, immunizations, check-ups, eye exams, dental visits and mental health services they may need to fully participate in school and remain engaged in class. Health coverage also provides access to important care if children get sick or injured. Nationwide, millions of school-aged children and teens qualify - and are enrolled - in free or low-cost health coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). These health programs can provide vital access to care; including well-child visits and vaccinations, to keep students focused on learning and give parents the peace of mind that comes with knowing their children are covered inside and outside the classroom. The start of the school year is a good opportunity to catch up on important well-child visits and ensure children are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases (like measles and mumps). And don't forget - if a child is six months and older and hasn't received their COVID-19 vaccine or booster, or they are aged five and older; parents should talk to their child's doctor about getting it as soon as possible.

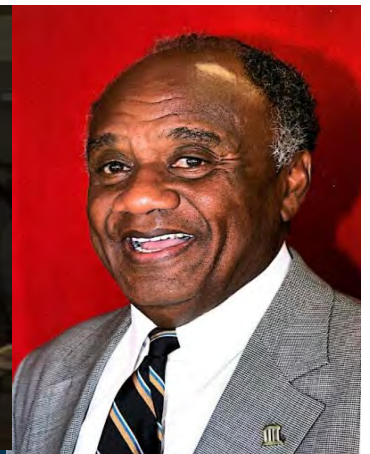
For the millions of families with children currently in Medicaid or CHIP, this is also a good time to make sure their address is up-to-date with their state program. Many people move over time and forget to update their address. These families might accidentally miss their renewal application that comes in the mail. Then, they could lose their

health coverage too.

Medicaid and CHIP provide free or low-cost coverage for eligible children and teens up to age 19. Eligibility is dependent on household size and income and varies by state.

You can apply online, over the phone, by mail or in-person with your state's Medicaid or CHIP agency or visit the "Find Coverage for Your Family" section on [InsureKidsNow.gov](http://InsureKidsNow.gov). For more information, call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (1-877-543-7669). Enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP is open all year, and, once your child is enrolled, you need to renew their coverage every year to keep them covered. Make sure your state has your current mailing address, phone number, email, or other contact information, especially if you have moved in the last year. This way, they'll be able to contact you about your Medicaid or CHIP coverage. Your state will mail you a letter about your coverage, including renewal information.





*In Loving Memory of*

## Samuel H. Frink

March 20, 1944 – September 04, 2022

UNCF and the Pee Dee Area Leadership Council members honor and remember the extraordinary commitment and dedication of our beloved colleague, Samuel H. Frink. For over 30 years, Sam embodied the spirit of what it means to be a keeper of the flame of knowledge. Throughout his life he strived to ensure that all young people had access to a high-quality education by sharing his time, talents and treasures. Sam's smile, laughter and the joy he brought to living will remain in our hearts forever!





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# BALL

PEE DEE AREA 2022

During the 2020-21 school year, 375 awards totaling **\$1.5 million** were given to students from South Carolina.

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Mayor, City of Florence



**Charlene G. Lowery**  
Co-Owner, MiLadies 182 Boutique



**Beverly W. Woods**  
Afterschool Coordinator, Florence 1 Schools



**Rosalind D. McGinnis**  
Area Development Director, UNCF

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# FELLOWS IN EDUCATION PREPARES FOR ANOTHER EXCITING YEAR

Submitted by Debbie Hyler, executive director of The School Foundation



*Fellows In Education Class of 2022-2023*

Now in its seventh year, the Fellows in Education program give business and community leaders a unique behind-the-scenes look into Florence 1 schools. The program, a School Foundation, Chamber and Florence 1 Schools partnership, is designed to give its members a close look at day-to-day school operations.

“We are thrilled that the Fellows in Education program is now in its seventh year,” said Debbie Hyler, executive director of The School Foundation. “Having the opportunity to visit the classrooms affords our community leaders a better understanding of today’s technology and programs designed to provide our students with the skills needed to enter the workforce. The foundation is proud to have the opportunity to showcase the numerous grants we have funded throughout the years.”

“Each year the Chamber looks forward to working with The School Foundation and Florence 1 Schools on this joint project,” said Michael Miller, president of the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce. “The Fellows in Education experience has grown to be popular with area business and community leaders. It certainly has served its purpose by creating a community of educational ambassadors that can share firsthand knowledge of our local student proficiencies and educator experiences.”

Florence 1 Superintendent Dr. Richard O’Malley expressed his views about the program. “The Fellows program helps provide cohesive district-wide and community-wide communication and is re-energizing collaborations with our business community. I am excited about the opportunities this program provides.”

Organizers of the program say the ultimate goal of Fellows in Education is to create a large group of local leaders who will be able to collaborate with policymakers and community members in developing better education policies in the local community.

An orientation meeting for the program was held on Tuesday, August 9. The first of nine sessions will begin on Tuesday, September 13, and sessions will be held thereafter each month through May 2023, at various Florence 1 Schools.

Members of the three-way partnership have sought community and business leaders whom they believe are civic-minded supporters of the need for expansion of local educational resources.

## **Members of this year’s Fellows in Education Program include:**

Emily Adams – McLeod Health  
Dr. Natasha Addison – High School to Infinity  
Jay Bishop – Duke Energy  
Stephanie Bosch – Florence County Economic Development Partnership  
Dr. Gloria Bracey – F1S Board of Trustees  
Chris Day – Morning News  
Sarah Duby – Assurant  
Pam Edwards – ThermoFisher Scientific  
Dr. Jermaine Ford – Florence-Darlington Technical College  
Kate Glass – Francis Marion University PAC  
Jay Hinesley – MUSC Health – Florence Medical Center  
Debbie Hyler – The School Foundation  
Julie Jebaily – Jebaily Properties  
Uschi Jeffcoat – Florence County Museum  
AJ Jones – Florence Toyota  
Mathew Langston – Truist  
Terry Martin – McCall Farms  
Glacieria Mason – Diversity Works Magazine

Sara McIver – PGBA-BCBSSC  
Michael Miller – Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce  
Darryl Morris – Pee Dee Food Service  
David Mullins – First Reliance  
Chip Munn – Signature Wealth  
Dr. Richard O’Malley – Florence 1 Schools  
Richard Rowlett – Field Fastener  
J. Lawrence Smith – Smith Funeral Home/City Council  
Carin Spears – HopeHealth  
Sarah Sweeney – United Way  
Mindy Taylor – Duke Energy  
Jon Weiss – Adams Outdoor Advertising  
Georgiana Wester – Parent  
Joan Wilson-Pringle – Retired – Social Security Administration

For additional information, contact Debbie Hyler, executive director, The School Foundation, [dhyl@theschoolfoundation.org](mailto:dhyl@theschoolfoundation.org); or Michael Miller, president, Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce, [mmiller@flochamber.com](mailto:mmiller@flochamber.com);

## **BUTLER ACADEMY HOSTS MANDARIN TEACHER**

Submitted by Barbara Chappell, vice president of Development



*(Left to Right) Butler Academy’s new Mandarin teacher Wanlin Lin and Middle School Dean of Academics Nateisha Taylor.*

**HARTSVILLE** – Butler Academy welcomed Lin Wanlin from Taipei City, Taiwan, to our school and community this month. Wanlin will teach Mandarin to scholars in each of the school’s K-6 grades.

“While more than 6,000 languages are spoken worldwide, Mandarin is the immersive language experience taught at Butler Academy,” said Butler Academy President Jerome Reyes. “All scholars are exposed to Mandarin weekly, working independently and in small groups to develop their speaking and comprehension skills. They learn to read and write characters, plus explore the teacher’s native culture through music, food and holidays, like the Chinese New Year.”

“Exposing Butler Academy students to Mandarin Chinese as early as Kindergarten fits perfectly with our emphasis on social and emotional learning and cultural awareness and is yet another way we are committed to a whole-child education,” said Butler Academy Middle School Dean of Academics Nateisha Taylor.

Wanlin’s one-year appointment at Butler academy was made possible through a competitive award by the American Councils for International Education. Butler Academy was one of 19 schools nationwide to receive the award.

The State Department’s Teachers of Critical Language Program (TCLP) is designed to increase the study and acquisition of important world languages in U.S. Schools. This program enables primary and secondary schools to strengthen their teaching of critical languages by bringing teachers to the U.S. to teach their native Arabic and Chinese language for an academic year. Launched in 2006, TCLP has launched or expanded more than 220 critical language programs in K-12 schools throughout the United States.

In addition to receiving a native speaker of Mandarin or Arabic to teach language classes, students, teachers and community members have the opportunity to learn about the TCLP exchange teachers’ home cultures, expanding their understanding of the world and preparing them for study and work in an interconnected world. Through TCLP, many schools establish lasting bonds with their exchange teachers’ home schools abroad.



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# HGTC PRESENTS THE MARSHALL ALTMAN "TOP TECH" AWARD Articles submitted by HGTC



*Altman Family with President Fore and Professor Springs (pictured left to right) Taylor Altman, Marshall Altman's son, Collin Altman, Marshall Altman's son, Celeste Altman, Marshall Altman's wife, Jackson Altman, Marshall Altman's son, Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president, Stewart Altman, Marshall Altman's brother and Matt Springs, HGTC Outboard Marine Technology professor*

CONWAY – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is proud to announce that the Outboard Marine Technology Program developed a "Top Tech" award in memory of Mr. Marshall Altman, vice president and president of Marshall's Marine for 18 years. Altman played a crucial role in establishing the first and only Yamaha Outboard Marine Technology Program in South Carolina at HGTC. A ceremony was held to honor his family with the surprise announcement and present the first-time award to a deserving student.

"If you knew Mr. Marshall Altman, he would often say that working in the marine industry was not just a job or a career, it was a lifestyle. He told us that in order to be great at what you do, you must study it, know it, live it, and breathe it. Mr. Marshall Altman was that perfect example for all of us in this program," said Matt Springs, HGTC professor of Outboard Marine Technology.

Receiving the first-time Marshall Altman "Top Tech" Award was Luke Sturdivant.

Originally from western North Carolina, Sturdivant completed a two-year automotive program at Wilkesboro Community College in Wilkesboro, NC. Then, he planned to enroll at HGTC in the Diesel Engine program. Once he found out the program was full, he was led to pursue Outboard Marine Technology. He immediately fell in love with the coastal area and his experience with offshore fishing. After taking his fresh catch to a restaurant right on the docks in Little River and enjoying what the chef prepared, he was hooked on the lifestyle! Besides living the lifestyle, Sturdivant never missed a day of class, always had a positive attitude, showed up early or stayed late, was eager to learn and helped in any way he could.

According to Springs, "Luke Sturdivant has exceptional professionalism and earned the respect of his instructor, as well as his classmates. Luke will no doubt become a successful marine technician. He is already working part-time at Saltwater Marine in Wilmington, NC."

In addition to the overall award, Professor Springs also presented certifications to the fourth cohort of students completing the program since 2019. Students have earned five Yamaha certifications and two National Marine Electronics Association certifications. These certifications are industry certifications that follow the student as they negotiate their careers in the marine industry.

The Outboard Marine Technology program was created in response to a significant local industry need for a skilled workforce in this area. The marine industry is growing at a rate that the technician labor supply is not matching.



*Outboard Marine Graduates with Special Guests (pictured left to right) Joe Maniscalco, Yamaha Marine Group, general manager, Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president, Mark Harden, Yamaha Marine Group, regional service manager, Matt Springs, HGTC Outboard Marine Technology professor, Senator Stephen Goldfinch, South Carolina Senator, District 34, Celeste Altman, Marshall Altman's wife, Stewart Altman, Marshall Altman's brother, Taylor Altman, Marshall Altman's son, Jackson Altman and Marshall Altman's son*

"When Mr. Marshall Altman approached HGTC about an outboard marine program, he was taking the monumental step in securing the future of the marine industry and establishing a crucial alliance. The partnership, formed between Marshall Marine, HGTC, and Yamaha, proved to be an essential piece to the sustainability of the marine industry," said Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president.

Yamaha Marine Group has been a dedicated industry partner needed to ensure the success of the program. Yamaha Marine University has consistently praised the success of the HGTC program as a national training model, as well as the exemplary leadership of Springs.

The Outboard Marine Technology program runs for three semesters and provides training that covers all components and functions of an outboard engine including service, diagnostic electrical systems, rigging, propellers, lubrication, lower units and fuel systems. After completion of the program, students will obtain skill sets needed to enter the workforce as an outboard engine technician.

The HGTC Outboard Marine Technology program is the only one in the state of South Carolina and has the most graduates in the nation. The program is full through the fall of 2023.

For more information about the Outboard Marine Technology program, contact Professor Matt Springs at [john.springs@hgtc.edu](mailto:john.springs@hgtc.edu), 843-349-3172, or visit [www.hgtc.edu/academics/academic\\_departments/manufacturing\\_ind/Outboard\\_Marine.html](http://www.hgtc.edu/academics/academic_departments/manufacturing_ind/Outboard_Marine.html).

## HGTC LAUNCHES OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT PROGRAM



CONWAY – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is proud to announce the launch of the new Occupational Therapy Assistant program major. The approval process for the new program began in the fall of 2020. The HGTC Area Commission, the governing board of the college, approved the program proposal in February 2021, with a projected implementation date of August 2022. There are currently 18 students enrolled in the first class that began August 22, on the Grand Strand Campus in the Speir Healthcare

Education Center.

"HGTC is proud to offer the new Associate in Applied Science degree in Occupational Therapy Assistant program. The HGTC Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Development conducted a local survey of businesses in Horry and Georgetown counties. The results indicated there was a positive trend in new jobs with nearly 200 new positions available since 2019," said Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president.

Occupational therapy is a healthcare field which specializes in helping people regain, develop, or master everyday skills necessary to live independent, productive and meaningful lives related to decreased normal functions resulting from injury, pain, disease or birth defects. Occupational therapy assistants work under the direction of an occupational therapist in the care and treatment of virtually every patient population, from the elderly to pediatrics.

The Occupational Therapy Assistant program provides students with hands on technical experience, as well as didactic instruction of occupational therapy interventions for common diagnoses throughout the lifespan. Fieldwork rotations give the students exposure to patient care and experience in performing occupational therapy interventions to prepare them for this crucial part of the healthcare team.

"Student interest has been driven by the numerous healthcare related programs currently offered at the College. Many of the students currently enrolled in the Associate in Science healthcare path are interested in becoming an Occupational Therapy Assistant," said Gina Brown, HGTC professor and director of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program.

For more information about applying, enrolling and registering at HGTC, call 843-347-3186 or visit [www.hgtc.edu](http://www.hgtc.edu).



## HGTC CELEBRATES HIGHEST GRADUATE PLACEMENT RATE

Articles submitted by HGTC



Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president, addresses graduates at 2022 Graduation Ceremony.

CONWAY - Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is pleased to announce the highest graduate placement rate for students in the history of the College. The rate has continued to inch higher and higher over the last several years and reached 95 percent for the 2020-2021 academic year. The HGTC Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Development tracks the placement of students on an annual basis. The state technical college system-wide target for placement rates is 80 percent. HGTC exceeds that rate annually with the highest rate results calculated during the last academic year.

“HGTC was founded on a commitment to prepare people for jobs, sustain a high job-placement rate and facilitate university transfers. The statistic means that 95 percent of students are either placed in a job or transferred to a four-year institution. We are very pleased with this achievement and continue to strive for the betterment of our students and community,” said Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president.

For more information about applying, enrolling and registering at HGTC, call 843-347-3186 or visit [www.hgtc.edu](http://www.hgtc.edu)

## HGTC RECOGNIZES JAN DUKES



Jan Dukes

CONWAY– Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is excited to announce that HGTC Culinary Arts staff member, Jan Dukes, received the Temporary Staff Member of the Year Award for 2022.

Dukes has served the College in a variety of roles since she was hired in 2006, including support as an adjunct instructor and a COVID-19 contact tracer. She currently serves as the Dining Room Coordinator and does an incredible job facilitating events for the Culinary Department at the International Culinary Institute (ICI) of Myrtle Beach. She is described

as positive, professional and always accommodating of employees and the public. She is hardworking and constantly willing to help others.

“If you have visited the HGTC International Culinary Institute, you may have been welcomed or received assistance from Jan Dukes. Her warm smile, knowledge about the program and great customer service are just a few reasons she has contributed to the overall success of the ICI and is the perfect recipient of the award,” said Dr. Jennifer Wilbanks, HGTC executive vice president of Academic and Workforce Development.

“Jan is an integral part of the International Culinary Institute as a Fowler Dining Room Coordinator, but what Jan does for the Institute extends to all facets of the operation from teaching students dining room setup and operations, instructing students in proper service, numerous administrative duties, giving tours and helping with open houses to working all the extra events that are held at the institute, and handling many other helpful tasks that are required. Jan performs all the various duties with a great attitude and pleasant demeanor,” said Joe Bonaparte, HGTC Executive Director for the International Culinary Institute of Myrtle Beach.

For more information about applying, enrolling, and registering at HGTC, call 843-347-3186 or visit [www.hgtc.edu](http://www.hgtc.edu).



## JOIN OUR TEAM.

As Gators, we believe we're at our strongest when we support and celebrate our similarities as well as our differences. That's why diversity and inclusion are more than buzzwords at HGTC. It's about communities and individuals—students, staff, and professors who combine their own unique identities and views by working together.

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## JOHNSTONE SUPPLY DONATES EQUIPMENT TO FDTC HVAC PROGRAM



FDTC HVAC Program Director Matthew Lewis instructs his class on a piece of equipment donated by Johnstone Supply

Johnstone Supply donated more than \$35,000 worth of HVAC equipment to Florence-Darlington Technical College which will provide students with valuable hands-on training with some of the newest technologies in the business.

“We are grateful that Johnstone Supply is willing to gift FDTC with this equipment,” FDTC HVAC Program Director Matthew Lewis said. “This donation is great in that

students get to experience the diverse background the HVAC field has to offer. The HVAC field is always changing, and this will help FDTC stay current with the new trends going forward.”

Johnstone Supply had excess inventory that needed to be moved and instead of selling it elsewhere, chose to donate the equipment to FDTC.

“We wanted to make it useful for the school,” Johnstone Supply Inside Sales Manager Daniel Turner said. “We felt like this would benefit the school and the give the students more hands-on experience.”

The donation included roof top units, heat pump condensing units, air handlers, mini-split heat pumps, mini split indoor wall cassettes for condensing units, multi zone indoor units, motors, temperature control and a gas furnace.

Lewis said the donations will be used in the HVAC Labs at both the main campus and the Continuum in Lake City. Students will utilize the equipment to learn how to disassemble and remove and reinstall parts.

“With this equipment, students can see the differences between residential and commercial systems,” he added. “Mini split technology is the newer trend these days and this equipment gives those students the understanding on how it works and is installed in the field.”

## FDTC AWARDED GRANT TO SUPPORT STUDENT DAYCARE EXPENSES

Florence-Darlington Technical College was recently awarded a four-year Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant by the U.S. Department of Education to offer its students assistance with their daycare expenses while attending classes at the college.

“It is our goal here at FDTC to make it easier on our students to attend classes and not worry about childcare,” FDTC Associate Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services Genell Gause said. “We truly want to remove any barriers that could potentially keep students from being the professionals they want to be.”

CCAMPIS is a Federal Department of Education grant that is meant to assist students, who are parents, with funds to pay for childcare so they can focus more energy on staying in school, completing their college goals, and graduating. FDTC was awarded \$194,691 to offer this assistance program to its students for beginning Oct. 1, 2022, through September 30, 2026.

“We are invested in student success, and workforce development here at Florence-Darlington Technical College,” FDTC President Dr. Jermaine Ford said. “Programs like this one help us to eliminate barriers to student success.”

To be eligible for the grant a FDTC student must maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA), be enrolled in at least six credit hours of courses and must complete a Federal Student Aid Application (FASFA) and qualify for financial aid.

To learn more about this program or to see if you are eligible for this assistance contact FDTC at (843)-661-TECH (8324).

About Florence-Darlington Technical College

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) has provided affordable technical education to many thousands of Pee Dee-area students since 1963. FDTC currently enrolls more than 3,000 curriculum students and about 3,500 noncredit students annually, through the college’s Corporate and Workforce Development division, located at the Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology. For more information, visit [www.fdtc.edu](http://www.fdtc.edu).



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# SCDE ALLOCATES \$42 MILLION TO LCSD FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Submitted by Shawnta McKenzie, Office of Human Resources, Lee County School District



Top row (left to right): Mr. Bernard McDaniel, Sr., superintendent, Senator Gerald Malloy, State Superintendent Molly Spearman, Lee County School District Board chairperson, Ms. Sylvia Scott, and Representative Will Wheeler. 2nd row and bottom row: second and third grade students from Dennis Elementary School, Lower Lee Elementary School and West Lee Elementary School.

**BISHOPVILLE** - SC Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman met with leaders in Lee County Wednesday, September 15, 2022, to mark the allocation of \$42 million in infrastructure funding for Lee County School District to renovate and replace aging school facilities. Senator Gerald Malloy, Representative Will Wheeler, Lee County School District Board Chairperson Ms. Sylvia Scott, Board Vice-

Chairperson Mrs. Quennie Boyd, Board Secretary Mr. Nathaniel Brunson, Board member Mrs. Lucretia Mack, County Administrator Mr. Alan Watkins, elementary school Principals, Ms. LaToya Boyd, Mrs. Shelia Stukes and Dr. Veronica Bradley, select teachers and second and third grade students from Dennis Elementary School, Lower Lee Elementary School and West Lee Elementary School, and district-office leaders were all in attendance at the infrastructure funding presentation.

In April of 2022, the South Carolina Department of Education commissioned independent facility studies of schools in the state's poorest counties to aid in decision making for capital funding appropriated by the General Assembly for disadvantaged schools. The independent review of schools in Lee County School District concluded critical needs on the elementary level caused by aging facilities and declining enrollment.

Allocations of \$23 million in ESSER Funds, \$15 million in state funds appropriated under Proviso 1.104, and \$4 million in state funds appropriated under Proviso 1.92B will be used to address the identified facilities needs in the district.

"The funds for Lee County School District will allow them to operate more efficiently while providing the educational facilities and resources that their students and educators need," Spearman said. "We are pleased to be able to provide the funding needed to provide safe, state-of-the-art facilities that students, families and educators deserve."

The facility assessment team recommended building one new elementary school to replace Dennis Elementary School, Lower Lee Elementary School and West Lee Elementary School, which are all over 50 years old. Lee County School District has seen a steady decline in student enrollment, with the greatest decrease seen at the elementary school level. The study shows that during the 2016-2017 school year, the total number of elementary school students enrolled was 981 which reduced to 682 by 2020-2021. Current enrollment of the district is approximately 1,565 students in grades K through 12.

"These funds will ensure that our Lee County School District students and educators get the safe, modern and efficient learning spaces that they deserve," said South Carolina Representative Will Wheeler, who represents District 50 in the General Assembly. "We are pleased with the state's investment in our students and in education, and I look forward to the new facility and what it means for the community."

Lee County Superintendent Mr. Bernard McDaniel, Sr. said, "The impact of these funds will have lasting benefits for students and families in our district. Every student deserves the best educational experience and a modern, state-of-the-art facility will help support the work of our teachers and staff as we strive to meet our goals. We're excited about the funding, and we look forward to the construction of the new school in Lee County."

Lee County School District

Teacher of the Year  
2022-2023

Ms. Mauvette Doyley

## BLUECROSS BLUESHIELD OF SOUTH CAROLINA INVESTS IN BLUESCHOLARS

Submitted by J. Craig Cotton, director of public relations, Office of Communications and Marketing Clafin University



(From left) Stephanie Pfeiffer, BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina human resources director, Talent Acquisition; Clafin University President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack; Benedict College President and CEO Dr. Roslyn Clark Artis; David Cote, BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina vice president of Human Resources

**ORANGEBURG** - BlueCross® BlueShield® of South Carolina is partnering with Benedict College and Clafin University to give more students an opportunity to pursue an education while getting a head start on their career paths.

The BlueCross BlueScholars program will select four students from each institution to receive a full four-year scholarship that covers tuition, room and board.

“We are committed to supporting students of our state’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs),” said BlueCross President and CEO Mike Mizeur.

“Early during the pandemic, BlueCross made a significant investment in several South Carolina HBCUs, and we aim for our support to extend beyond students’ academic careers. The BlueScholars program creates a pathway for students to hold leadership roles within our company after graduation. We are committed to support their educational pursuits and their place as future leaders in our workforce.”

The eight students selected for the inaugural BlueScholars program will participate in career development workshops and will be able to engage with BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina representatives during panel discussions and summer internships. These events are designed to prepare the students for employment opportunities at BlueCross.

“Benedict College is pleased to partner with BlueCross on the development of the BlueScholars program, which provides much needed financial support for our scholars. Additionally, and perhaps equally important, BlueScholars will receive ongoing professional development and highly coveted summer internship placements with BlueCross, one of our state’s premier employers. These students will have the opportunity to work in a dynamic environment and gain valuable professional experiences that will place them on a path toward a meaningful and rewarding career,” said Benedict President and CEO Dr. Roslyn Clark Artis.

Students selected as BlueScholars will have summer internship opportunities at BlueCross beginning the second year of the program.

“We are immensely grateful to be a part of the BlueScholars program,” said Clafin University President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack. “Clafin has produced exceptional leaders in every industry and profession. This program is also an investment in our current scholars who are continuing our proud legacy of exemplary leadership, academic achievement and compassionate community engagement. We applaud BlueCross for expanding access to career opportunities for HBCU students.”

## THOMAS TO LEAD MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS AT GSSM



Hunter Thomas

**HARTSVILLE**-The South Carolina Governor’s School for Science and Mathematics (GSSM) has hired Darlington native, Hunter Thomas to serve as the Marketing and Communications Manager.

Thomas brings more than 12 years of marketing and public relations experience to GSSM. Throughout his career, he has worked in higher education, NASCAR and he has freelanced for several Pee Dee and Grand Strand media outlets.

“I couldn’t be more excited to join GSSM,” said Thomas. “I’ve lived in Darlington County my entire life, and I absolutely love the state of South Carolina. This is an opportunity of a lifetime, and I can’t wait to begin telling GSSM’s story.”

Thomas looks to strengthen GSSM’s social media and digital media presence, as well as the overall marketing efforts by implementing an innovative strategic content marketing plan. The Marketing and Communications Department will also work with GSSM’s Leadership Team to develop a Marketing Master Plan that will support the mission and vision of the school’s overall Strategic Plan.

“We were looking for someone with a passion for their work and an appreciation for GSSM’s mission to find and develop exceptional students,” said GSSM CIO Jon Shannon. “Hunter connected early on with our mission and brings a lot of energy and a deep portfolio of experience and connections to GSSM. We are excited to build new ways of engaging with people who want to learn more about the school and be a part of the great things happening here.”

Thomas most recently worked at Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC), where he served as the Public Information Specialist. Thomas grew the college’s social media following, spearheaded the digital media content creation and graphic design and assisted with the public relations efforts. Thomas has also spent more than 12 years working in NASCAR as a journalist and photographer.

Thomas earned a B.A. in Mass Communications from Francis Marion University in 2012, and a M.S. in Management and Leadership from Coker University in 2021.

### About GSSM

One of the few specialized public residential high schools of its kind, the South Carolina Governor’s School for Science + Mathematics (GSSM) exists to push motivated young learners beyond their perceived levels of academic ability. Founded in 1988, under the leadership of the late Governor Carroll Campbell, GSSM has consistently raised the bar for STEM education in the Palmetto State. GSSM’s two-year residential high school program—as well as its virtual high school program, summer camps and outreach programs—all invite young people to explore the subjects they love in a diverse, inclusive and uncommonly supportive academic environment. Here, challenge is viewed as a gateway to opportunity. GSSM students embrace the school’s rigorous approach to education and in so doing begin to realize their full potential. Learn more by visiting [www.scgssm.org](http://www.scgssm.org).

## FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY EARNS PERFECT MARKS Articles submitted by FMU



Francis Marion University has once again achieved top marks in all categories for the Great Colleges to Work For® survey.

2022 marks the tenth straight year FMU has been recognized by Great Colleges to Work For®, and this is the second time in a row the University has scored top marks in all categories.

The award is based on a survey of FMU employees conducted by Modern Think, a leading strategic

organizational development and management consulting firm that focuses on workplace excellence. The honor signals that FMU continues to maintain one of the finest workplace environments in the nation. Only a select few national institutions of higher learning are recognized each year.

Complete Great Colleges rankings were published as part of The Chronicle for Higher Education's 11th Annual Academic Workplace Special Issue in September. They are available on Modern Think's Great Colleges website at <https://greatcollegesprogram.com/list/>.

FMU is one of 68 four-year colleges and universities in the nation recognized by Modern Think's survey and one of 42 recognized as an honor roll school. It is one of two South Carolina institutions recognized as an honor roll institution for 2022, and the only public university recognized.

The survey was administered to faculty and staff in universities across the country, and compiled independently by Modern Think. Employees were selected randomly for the survey, which covers 10 categories of work life.

Dr. Fred Carter, FMU's president, says FMU's recognition for its welcoming and inclusive culture is indicative of the university's commitment to excellence in all areas.

"Today's announcement is the result of a decade of hard work and dedication from the faculty and staff here at Francis Marion University," Carter says. "This institution is able to serve this state, this region and this community because of the incredible people who make up the FMU community. As a president, I could not be more proud."

FMU's employees reported top scores in all categories: Job Satisfaction and Support; Compensation and Benefits; Professional Development; Mission and Pride; Supervisor/Department Chair Effectiveness; Confidence in Senior Leadership; Faculty and Staff Well-being; Shared Governance; Faculty Experience and Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging.

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

## FMU FALL CONSTRUCTION AND PROGRAM EXPANSIONS



Dr. Fred Carter

Francis Marion University's newest academic year is expected to be one of growth and expansion, highlighted by major construction projects and new academic programs over the next three years.

President Dr. Fred Carter provided an update on the university's upcoming projects during the annual welcome reception for faculty members held at the FMU Performing Arts Center. Carter's remarks highlighted major construction that will begin midway through the fall semester, including a new School of Business and School of Education building, renovations to the Smith University Center, a new engineering

workshop and \$9 million in improvements to existing campus facilities.

Carter said the university will work to ensure that the progress comes with as little disruption to campus life as possible. "Just be patient with us," Carter said. "There'll be \$80-90 million in construction underway over the next three to four years."

Other upcoming construction projects include the Dr. C. Edward Floyd Medical Education Consortium Building, located at the former Circle Park building in downtown Florence. The new Forestry and Environmental Sciences Building on the main campus is also in the planning phases after being fully funded through state appropriations in the latest fiscal year.

Francis Marion's physical growth compliments the university's ever expanding academic offerings. The new semester includes new programs in environmental studies and environmental policy. In the years ahead, Carter said FMU will likely propose additional areas of study, including a new Montessori program, collateral in autism studies, a psychology doctoral degree and a graduate program in professional and creative writing. FMU has already approved forestry programs with a doctorate in occupational therapy to begin within the next two years.

"These are timely programs, and they are all essential for addressing compelling needs within this state," Carter said. "They also send a clear message to the state's leadership that our curriculum remains relevant and vibrant."

The president also announced a 5.5 percent pay increase to all permanent custodial and grounds employees, as well as administrative assistants. These raises are in addition to the three percent across the board cost-of-living increase for all employees included in the latest state budget appropriations. Operating budgets across schools and departments will also see a five percent increase.

The only areas of uncertainty covered in Carter's remarks pertained to federal guidelines and regulations. The president noted that issues pertaining to Title IX, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and student financial aid and loan forgiveness have yet to be definitively addressed by federal officials.

Affirmative Action policies also remain a question mark, as the US Supreme Court prepares to hear oral arguments on the subject in October. A decision from that case could impact how universities around the country handle future admissions practices and financial aid.

"My concern is the adverse effect that it may have on access and equity programs in South Carolina, most especially needs-based scholarships," Carter said.

In other business, several members of the FMU faculty were recognized for exemplary service, including immediate past faculty Chair Glen Gourley. Gourley, who served for the last five years, was presented with an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree.

Biology professor Dr. Travis Knowles was also honored, as Carter announced him as the newest FMU Board of Trustee Research Scholar.

Carter also announced the formation of a provost search committee to replace current Provost, Dr. Peter King, who is retiring at the end of the academic year. King has held the position for the past six years.



Francis Marion University

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MAIN CAMPUS



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FRESHWATER ECOLOGY CENTER

## FMU DESIGNATED FIRST SC PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL UNIVERSITY Submitted by FMU



FMU Campus

When it comes to institutions of higher learning, Francis Marion University is officially one of a kind.

FMU recently became the first university in South Carolina to be classified as a Professional Doctorate University. The classification, approved by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) in June, enables Francis Marion to offer additional doctoral programs in the field of health sciences or other professional disciplines.

“The SC Commission on Higher Education congratulates Francis Marion University as the first Comprehensive Teaching University in South Carolina to meet the criteria for classification as a Professional Doctorate University,” said CHE President and Executive Director Rusty Monhollon, PhD. “This change increases the depth of doctoral programs in South Carolina and was based on program needs identified by FMU which were validated through our rigorous review process. Becoming a Professional Doctorate University broadens FMU’s mission and reflects the institution’s strong commitment to academic excellence in graduate education, and the advancement of educational opportunities

in our state.”

Institutions of higher education in South Carolina are now designated by one of five classifications: research universities, professional doctorate universities, comprehensive universities, two-year institutions and state technical colleges.

In late 2020, members of FMU’s Board of Trustees amended the university’s official mission statement to include “three applied doctoral programs in health professions.” The amendment then went to the CHE for final review and approval.

FMU’s School of Health Sciences began offering a Doctorate in Nursing Practice in 2018 and will add a Doctor of Occupational Therapy in 2024. A third doctoral program is expected to be established in the next four years.

“The university has been working to develop these programs for the past several years. We are very proud of the faculty for the hard work that they’ve invested in achieving this distinction. It represents an enormous amount of effort and a unique accomplishment,” said Dr. Fred Carter, president of Francis Marion University. “Of course, we are committed to expanding our curriculum in the years ahead to better serve students across this state and region.”

FMU’s School of Health Sciences can trace its roots to 2005 with the addition of the baccalaureate nursing program. The Doctor of Occupational Therapy will become health science’s ninth academic program.

This rapid growth required Francis Marion to open three new classroom buildings to accommodate the health sciences, most recently in 2021 with the Hugh and Jean Leatherman Medical Complex in downtown Florence.

A fourth health sciences-related facility – the Dr. C. Edward Floyd Medical Consortium Building on Cheves Street – will open in 2025.



**“When I look at each one of you, I know our future is bright.”**

- Vice President Kamala Harris



**“HBCUs always punch above their weight!”**

- Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona

## CLAFLIN HOSTS VP HARRIS AND SECRETARY CARDONA

*Submitted by J. Craig Cotton, director of public relations, Office of Communications and Marketing Claflin University*

**ORANGEBURG-**Vice President Kamala Harris and U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona visited Claflin University for a panel discussion with nine outstanding scholars on topics that included voter registration, mental health and entrepreneurship. Harris’ visit coincided with National Voter Registration Day and HBCU (Historically Black Colleges/Universities) Week.

“Today we are celebrating National Voter Registration Day,” Harris said. “When I think about that and the last big election, we had in 2020, I am happy to report that over half of the people in our country who were 18 – 21 years of age voted. “These young voters told us what they wanted.”

Harris mentioned several significant concerns of college-age voters – and how they were addressed by President Joe Biden and his administration. At the top of the list were student debt and making college more affordable.

“The president just signed an order that students will have \$10,000 of their student loan debt relieved,” Harris said. “And if they are Pell Grant recipients, it can be \$20,000.”

The focus on student debt and college affordability continued when Harris said younger voters also wanted to know what was being done about the Pell Grant.

“Students receiving Pell Grants said they need more benefits, so we don’t have to struggle to pay rent, buy books, food and school supplies,” Harris said. “So, we increased Pell Grants \$400 per student/per year. We intend to double that in the coming year.” Harris also mentioned the Biden administration’s historic \$370 billion investment in climate change, another priority of younger voters.

“Climate change is real,” she said. “Leaders from years before probably sold us short in terms of taking it seriously. We want leadership to accelerate the resources we need to save the planet.”

Before the closed panel discussion, three

Claflin scholars made brief remarks about their experiences as entrepreneurs. Greg Westbrook, a graduate student from Memphis, TN, launched his clothing brand, Underrated Stylz, four months ago. Westbrook is pursuing a master’s degree in business.

“My clothing is for those who have experienced being underrated but with a twist,” Westbrook said. “It allows them to embrace being underrated, but with their style, so they know that regardless of what life throws and what others say, anything is possible and that you are more than capable of what you give yourself credit for.”

Arteria Gibson, a senior mass communications major with a concentration in public relations, is from Columbia, SC. She currently serves as Miss Claflin for the 2022-23, academic year. Gibson started Mindful Mondays at the start of the 2022 Fall semester to promote physical and mental health to the campus community.

“Mindful Mondays is a forum for students to discuss mental health topics and societal and worldly issues,” said Gibson. “As we continue to recover and recalibrate from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more vital to bring attention to our community’s physical, mental and social well-being, especially those of students.”

Daaiyah Fogle, a senior mass communications major from Greenville, SC, is the founder of Day’s Design, a boutique creative marketing agency that helps small businesses improve their messaging and branding through custom strategy, graphic design, branding, social media management and content creation.

“I started my business to make some extra pocket change,” Fogle said. “But eventually, my hobby for graphic design transformed into an outlet where I get to help fellow small businesses like my own. Earlier this year, I was selected as a 2022 Black Girl Ventures x NBA Foundation Next Gen Scholar along with 24 other HBCU students. Through this

opportunity, I participated in an eight-week business accelerator program that focused on creating access to capital, training, mentoring and new networks for HBCU student entrepreneurs.

After the program, I was selected as a top seven scholar. I competed in a business pitch competition where I won first place and over \$18k in capital investment for my small business. Being a part of this program helped me find ways to navigate and overcome the challenges that come with starting and maintaining a business as a young entrepreneur.”

Cardona spoke with the nine Claflin panelists prior to the roundtable discussion. He viewed the visit to Claflin and his conversations with the students as opportunities to hear the insights and perspectives of young leaders.

“HBCUs have always punched above their weight,” Cardona said. “This is an opportunity for us to listen. Who better than you (students) to give us feedback on how to continue to improve -- especially around issues of mental health support? What we think might be needed and what students are experiencing -- may differ.

Both Harris and Cardona were greatly impressed by the scholars’ presentations.

“You are our future, and when I look at you -- I know our future is bright,” Harris said.

“When I hear about your plans for the future, it’s exciting,” Cardona said. “You are prepared to represent not only this (Claflin) university -- but also HBCUs and higher education.”







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## U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT RANKS CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY AMONG BEST COLLEGES

Submitted by J. Craig Cotton, director of public relations, Office of Communications and Marketing Clafin University



**ORANGEBURG** - Clafin University has been ranked ninth among the 2022-2023 Best Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) by U.S. News & World Report. Clafin has earned a spot in the U.S. News Top 10 Best HBCUs for 12 consecutive years. The University is ranked number one in Annual Alumni Giving Percentage among HBCUs and No. 20 in the Top Performers on Social Mobility category among national liberal arts colleges/universities.

Now in its 38th year, the rankings evaluate more than 1,450 colleges and universities on up to 17 measures of academic quality.

"We are tremendously pleased with our rise in the U.S. News & World Report's national ranking of the Top 10 Historically Black Colleges and Universities," said Clafin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack. "We are also extremely elated that this prestigious publication has consistently acknowledged our numerous

accomplishments and achievements. Our success is a testament to the collective contributions of university administrators, faculty and staff, students, leal and loyal alumni and other supporters. Our ranking in the social mobility category is confirmation that a Clafin degree transforms lives and expands career opportunities."

Clafin is among the colleges that are more successful than others at advancing social mobility by enrolling and graduating large proportions of students awarded Pell Grants.

U.S. News & World Report publishes the Best Colleges rankings each year to provide prospective students and their families with helpful data and information on factors such as graduation rates, social mobility and graduate indebtedness.

"For nearly 40 years, the Best Colleges methodology has continuously evolved to reflect changes in the higher education landscape and the interests of prospective students," said Kim Castro, editor and chief content officer at U.S. News & World Report. "Guiding that evolution is U.S. News' mission of providing useful data and information to help with one of life's biggest decisions."

Prospective students can see how Clafin University compares to other institutions and how the rankings are calculated on [USNews.com](http://USNews.com).

[USNews.com](http://USNews.com).

Founded in 1869, Clafin University is recognized by national publications such as U.S. News & World Report, [Forbes.com](http://Forbes.com), and Washington Monthly as one of America's best liberal arts colleges. The University proudly serves the state of South Carolina, the nation and the world.

Its beautiful historic campus is home to approximately 2,000 students from every region of the United States and more than 10 international countries. Clafin students demonstrate extraordinary achievement, distinctive confidence, and a lifelong desire to transform society through the elevation and transformation of visionary leaders. Clafin University's academic programs prepare students to compete and succeed in a global and technological society. **About U.S. News & World Report**

U.S. News & World Report is the global leader in quality rankings that empower consumers, business leaders, and policy officials to make better, more informed decisions about important issues affecting their lives and their communities. A multifaceted digital media company with Education, Health, Money, Travel, Cars, Real Estate, News and 360 Reviews platforms, U.S. News provides rankings, independent reporting, data journalism, consumer advice and U.S. News Live events. More than 40 million people visit [USNews.com](http://USNews.com) each month for research and guidance. Founded in 1933, U.S. News is headquartered in Washington, D.C.

# HELP 4 KIDS FLORENCE CARES FOR CHILDREN

by Glaciera Brown Mason



Diane Welsh

Food insecurity dates back to the Great Depression, the worst economic downturn in American history. During the 20th century, between 1929-1933, joblessness and loss of income resulted in the inability to buy food. In 2020, 5.6 million households with children, in the United States, were food insecure. Proper nutrition is critical to the growth and development of children, and the lack of nutritious food results in poor health, increased hospitalizations, aggression,

anxiety, behavior problems and attention deficits.

Help 4 Kids Florence (H4KF), a local non-profit organization in Florence County, cares about the health and well-being of the children in our community. Their goal is to feed children (k4-18) attending Florence County Public Schools, and who have been identified by their schools as “food insecure,” on the weekends, when away from the school breakfast/lunch programs, with bags of self-serving nutritious foods. Founded at St. John’s Anglican Church, by a group of Bible Study parishioners, Allie Walker, Debbie Watson and Diane Welsh, joined forces to help children and families in Florence County. Founder and President, Welsh is a 20-year retired educator and was the catalyst for, what today, has become an established non-profit 501(C)(3) organization. Working daily with children gave Welsh an awareness of childhood hunger and the number who suffer from food insecurity. During her career as an elementary school teacher, she often purchased and disseminated food to students, to ensure they were fed. Welsh quickly realized that often, the only food some children received, in adequate amounts, was in school. Recognizing this need and with an enormous amount of compassion, Welsh conducted extensive research to determine what could be done and what others were doing to mitigate the food insecurities of children. She found that none of the existing programs fit the need Florence County was experiencing. With a generous donation from the late Linda Russell, volunteers and financial donors, HELP 4 KIDS FLORENCE was born and proudly practices the four pillars of food security: food availability, access to food, utilization and stability. “The magnitude of what we’ve done with H4KF, and the amount of finances that it takes, and how the community has rallied around us, is nothing but the Lord,” said Welsh.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as, “a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.” Though closely related, hunger and food insecurity



## HELP 4 KIDS

FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA

A nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization

are quite different. One out of four children are hungry. Did you know, that in 2020, for the first time in a decade, the number of food insecure households increased? That statistic tugs at the heart of Welsh and is a part of what drives her and the H4KF volunteers to do the work they do.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected food insecurity for children, our most vulnerable citizens. Today’s challenges of supply and demand have increased food costs, making it necessary to adjust the food bag items to keep pace with inflation. Social responsibility requires us to help those less fortunate than ourselves. President John F. Kennedy said, “Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.” If we share in his belief, then, we share like mindedness with the founders, volunteers and benefactors of H4KF.

As H4KF prepares to celebrate its 10-year anniversary of distributing weekend food bags in Florence County, their giving spirit and heart continues to shine through. They serve weekend food bags to all elementary schools throughout the four school districts in Florence County, Florence and Timmonsville - District One, Pamplico - District Two, Lake City - District Three, Johnsonville - District Five and Head Starts in the Districts. H4KF feeds approximately 2,000 students per week as well as two Head Start programs in Dillon County. Because high school and middle schools have hungry students too, H4KF provides high school and middle school food pantries in seven schools. Welsh said, “one educator told us once that we are the hands, and feet of Jesus, I would add that we are also His heart.”

Packaging and distributing nutritional weekend food bags for children with the direct intent of staving off weekend food insecurity in our community is H4KF sole mission. Co-Founder Watson is the H4KF liaison to the schools. The children are anonymous to the H4KF volunteers. The children are identified by teachers, administrators and café workers if they exhibit food insecure behaviors, such as rushing lunch lines, stealing food, eating from other children’s plates, extreme fatigue, allergies, consistent runny noses, stomach aches, frequent request to visit the school nurse and absenteeism. Discretion for all students and families is practiced by the school staff, and only identified students, whose parent or guardian has granted permission for a child to receive a food bag are given one.

H4KF is 100 percent funded by donations, grants and food drives. H4KF is grateful for the generous community support from churches, individuals, businesses, organizations and groups such as K&J grocery stores, GE, Themo Fisher, CSP Insurance, Employee Reward Solution, S&W Printing, Medical University of SC, Pepsi Cola of Carolinas, St. John’s Anglican Church, Central United Methodist Church, St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, Lake City First Baptist Church, New Ebenezer Church, Wesley Methodist Church, Ruiz Foods, the Medical Alliance and the Wine & Food Festival to name a few. Due to the present economy, the average cost per bag has increased from three to six dollars per bag for each student.

To ensure that the program continues to be effective, and serves the needs of children, H4KF measures its progress annually by providing surveys at the end of each year. Surveys are given to teachers, administrators, students and parents to determine if the program is useful, wanted and needed. It asks



(Cover photo) Ruiz Foods gives back to the community with check presentation to Help 4 Kids Florence. Pictured left to right: Krista Meekins, Ryan Dill, Ronnie Isgett, Jon Holder, Brittney Alich, Yuliza Davila, Rick Maddox, Diane Welsh, Jamie Moore, Steve Perry, Orrie Roberson, Jim Bowman and Mary Williams

## HELP 4 KIDS FLORENCE CONT'D



Left to Right: Jim Bowman, Rick Maddox and Ryan Dill

questions to analyze ways to improve its service and also considers suggestions made by survey recipients.

Ruiz Foods Products, Inc. one of Florence County's local food manufacturers and distributors has been a consistent and vital supporter of H4KF. "The spirit of caring and giving to our community is a commitment that goes back to our cofounders Fred Ruiz and his father Louis. And it's something I am so very proud

to say we do all year long," said HR Manager, Jamie Moore. Ruiz Foods' philanthropy and volunteer support for H4KF has been demonstrated over the past six years with over \$15,000 in financial contributions and countless hours of company employee volunteer hours. Welsh said of their contribution, "H4KF sincerely appreciates the generous heart of Ruiz Foods in supporting the mission to reduce childhood hunger in our community. We are forever grateful for their generosity, volunteerism and kindness."

Ruiz Foods Florence Community Relations Coordinator, Krista Meekins said, "We are very proud to be able to support H4KF. Ruiz Foods strives to give back to the communities in which we live and work. Our Ruiz Cares program allows our Team Members to give back to our community personally by volunteering their time to projects that are important to them.

With our community involvement we like to focus on projects concerning children. Packing lunches at H4KF is a great way to keep with that focus by helping children who may otherwise go hungry. Our hope is that with our donation as well, it will help their efforts to provide more bags of food for their ongoing program."

How can you help? H4KF is happy to receive your financial contributions, food donations and volunteer services to help meet the needs of children in Florence County. All food packing is conducted at the H4KF donated warehouse located at 2420 Hoffmeyer Road. Regular volunteers pack bags at 10 a.m. on Tuesday mornings. Thursday afternoon packings at 5:30 p.m. is open packing, where volunteers may simply show up. Groups are also welcome and are asked to schedule packing events with a maximum of 10 persons due to COVID by calling Jeannie McGown at 703-927-1902. Runners are needed to deliver food bags to schools, organize business and community food drives and help with special events set up. If you are interested in volunteering, you may visit [www.help4kidsflorence.org](http://www.help4kidsflorence.org), and use the volunteer sign-up link or call 843-580-4111 for more information. To donate, mail your check to 252 South Dargan Street, Florence, SC 29506.



Ruiz Foods Team Members day of service (Pictured) Left Side of Table: Ronnie Isgett, Steve Perry, Orrie Roberson and Mary Williams. Right Side of Table: Jon Holder, Yuliza Davila, Brittney Alich, Jamie Moore, Diane Welsh and Krista Meekins



## Purchase 2022 Christmas Cards



Our 2022 Christmas Cards are available now and will deliver or can arrange pick up, as needed. They are \$10 each with proceeds going to support Help 4 Kids.

To order, call **Debbie Watson** at (843) 621-0870.

## DECREASING DISPARITIES IN MENTAL HEALTH

Submitted by Stacey Olden, PhD, LPC/S, LAC, NCC, counseling program coordinator Webster University - Myrtle Beach Campus



Stacey Olden, Ph.D.

**MYRTLE BEACH** - I have been a helping professional for 30 years. In my career, I have worked as a caseworker with marginalized populations in state and private agencies in Columbia, SC and New York City. I obtained my master's degree in rehabilitation counseling and am a licensed professional counselor. I have provided mental health therapy in solo and group private practices for people dealing with a variety of mental health issues. I have supervised Counselors-In-Training (CIT) as a

clinical supervisor and taught as an adjunct instructor. I currently hold a Ph.D. in counselor education and supervision, and I am full time faculty and the program coordinator of the clinical mental health counseling program at Webster University - Myrtle Beach.

Data reveals that social inequities and disparities in mental health care is an issue that significantly impacts the lives and functioning of underserved communities in America. Social disparities are developed out of systematic policies and practices that are unfair and inequitable, and it causes unequal distribution of social, economic and political resources. These inequities create barriers and challenges for marginalized groups to access and utilize services that can promote good health. Mental health counselors serving in the role of social justice advocates is a potential solution for mediating social disparities in mental health care.

Throughout my career, my passion for helping people and my commitment to advocating for marginalized communities has been consistent. As a multiple minority, a clinician and educator in mental health, two problems that have been established in the literature are the social disparities related to the access and utilization of mental health services in marginalized communities, and the difficulties counseling interns face in finding training opportunities and exposure to social justice advocacy work. Some of the main factors attributed to social disparities in mental health care for marginalized groups is the lack of information and resources available, the lack of health insurance and the inability to pay for services and transportation issues which makes service providers inaccessible. A few years ago, I founded a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, New Visions Wellness Center (NVWC), to address these issues. New Visions' goal is to decrease disparities in mental health through support services designed to alleviate barriers and challenges and improve overall wellness in underserved communities.

In my role as coordinator of the counseling program at Webster University, it is my goal to help students receive a quality education in counseling and ensure they receive training in social justice advocacy and mentoring to become professionally licensed counselors. NVWC and Webster University Myrtle Beach have partnered to develop and operate a Community Counseling & Training Center (CCTC) to address the mental health needs of underserved communities and the training and professional development needs of CIT.

The CCTC is housed on the campus of Webster University Myrtle Beach and will provide free individual mental health wellness services to the community. Individual wellness services are designed to be short-term, solution focused with needs assessment, goal setting and service coordination. A clinician will assess individual problems and needs, help clients develop

goals, link them to services and resources in the community and start them on the path to developing strategies to accomplish their goals. The CCTC will also provide family and couples counseling, psychoeducational groups as well as business and corporate seminars, workshops and retreats on a variety of topics, building healthy relationships, effective communication skills, stress management, relaxation techniques, conflict resolution and developing coping skills. Services will be provided in person on the Myrtle Beach campus and virtually.

The goal of is to help CIT grow and develop as counselors. The CCTC will provide training opportunities for students, provide professional development scholarships and benefits for students, even after they graduate from the program. Some of those benefits include, assisting trainees with applying for professional licensure, seminars to prepare for the licensing exam, funding assistance to cover licensure fees, assistance getting credentialed with insurance panels, specified training on social justice advocacy, trauma informed counseling and Tele Mental Health (TMH) service delivery, workshops to obtain Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for license renewal and assistance establishing a private practice and tele mental health services.

To evaluate the impact of the CCTC, graduate students will be required to enroll in the social justice advocacy course and complete a demographic questionnaire, qualitative measures throughout the course and an interview at the end of the course. Clients will also be asked to complete assessment instruments at the beginning and end of services. For the qualitative assessment measures, counseling students will complete a weekly discussion board, reflective journal questions and participate in an interview to explore their experiences in the social justice advocacy course and provide trauma informed counseling to marginalized populations, specifically exploring factors that helped or hindered an improvement in social justice competencies and advocacy skills. Clients will complete an outcome survey designed to measure clients' previous experiences and barriers to accessing mental health services and clients' satisfaction level with current services received. Additionally, service-related data will be analyzed to measure utilization levels of mental health services in the targeted marginalized communities. If the results of data analyses are significant and suitable for dissemination, they will be submitted for publication to report the impact of the CCTC as a healing justice intervention.

The center is set up on a tiered, mentor-based system, where counselors are assisted with career development, from master's level graduate students and in field experience courses to licensed professional counselor supervisors. The tiered system allows people from all income levels and insurance situations to have access to mental health services. Education and outreach will be conducted regularly in marginalized communities to raise awareness and decrease stigma. Free individual wellness services will be made available to anyone in the community without insurance or the ability to pay for services.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, NVWC relies on charitable donations. NVWC humbly encourages tax-deductible contributions from individuals, businesses, organizations, institutions and philanthropists to help support the work we do in underserved communities. NVWC plans to apply for grant funding from different sources related to the social justice nature of our organization and the innovative services we provide. Additionally, NVWC will seek other public and private funding opportunities as appropriate.

If interested in receiving mental health services or donating to NVWC, call us at (803) 479-4629 or visit [www.newvisionswellness.com](http://www.newvisionswellness.com).

# COVID-19 AND ITS EFFECTS ON SUBSTANCE USE

Submitted by Erica Buffkin, prevention specialist II Circle Park Behavioral Health Services



Erica Buffkin

consequences go far beyond that.

The protocols to protect us against COVID were necessary and people became isolated, lonely, anxious and depressed. COVID has a lasting influence when it comes to substance use disorders and emotional wellness. Joblessness, increased anxiety and limited social and family interactions created a “perfect storm” to influence the increase in substance use. The increased stress of the pandemic triggered relapses from people with a previous substance use disorder and triggered first use for those people grappling with ways to cope.

According to the CDC, 13 percent of Americans reported starting or increasing substance use as a way of coping with stress or emotions related to COVID-19. By September 2020, a study by LifeWorks and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation found that nearly one-third of people in the U.S. who drank alcohol had increased their consumption since the pandemic began, and nearly 30 percent who used drugs reported an increase in that activity.

While overdose deaths in the U.S. were already increasing before the onset of COVID, factors related to the pandemic, such

as social isolation, stress and decreased access to treatment and emergency services made the problem worse. Also, during this time, fentanyl became a cheaper alternative to other substances and increased isolation meant a reduced chance that Narcan could be administered if an overdose occurred. According to the CDC, deaths from overdoses rose 27 percent from 2019 to 2020.

As we move toward normalcy as restrictions have lifted, the increase in substance use and long-term emotional issues caused by COVID will remain a critical community issue. Recent research projects that, additional deaths due to suicide and alcohol or drug misuse may continue to rise over the next decade.

Don't be afraid to seek help. Treatment can be found in many forms and tailored to your needs. At Circle Park, we provide individual and group counseling, peer support and medication assisted therapy to assist our clients on their road to recovery. We are dedicated to providing a broad range of behavioral health services with emphasis on educational and professional counseling programs related to alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse.

Treatment can help individuals manage their symptoms, reduce use and prevent relapse. Rates of relapse for treatment of substance use disorder are consistent with those of other chronic illnesses, and recovery is possible. Millions of people are in recovery today and living healthy, happy and productive lives.

At Circle Park Behavioral Health Services, we remain committed to supporting the residents of Florence County through treatment, intervention and prevention services, community education and support. For information on treatment options and other services, contact Circle Park at 843-665-9349 or visit our office located at 238 S. Coit Street in Florence. Visit us at [www.circlepark.com](http://www.circlepark.com).

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## CHILDREN AND FAMILY RECONCILIATION by Jennifer Robinson



*Tracy Redfearn*

**HARTSVILLE** - Tracy Redfearn is excited and faithful about children and families being healed from trauma. Her positive outlook is infectious and the reason so many families receive the assistance they need when children require mental health services. Services are provided through the Child and Family Resource Foundation.

Her faith and care for the community led her to establish the foundation following an encounter with a boy who watched his sister die in a fire. When she tried to show care for him, he punched in her nose. Instead of being angry, Redfearn turned that incident into a way to reach traumatized children and help them give a voice to their pain. Parents also need a safe place to share their issues about parenting and caring for children who have experienced trauma.

The Child and Family Resource Foundation has a multilayered approach to providing psycho-emotional and social support for children in their local community. Their programs include grief camps, mentoring programs, hosting community dinners, assisting teen moms with physical and emotional support and back to school backpack programs for Title I schools. They believe the key to a child's success in life is achieved through empowering their families to heal from grief, trauma and loss in their daily lives. They also provide community awareness on the effects of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES).

The Child and Family Resource Foundation's primary purpose is to educate, evaluate, address, coordinate and provide resources to all children and families who come to us. Their goal is to ensure all children are equipped with a strong foundation and have the necessary skills to be successful in school and in life. The Child and Family Resource was originally a camp for children who experienced grief and loss. Unfortunately, insurance does not cover some treatments. Because some families have difficulty paying for treatment services, the Child and Family Resource Foundation provides funding for those who are unable to pay. Redfearn and her team created therapeutic art to open up about their pain. It also encourages social and emotional growth for children who find challenges in communicating effectively. Music and arts are used to help children express their feelings about what happened to them. One of the goals is to remove labels of children who were thought to have behavioral issues, but most behavioral problems are trauma based.

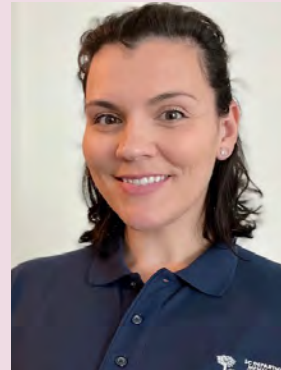
The Annie Case Foundation studies child welfare and found a 55 percent increase in anxiety and depression in children. The Post and Courier says South Carolina ranks 39 in economic well-being, education, health and family and community — to produce an overall child well-being. The parenting classes provided by the Child and Family Resource Foundation teach nurturing and mental health support ([www.postandcourier.com](http://www.postandcourier.com)). Redfearn stated, "62.8 percent of children, are testing on second grade levels, and as they grow, it could impact the future of economic development." Redfearn believes the trajectory of the future hinges upon industry development.

She promotes visits to local business from the children with hopes they will be inspired to start their own businesses. The business visits also encourage the children to fulfill their purposes and honor their feelings. Redfearn has the vision of a farm that will help children learn soft skills by engaging with horticulture and nature. The farm is a venue that connects outdoor education and learning experiences to create a space in an even greater way for healing.

The Children and Family Resource Foundation's 10 ½ years of service has helped build healthy families. With their efforts and the support of the community, Hartsville and surrounding areas will thrive. To learn more or to donate to the foundation, visit <https://www.childandfamilyresourcefoundation.com>.

## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE LIVES

*by Susan Carter*



*Stacey Rowell, LISW-CP, S,*

A focus of October's Mental Illness Awareness Week is the need for improved crisis response and mental health care for those experiencing an unexpected mental health need. Stacey Rowell, LISW-CP, S, is the Mobile Crisis program manager for the SC Department of Mental Health (SCDMH). She describes how crisis needs have increased and SCDMH's response has changed in the past five years: "SCDMH created a Mobile Crisis program that became available

statewide mid-2019, to anyone in the state of SC experiencing a mental health crisis. SCDMH has worked to increase access to services by embedding clinicians in a variety of non-traditional settings, including emergency departments, schools, jails and law enforcement agencies. Most recently, SCDMH received a grant from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to expand Mobile Crisis services in our high risk and high need areas of the state by incorporating peer support and telehealth service expansion. SCDMH has remained flexible and adapted to the needs of SC, even during the COVID-19 Pandemic, by decreasing access barriers using telehealth services to continue meeting the mental health needs in SC."

Often crisis response involves not only mental health professions but also law enforcement, as individuals experiencing symptoms of serious mental illness such as psychosis may come to their attention before recognizing or seeking help for their mental health condition. Law enforcement officers throughout SC are being offered Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), an educational and verbal de-escalation training for law enforcement. The National Alliance on Mental Illness of SC, in partnership with SCDMH, provides this week-long training at no cost. The SC Criminal Justice Academy have approved the course to offer hours for mental health training. Officers receive two days of educational training on mental illnesses, information on how to help those living with a mental illness from agencies including Probate Courts and hospitals, verbal de-escalation training and participate in role plays to practice those skills. CIT training is meant to reduce arrests, increase safety for the officer and the person living with a mental illness, and connect individuals to mental health resources and treatment.

Innovative strategies, such as Mobile Crisis and CIT, are helping to improve the lives of individuals living with serious mental illness through timely, safe and informed responses to their critical needs. In turn, our communities benefit by having stable, contributing members with fewer days lost to hospitalization or incarceration.

For more information about SCDMH's Mobile Crisis Program or Crisis Intervention Training, contact Rowell at the SCDMH Office of Emergency Services (803) 521-0402 or [stacey.rowell@scdmh.org](mailto:stacey.rowell@scdmh.org).

Those in crisis are encouraged to call the SCDMH Crisis Line: (833) 364-2274.

# RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING THE WARNING SIGNS by Susan Carter



*Angela Scott,  
Zero Suicide champion*

Angela Scott is a licensed professional counselor and Zero Suicide champion at Pee Dee Mental Health Center in Florence. She keeps staff and community members educated on suicide prevention, equipping them with the knowledge of how to recognize and address warning signs of suicide in friends, family, coworkers and anyone we come across in our daily lives. Scott reports that SC is ranked 24

in the nation for its suicide rate but cautions that “some of the rates can be skewed depending upon the way the death is reported by the coroner and other factors.” Suicide is one of the top 10 causes of death in South Carolinians ages 10-64 ([camps-care.com](https://camps-care.com) and SC DHEC).

SC is ranked 24 in the nation for its suicide rate. Throughout the state of SC, suicide is the:

- third leading cause of death for ages 10-24
- second leading cause of death for ages 25-34
- fourth leading cause of death for ages 35-44
- fifth leading cause of death for ages 45-54
- ninth leading cause of death for ages 55-64
- 17th leading cause of death for ages 65+

Overall, suicide is the 10-leading cause of death in SC. More than two times as many people died by suicide in 2019, than in alcohol related motor vehicle accidents. Yet, 65 percent of our communities did not have enough mental health providers to serve residents in 2020, according to federal guidelines. Researchers collect data to study increased patterns of suicide to assist prevention efforts. Although data is not available for the last four-year span in SC yet, suicide and suicidal attempts are associated with indicators including mental health problems, physical health problems, relationship problems, depression and interpersonal conflict.

Scott describes how the pandemic increased feelings of loneliness and depression in many people which led to thoughts of suicide: “In the height of the pandemic it is clear that the majority of struggling individuals would have been affected by the presence of COVID. We had to isolate in order to avoid catching and passing of COVID from one to the other, especially when it comes to our elderly loved ones. Jobs began to close, and people lost their biggest sources of income. Schools closed and went virtual. We panicked over where our next meals would come from. Who would watch our kids, if and when we had to return back to work. We were not prepared physically, financially or mentally for all that was brought upon us during this pandemic. Every aspect of the common indicators was affected or present and would definitely lead to an increase in suicide and suicide attempts. Many people felt trapped, like there was no way out, no one to talk to and listen to the unheard cries.”

Another contributing factor to the rising prevalence of suicide is the lack of mental health resources available to individuals in rural areas with limited access to primary and mental health providers and transportation barriers to reaching help that is accessible in larger communities. Because of these limitations and the lack of awareness about mental health conditions, it is important that we all know how to recognize the warning signs that someone is considering suicide. Scott notes that one of the first signs is often “a change in behavior or the presence of entirely new behaviors. This is of sharpest concern if the new or changed

behavior is related to a painful event, loss or change. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.”

Something to look out for when concerned that a person may be suicidal is a change in behavior or the presence of entirely new behaviors. This is of sharpest concern if the new or changed behavior is related to a painful event, loss or change. Most people who die by suicide exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do. For example, the person may talk about feeling hopeless, having no reason to live, being a burden to others, feeling trapped or being in unbearable pain. Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss or change include increased use of alcohol or drugs, withdrawing from activities, isolating from family and friends, sleeping too much or too little. People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods: depression, anxiety, loss of interest, irritability, humiliation or shame, anger and even a sense of relief and sudden improvement once the decision to suicide has been made (<https://afsp.org/>).

Although suicidal thoughts are a serious mental health condition, there are steps we all can take to intervene and reduce the likelihood of a negative outcome. Scott suggests “talking to them and being supportive of seeking help for and with them. If you feel that you are unable to talk with them about the thoughts, they are having direct them to speak with a counselor in the local area. SC Department of Mental Health has been placed in every county in the state. They offer a number of services that can assist and individual going through difficult times to better understand their role in recovery.” If the individual is in immediate crisis, always call 911. If they need to talk with someone and you are not in a place to do so, you can have them call the Crisis Line 833-364-2274 here in SC. This is a statewide service that provides on-site emergency mental health screening, assessment and referral, as appropriate, seven days a week, with the Mobile Crisis team to meet the psychiatric needs of the residents of SC.”

Another option is the new 988 line that can also offer support to individuals considering suicide via phone call or text message. If the individual is willing to seek services on their own, Scott recommends requesting an evaluation at a local Emergency Room. Scott’s passion for Zero Suicide is evident in her communication to Pee Dee Mental Health Center staff and our community: “Suicide is preventable, and it takes having people who are willing to help those individuals at their lowest make a decision to live and seek help. Any individual who has suffered the loss of a loved one due to suicide should know that there is support out there for you as well. Please take advantage of counseling. Talk to someone about the situation. Take advantage of the resources available and stop the stigma surrounding suicide and mental illness.”

Pee Dee Mental Health Center has counselors available in Florence, Marion and Darlington Counties. Call our main office at 843-317-4073 to request services or obtain more information.



# A WARRIOR CHERISHING EVERY BREATH by Adalia Ellis



Gloria Bishop

**HARTSVILLE** - Gloria Bishop, born May 30, 1954, is a wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, sister, aunt, niece and friend. She is also a breast cancer survivor and warrior.

In February 2016, after a biopsy, she learned she had breast cancer. "At that moment I stopped talking and gave it to God," recalls Bishop. When she told her husband, he said, "Its ok baby. You will be fine and I'm right here with you." When her daughter found out, she broke down crying. "I grabbed her and lifted her face so she could look me in the eyes. I said, Baby, CANCER is not my death sentence. It's not gonna take me out because they're gonna take it out of me."

She was treated at McLeod hospital where, "God sent me a team of amazing doctors and nurses. They explained everything that was going to take place. I was told that they would do chemo first." Wanting to know what to expect, she asked others and they said that it is different for each person. It was her childhood friend, Clynett that gave her the best advice, "Whatever you go through

don't give up, keep it moving and eat with plastic ware."

In March 2015, she began chemo treatments every 3 weeks. On the third day of the first round of treatment she started to feel the effects of the chemo. "I began to get weak and felt all flustered. I had no energy, no appetite. Plus, when I tried to eat, the food would not stay down. I did not know what to do." It was her daughter, Lasheba, who found smoothies by Boone Farm that Bishop was able to keep down. Other than foods that were vinegary or sour, nothing else was appetizing.

It was in the second week of the second round of treatment that she began to lose her hair. "In the second week I was taking a shower when I looked down and noticed my hair was on the floor. In a split second I began to cry. When I told my husband he said, "Well baby, you wear it short anyway and it's gonna be fine." So, he cut my hair and when he was done, he said, "Look in the mirror and I want you to see what I see. You are now the 4 B's, BLESSED, BLACK, BEAUTIFUL AND BALD!" All I could do was laugh, hug and kiss him. That was the sweetest encouragement anyone could give me."

The third, fourth, and fifth treatments were extremely hard. She put all of her trust in God and relied on her family to love and care for her through it. "By the time I got the 5th round of chemo I thought I was gonna die. My blood count went down to 0.0. They had to give me a shot to bring it back up. Through all this, my family and friends were there for me."

In July 2015, she had surgery to remove the rest of the cancer and is now cancer free. She's determined to give back. "The cancer HOPE Foundation took care of me when I had no insurance, but they still took care of me. I want them to continue to help other people, so I did a

fundraiser last year and gave back. I'm also doing one this year. If you want to donate, send \$1.00 to Cash App at \$pinkgloria or send check or money order to Gloria Bishop, PO Box 1930, Darlington, SC 29540 or send to McLeod Health Foundation, PO Box 100551 Florence, SC 29502 in honor of Gloria Bishop for the Hope Fund. (HOPE) means, HELPING ONCOLOGIST PATIENTS EVERYDAY."

She uses the hashtag #NOONEFIGHTSALONE to show the importance of family when someone is fighting cancer. It was also her faith in God that got her through the hardest times in treatment. "My fight was for all of my family because I love them dearly, more than they could ever know. I have lost a sister, brother and some friends to cancer and I did not want them to lose me. I now live my best life, doing everything God allows me to be able to do. I cherish every breath I take. To inhale and exhale is a miracle from God."

Upcoming opportunities to show support: October 15, Taste the Rainbow Cancer Gala Fundraiser, 3 p.m. – until Darlington; October 29, Heal Cancer Charity Walk, 7 a.m. -11a.m. Darlington To purchase tickets, contact Leona Burns at Beauty N-U Salon 843-468-1283

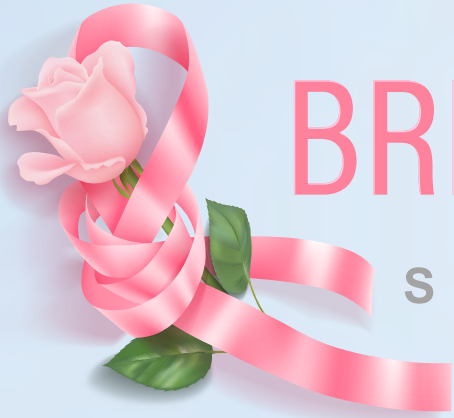
For more information contact Gloria Bishop at 843-287-6020.



Gloria Bishop survivor and warrior







AWARENESS MONTH

# BREAST CANCER

SUPPORT THE FIGHT



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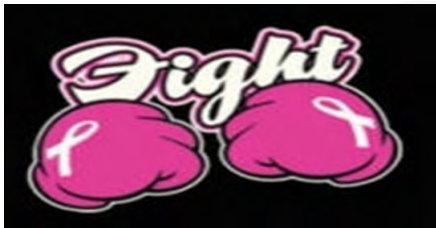
## THE ULTIMATE FIGHT Submitted by Angela Charles



Angela Charles

We all know someone directly or indirectly who has had a bout with cancer. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and raises public awareness of breast cancer, its detection, research, mammograms, other treatments and preventative measures that may lead to a permanent cure in the future. For those of us who have the fight personally, we know the importance of mammograms and cancer research. The evolution of both the mammogram and cancer research has come full circle.

In 1982, there was very little research and little known about breast cancer and many succumbed to the disease. And now, 40 years later, cancer research has evolved and many, even with stage four breast cancer, are living and thriving.



Join me on this journey. In 1981, as an eighth grader, my mother advised my sister and I that she had breast cancer. I had never heard of anyone having breast

cancer. I watched her go from a healthy woman to bedridden in a matter of months. My sister and I began to take on so many tasks to maintain the household. I knew where to pay all the bills and how to order grocery. As my sister, my grandparents and I watched my mother's health diminish, it affected all of us in many ways. My mother was the only child and my grandparents suffered as they watched her become sicker and sicker. I remember asking questions about the big sore my mother had on her left breast. Doctors could not give the family any answers, and I didn't understand why they couldn't do anything for her. My mother taught us to be strong and to believe God for everything. They gave her a few months to live and each time she would surpass that timeframe. But on August 12, 1982, my mother passed away and I was not ready. For many years, I dreaded the month of August. Cancer changed my life. Although it changed my life, it made me take care of me.

Let's fast forward to 2014. I scheduled my annual mammogram with McLeod Regional in October. Prior to my appointment, they called and asked if I wanted the new 3-D mammogram. My insurance verified that it was covered. This mammogram detected cancer in my left breast. I did not start chemo immediately. I waited and waited, then I began. While going through chemo, I planned my funeral. I talked to my daughter about raising my son and started to get my affairs in order. I could no longer look in the mirror and, whatever I wore, no longer fit. My hair was gone. I pride myself on being strong-willed and minded; but depression set in. I began to see a counselor. I had a recurring dream of something chasing me. I was tired when I woke up every morning. One night I woke up during my dream and my light was on. The voice spoke clear to me, "you will live." I looked around for the person speaking and found that I was alone. My faith was renewed. I had heard

from God. The next night, the dream returned, but this time I got to see the breast cancer ribbon chasing me. It wasn't an ordinary ribbon; it had a cape on. I called my friend and began to describe the ribbon and she drew it from my description. The dreams stopped. I have now been in remission since July 2015. My first year in remission, I was afraid to celebrate. I slowly understood the blessing that had been bestowed upon me. I then became an advocate for mammograms and screening and getting to know your body.



Shero Angela Charles

Join me as I journey into 2022. My only sister was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer. The carpet was pulled out from under me. I prayed and one of the few times, I asked God, WHY? My sister moved to South Carolina with me in 2013. She helped and supported me through my battle with cancer, and we shared the loss of our mother. As my sister started her chemo, we talked and shared. I suddenly had to rush her to the emergency room, and they sent her back home. Three days later she was placed in ICU because

she became septic, poisoned, throughout her body. Chemo stopped and my faith almost stopped. My niece and nephew came and began to rotate so someone could always be with her at the hospital. She then had a mini stroke. My sister could no longer walk. She was moved to a regular room after five days. Eventually she was moved to a rehabilitation facility. She saw a physical therapist, but she was not walking on her own. She was released home on May 19, 2022. Our Dad passed away on May 20, 2022. My sister was in a wheelchair at his funeral and was wearing an infusion pump for antibiotics. A week after the funeral, the infusion pump was removed, and she had at home physical therapy. Chemo resumed and she started taking steps with a walker. She started walking further but now with a cane. In July, we traveled back to NC to a family reunion, and she walked in with her cane. My family who had just saw her 60 days ago in a wheelchair could not believe their eyes. It was a miracle. My sister has now completed chemo and has returned to work.

The change in cancer treatment from 1982 to 2022, has changed by leaps and bounds. Stage four cancer used to be considered a death warrant. Stage four breast cancer is now a treatable disease due to the advancement in cancer research and technology. A yearly mammogram or cancer screening can save your life, it saved mine. Becoming familiar with your body can save your life, it saved my sister's life. If cancer runs in your family, talk about it so that the question regarding cancer in your family history can be answered correctly at the doctor's office. Our future needs to know so they can start getting mammograms and screenings early. Cancer is no longer the dreaded 'C' word, it's curable. No longer a crisis, but a cure! Please support efforts dedicated to research, technology, saving lives and finding a cure for cancer. Make a mammogram a part of your yearly regimen for self-care and know your body by committing to breast self-exams. Remember to love and live life to the fullest.

# LIVING HER BEST LIFE TO THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD by Anna Bowman



Gloria Lewis

Nothing can truly prepare someone to hear the words, you have cancer! When Gloria Lewis, like millions of women across America, scheduled her annual mammogram in May 2021, she was confident that everything would be okay, after all, she was doing everything she felt was right to stay healthy, only to be informed that cancer had not eluded her. Annual

Mammogram screenings are supposed to be just that – annually, once a year! Still, thousands of women will be notified just like Lewis that something isn't quite right, and a follow-up screening is needed, immediately!

"My heart sank," Lewis remembered, upon receiving

notification that she needed to return for a follow up screening after her mammogram. Knowing that cancer can be merciless, she feared the worst. Perplexed, Lewis couldn't remember having any symptoms, prior to her mammogram. "I felt fine as usual, but was advised to come back, they saw something that needed to be checked again," she recalled. Her biopsy revealed a stage 1 cancer

diagnosis: ER, PR Negative-Her2 Positive, on June 25, 2021. Even though the cancer was early she would have to undergo chemotherapy to combat the Her2 Positive, because it was a more aggressive form of the disease, she was informed by her physician.

The words cancer, biopsy and chemotherapy were never in her vocabulary, but suddenly they were essential components of her daily life. "I was afraid and nervous," she explained. Like so many women before her, Lewis felt a sudden uncertainty about her future, "It felt as if my entire life was placed on pause, until further notice," is how she described her follow-up mammogram screening. No one hears the word cancer and simply replies, "okay,"

Facing a life altering diagnosis as a single parent, Lewis' faith never wavered; she was fighting not only for herself but for her son Jacob, as well. "As a single mother, I'd raised a wonderful young man," she said, adding, "I wanted to continue to be there for him as long as I could." "Once I got my thoughts together, I gave it all to God," she acknowledged. Sharing her diagnosis with family, friends and co-workers, wasn't easy for Lewis. Fear that people would treat her differently once her diagnosis was revealed, was soon replaced with an outpouring of love, compassion, and prayers for a full recovery. "I was met



Gloria's hair beginning to grow back after 10 months of chemo taking it out.

with more love than I could ever imagine, and thankfully, my chemotherapy treatments did not prevent me from working."

"I'm living my best life to the fulfillment of God," Gloria Lewis, proudly acclaimed. Her gratitude is forever endless to the medical staff of the McLeod Oncology Department, whom she described as simply awesome and offers her many thanks for all their encouragement.

I AM A  
SURVIVOR  
& I AM A  
WARRIOR  
I AM A  
FIGHTER

KEEP  
*Hope*  
ALIVE  
Breast Cancer  
Awareness Month

Breast Cancer Awareness



# EARLY DETECTION



## SCHEDULE YOUR MAMMOGRAM

Breast Cancer is the leading cause of cancer among women and early detection significantly influences your chance of survival. The National Cancer Institute recommends that women start having annual mammograms at age 40. At McLeod Health, each of our hospitals offer 3D mammography, the most advanced technology for early detection.



**Greater Accuracy**



**Improved detection  
of invasive cancers**



**Earlier Detection**



**Reduces call back tests**



Schedule Your Mammogram at [McLeodMammogram.org](https://www.mcleodmammmogram.org)  
or call 843-777-2095 (Option 1)

## McLeod Health

FLORENCE | DILLON | CHERAW | CLARENDON | LORIS | SEACOAST

# GET THE FACTS ON BREAST CANCER.

Breast Cancer is diagnosed every

**14 seconds**

around the world, and  
in the U.S. it's every

**2 minutes.**



About **287,850 women** and about  
**2,710 men** will be diagnosed  
with breast cancer in the U.S. this year.



About  
**1 in 8 women**  
in the U.S. will  
get breast cancer  
in her lifetime.

It is estimated that

**90% of people**

will survive **5 or more years**

after being diagnosed  
with breast cancer.

**In non-metastatic invasive breast cancer**

There is estimated to be more than

**3.8 million**

**breast cancer  
survivors in  
the U.S.**



**Breast Cancer** is the leading cause of cancer death in women,  
after lung cancer. The chance of a woman dying from early stage  
breast cancer is estimated to be **1 in 39 (about 2.6%)**



Schedule Your Mammogram at [McLeodMammogram.org](https://McLeodMammogram.org)  
or call 843-777-2095 (Option 1)

## McLeod Health

FLORENCE | DILLON | CHERAW | CLARENDON | LORIS | SEACOAST

# PINK RIBBON MONTH: IS YOUR MAMMOGRAM UP TO DATE?

Submitted by Sydney E. Murphy, PA-C, physician assistant HopeHealth



Sydney E. Murphy, PA-C

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign to raise awareness about the impact of breast cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, there will be 250,000 breast cancer diagnoses in 2022. Breast cancer is the most frequent type of non-skin cancer, the most frequent cause of cancer death in women worldwide and the second most frequent cause of cancer death for women in the U.S.

The majority of breast cancer cases in the U.S. are diagnosed as a result of an abnormal screening study, such as a mammogram, although a significant number are first brought to a medical provider's attention by the patient who has noticed something abnormal. A screening mammogram is the primary modality for breast cancer screening with ultrasound and MRI reserved for diagnostic purposes to better evaluate abnormal images. Screening mammograms are not typically started

before the age of 40 unless there is a strong family history of breast cancer. If you have family history, a mammogram is recommended 10 years before the age your family member was diagnosed. As a woman younger than 40, you should be "breast aware" or vigilant and alert to any changes. Always bring suspicious changes to your clinician.

There are a multitude of things that may cause lumps or other changes in your breast such as menstrual changes, fibrocystic disease and benign growths called fibroadenomas. BRCA genes, defined as DNA mutations that increase the risk of breast cancer, are also a hot topic. The process of testing for the BRCA gene involves a consult with a geneticist and your primary care provider to determine when you will start screening.

It is also important to remember that while we do not routinely screen men, they can have breast cancer as well. Encourage the men in your life to be "breast aware" as well, monitoring any changes within their own breast tissue and reporting them to their provider.

While Caucasian women are slightly more likely to develop breast cancer than their African American, Hispanic and Asian counterparts, African American women are more likely to develop more aggressive, more advanced-stage breast cancer, diagnosed at a younger age. African American women are also more likely to die from breast cancer than women of other ethnicities. Historically

these differences in outcomes have been attributed to having less access to mammography and quality medical care, as well as various lifestyle patterns. At HopeHealth, we can provide you with quality health care and better access to early detection tools that can improve your overall health as well and work to improve the outcomes of any illness that may be diagnosed.

If you are uninsured and worried about the cost of screening, contact HopeHealth. We can enroll you in the Best Chance Network that helps women needing mammograms and cervical cancer screenings. Through our sliding fee scale program, we can also help with the cost of ongoing health care needs and preventive medical screenings.

Earlier detection through screenings and improvements in breast cancer treatment have dramatically reduced the mortality rates from what they were in the 1980s. We are fortunate in our area to have expert-level care should we discover something abnormal on a screening exam.

So, tell your aunt, your mom, your sisters and your friends to go get their mammogram! You never know, you just might be saving their life!

Sydney Murphy is a board-certified family medicine physician assistant serving patients of all ages at HopeHealth on Pine Needles Road. She is accepting new patients. Contact HopeHealth (843) 432-2952 to schedule an appointment.



## American Cancer Society Recommendations for the Early Detection of Breast Cancer

Guideline for women at *average risk* for breast cancer



### Ages 40 – 44

Woman should have the choice to start annual breast cancer screening with mammograms if they wish to do so.



### Ages 45 – 54

Woman should get mammograms every year.



### Age 55 and older

Women can switch to mammograms every two years, or can continue yearly screening. Screening should continue as long as a woman is in good health and is expected to live 10 more years or longer.

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# AN ADVOCATE WITH THE PASSION TO SERVE by Ta'meeka Epps



Asia McFadden

**LAKE CITY** - Domestic violence is an infectious disease which runs rampant through many homes, families and communities. October of every year is Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM). This year's theme is #Every1KnowsSome1. The mission is to shine a light on the issue while bringing awareness, informing, giving hope and bringing healing. The theme highlights that domestic

violence is a common occurrence which affects young as well as old, men as well as women. Domestic violence presents itself in many forms and looks different from case to case.

The Pee Dee Coalition (PDC) is dedicated to the reduction of sexual assault, family violence, child abuse and to the needs of its victims. It is the PDC's belief that the reduction of these ills is a community issue. This means that it takes a community effort to be able to see a reduction in domestic violence-not only women, not only service providers- but all who value the basic human desire to be free from physical threat and harm.

Asia McFadden born and raised in Lake City, SC is an advocate for the PDC Rural Florence County. As an advocate McFadden provides support and assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. She ensures she maintains her knowledge of the laws surrounding domestic violence/sexual assault to always be a resource relaying correct and the most up to date information. Collaboration and networking with other organizations, businesses and individuals are also essential components in her role as an advocate. Other services McFadden provides include community education, court accompaniment, information/referrals, crisis counseling, medical/legal advocacy. Prior to working for the PDC, McFadden was a substance abuse specialist with Shoreline Behavioral Health Services located in Conway, SC.

Domestic violence is a deliberate and repeated injury or threat to do bodily harm to an individual from a person with whom they share a child with or have a primary relationship (married, divorced, separated, couple living together or an intimate partner). It's important to realize that victimization can take place in many forms: in heterosexual relationships and within the LGBTQ+ community. The PDC see a lot of different types of domestic violence. Victims of molestation, sexual harassment, rape, and those who are sexually abused without physical contact are all seen at the PDC. Some abusers don't physically attack but use psychological weapons instead. These include threats, verbal attacks on one's self esteem and controlling a victim's activities such as sleep, eating, isolation or denial of access to money/funds. Threatening to destroy property or harming pets and stalking are also abusing acts.

The PDC provides services to victims of all ages. As a Rape Aggression Defense Instructor, McFadden can teach prevention and risk reduction for children as young as 12, and adults of any age. Pertaining to advocacy, she works mostly with adults of various ages, both men and women. In the event of child and adolescent physical or sexual abuse the Durant Children's Center (DCC) would be contacted. Durant's Children's Center, a multidisciplinary assessment and treatment center, is a program of PDC with three satellite centers located in Florence, Sumter and Hartsville. The children centers are available to all counties where services are provided.

The PDC works with families and individuals. While the satellite centers work with victims, another program of the PDC, Alternatives to Violence (ATV), work with perpetrators of domestic violence. When trying to reduce the number of occurrences of domestic violence, it's important to start with the main issues; those who cause abuse.

The PDC realizes many times victims will return to their abusers for an array of reasons. They know they cannot stop the victim from returning however they can try and help create a more functional household, without violence. Alternatives to Violence is dedicated to stopping domestic violence by teaching the offenders healthy ways of dealing with emotions. There are family, individual and group therapy sessions offered by the ATV Program. Participants may voluntarily take part in the program; however, most are referred by the judicial system.

The shelter program consists of two shelters for female victims of family violence and their children: an Emergency Safe Shelter (ESS) and New Beginnings Transitional Shelter (NBTS). Women and their children who are in immediate danger of family violence are eligible for ESS. The ESS is at an undisclosed location and houses up to 25 women and children on a temporary basis. The NBTS, located in Wallace, SC, houses up to 32 formerly abused women and their children.

The transitional shelters are not for women in crisis, but for those who have already left an abusive situation and are homeless due to violence. The transitional shelter offers a 24 month stay while survivors of family violence learn the necessary life skills to live independently. Both shelters provide a variety of structured services to victims and survivors.

During the month of October, the PDC recognizes DVAM by hosting numerous events in the counties they serve. There will be a PDC Newsletter released which includes a schedule of events being held in each of the counties for DVAM. In the rural Florence area specifically, the PDC will begin the month partnering with Ashley Brown, a survivor of domestic violence, to host the third annual Domestic Violence Awareness March in Lake City.

As a child, McFadden knew that when she grew up, she wanted to be in a position where she could help others. "I've always worked in roles where my duties were to provide services to clients, it's my passion. The need for advocacy in our community is high because the rates of domestic violence and sexual assault are rising. I breathe therefore I serve," McFadden explained.

Those in need of services can contact the business line (843-669-4694) or walk into a center during business hours. There are 24-hour crisis lines (843-669-4600, 1-800-273-1820) and a Parent Hotline for the DCC (843-618-2420). Whenever someone calls, they'll speak with a live representative. Additional information can be found at [www.peedeecoalition.org](http://www.peedeecoalition.org).





# **Calling All Runners**



In Honor of October's National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Pee Dee Coalition Announces

**Breaking Free From Domestic Violence**

**Pee Dee Coalition's 11th Annual October 2022**

**Distance Challenge**



Breaking Free will be a distance-challenge for individuals and teams that will be held virtually throughout the month of October.

With violence on the rise since the pandemic we have set a goal of raising \$50,000 through this event. This will be split between our New Beginnings Transitional Shelter in Wallace SC (4 miles from Cheraw) and our Emergency Shelter in Florence

**30 Miles In 1 Month Challenge**

Complete 30 miles at your own pace or compete in the Longest Distance Challenge



**Shatter the Silence**  
**Stop Domestic Violence**



Register at

<https://BreakingFree5k15k.itsyourrace.com/>





## Talk to your friend about it.

Always think of your own safety first, as it might be dangerous to confront someone who has been physically abusive. If you see, hear or find out about a friend being emotionally,

physically or sexually abusive toward someone else, and you feel comfortable intervening, say something or do something. Start with gentle questions like, “How have things been going between you and [partner] lately?” The goal is to get your friend to admit that they are feeling stressed and that they could use some help dealing with that “stress.” An abusive person is extremely unlikely to respond positively to being told that they are an abuser. Going along with your friend and pretending it is stress might get that person to accept help faster than trying to get them to admit they are perpetrating relationship violence. An expert may be able to do so, but you risk endangering the victim if you press too hard on an abusive person to make them admit they are a perpetrator of relationship abuse. Talk to other friends about what you’ve seen and heard and work together to produce solutions.

## Know where to refer your friend.

If your friend will admit to being “stressed,” offer to go with them to a behavioral health or a mental health counselor. Normalize mental health treatment by telling your friend about a time you needed help, or someone else in your family needed mental health counseling. Plan in advance where you could go together for help. The Pee Dee Coalition provides support to community members in need of resources concerning abusive behaviors. Our program, Alternatives to Violence (ATV), is dedicated to stopping domestic violence by changing the behavior that causes it. The program teaches alternatives to anger, rape, fear, isolation and desperation that are a part of the abusive relationships. The goal is to enable abusers to identify alternative ways of dealing with emotions without the use of violence. Participants may voluntarily take part in the program; however, most are referred by the judicial system. If you or someone you know and care about could benefit from this program, please contact our ATV Coordinator at (843) 673-2008.

The best thing you can do as a friend or loved one is to encourage them to get help from a professional.

## Emphasize how important it is that your friend does not use violence.

Tell your friend that no matter how bad things get, including, if their partner has cheated on them, insulted them or done other unfair things — there is never a reason to hit or hurt them. You can let your friend know that excessive drinking does not excuse the use of violence and having a difficult childhood is no reason to hurt someone else.

## Many abusive people do not realize they are being abusive.

An abuser may believe that they are being sweet, caring and loving when trying to “protect” their partner, or think that, to “show how much someone means to you,” you must act jealous. Alternatively, they could know that their behavior is inappropriate and/or criminal and feel they can’t control



themselves or don’t care about what happens. If you think a friend is being abusive in their relationship, it is vital that someone speaks with them about their behaviors. While it is important for you to try and approach them about this, they may not want

to listen. If possible, have them receive counseling for their behaviors. If they are not receptive, it can be helpful to speak with other people in their life they admire (a coach, teacher, parent). Explain to those people what you are seeing and ask them to speak with your friend about how they need to change their behaviors, and why they should change their behaviors. Some of the signs of an abusive personality include not accepting responsibility for their actions, difficulty tolerating injury, if someone hurts them, they think it’s okay to hurt them back and inability to communicate about emotions.

## Abusive behavior can stem from a number of different risk factors.

Past trauma, codependency, a sense of abandonment, familial rejection or neglect, inability to communicate about emotions, lack of validation from outside parties and objectification of women are all risk factors for abusive behavior.

## Talking to a Friend About Abuse

Start by Believing.

**BLAME**

**TRY TO FIX IT FOR THEM**

**JUDGMENT**

## BEING A VICTIM IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

*Submitted by Joyce G. Ford, executive director the Naomi Project*

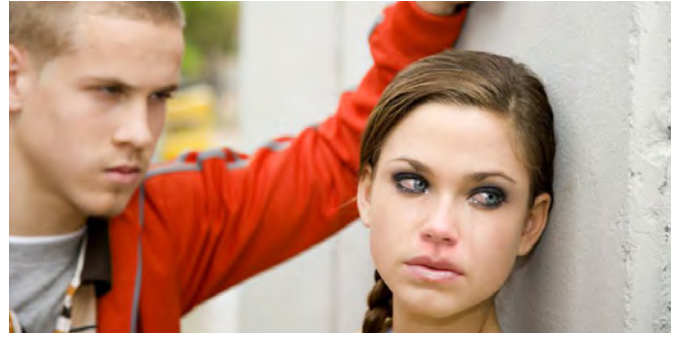


*Joyce G. Ford*

No matter what, fear and helplessness do not belong in a relationship. Do you think you or a friend might be in an abusive relationship? The following are warning signs for abusive relationships and might just save someone's life.

Does your partner try to control and isolate you? This can be as simple as saying they do not like you leaving the house wearing certain clothing or saying your friends are "bad influences." Does your partner blame others for his actions or blame you for any problems in the relationship? Some may call this the "blame game," and can cause the victim psychological distress. Does your partner exhibit constant jealousy? The abuser may say it is because they "love" the victim, but this comes back to them having control. Does your partner show disrespect for his mother and others in authority? This again comes back to the abuser wanting control.

Does your partner tell you that you are worthless or embarrass you in front of others? This can cause the victim's severe psychological distress. Does your partner verbally or



physically lash out at you? Even if he says he will never do it again, he most likely will. Does your partner check up on you or do you find yourself having to account to him about your whereabouts when you are not with him? He may say that he misses your voice or just wants to know about your day, but this again comes back to the abuser wanting control.

If you found yourself answering yes to any of these questions, then you may be in an abusive relationship. If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship, reach out for help. There are many organizations that can help the victims not only leave their abuser, but also help create a safe and nurturing environment. You can call 211 to speak to a person regarding resources available in your area.

# Need help and don't know who to call?



**We have trained specialists ready to connect you with services.**

- Food assistance
- Housing and shelter
- Health services
- Veterans assistance
- Mental health services
- Financial and legal
- Employment help
- Child care and education
- Aging and disability
- Crisis and emergency
- And more

# A COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER

by Jennifer Robinson



Ashley Page

**LAKE CITY** - How has society handled bullying? Has it been addressed as just minor misbehavior? Is bullying simply about repressed behavior that is excused because children are not able to express their feelings appropriately? Bullying may not be an act that is easily explained but most states do recognize it as a crime. Unfortunately, people who feel it is just bad behavior fail to

know bullying is a crime which is a punishable act by law. Ashley Page, youth intervention coordinator for the City of Lake City, SC said, "state and local lawmakers have taken different steps and actions to prevent bullying and each state addresses bullying differently. Most states have established laws, regulations and policies. In most cases this act appears in the criminal code of a state that may apply to juveniles." It is important to learn how serious bullying is so people can talk to their family about it. Moreover, family must gather information to teach children and adults to express their feelings in a healthy way instead of in aggression.

The aggression children feel is often transferred into intimidation and manipulation towards others. [Psychologytoday.com](http://Psychologytoday.com) said, "Bullying is a distinctive pattern of repeatedly and deliberately harming and humiliating others, specifically those who are smaller, weaker and younger or in any way more vulnerable than the bully. The deliberate targeting of those of lesser power is what distinguishes bullying from garden-variety aggression. The question is ever present, how is bullying prevented? Page said, "Always learn the warning signs of bullying, pay attention to environment change, how children distance themselves from others and have talks with the children. This means being an advocate and role model and be supportive of what the children love to do. As the coordinator for the Lake City Police Department, Page plans to continue to travel in different neighborhoods, visit schools; continue being a great mentor to our youth and being able to continue joining together



with their Anti Bully Rallies." In 2022, Page and the Lake City Police Department held events in May to raise awareness against bullying. On a continuum, Page shared, they collaborate with Florence School District 3 to speak and do presentations at different schools within the Lake City area. This keeps students and teachers informed about bullying so they know how to defend themselves when or if it occurs.

The partnership with the local school district, the local police department, Florence School District 3 mentors and several more is the best way to show students they have the support of their community. Children must know they have a safe environment when they feel they are not safe. A team effort from different entities throughout the community will show students that safety and their well-being is top priority. "Having a relationship with the community makes a difference," said Page. We have more students and parents sharing their experiences and wanting to know how to make a change or what can they do to prevent the next child from going through that situation or wanting to join the various activities we have here at the police department." To learn more about the Lake City Police Department, visit [www.cityoflakecity.org](http://www.cityoflakecity.org).

Page is a 2014 graduate of Clafin University in Orangeburg, SC. In 2020, she received her Master's in Business Administration with a concentration on Human Resources from Colorado Tech University. Page is pursuing her Doctorate in Public Administration. Her current position is as Youth Intervention Coordinator for the Lake City Police Department. She is involved in several activities and yet manages to keep family first.

BULLYING PREVENTION



OCTOBER

## National Bullying Prevention Month

BULLYING IS INTENTIONAL AGGRESSIVE, HURTFUL BEHAVIOR

160,000

BULLIED TEENS SKIP SCHOOL EACH DAY BECAUSE OF FEAR OF BULLYING

85%

OF BULLING OCCURS INSIDE OF A SCHOOL

1 of 5

ABOUT STUDENTS REPORT BEING BULLIED

STUDENTS WERE MOST OFTEN BULLIED BECAUSE OF THEIR LOOKS (55%), BODY SHAPE (37%), OR RACE (16%)

Types of Bullying

- VERBAL
TEASING, NAME-CALLING, TAUNTING, TREATENING, SEXUAL COMMENTS
- SOCIAL
SPREADING HURTFUL RUMORS, EMBARRASSING SOMEONE IN FRONT OF OTHERS
- PHYSICAL
HITTING, KICKING, PUNCHING, TAKING OR BREAKING SOMEONE'S THINGS

Cyber-Bullying

SENDING OR POSTING HURTFUL, EMBARRASSING, OR THREATENING TEXT OR IMAGES, USING THE INTERNET, CELL PHONES, OR OTHER DIGITAL COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Bullying is a serious problem. Help to stop it!

Warning signs for bullied children

- MISTERIOUS INJURIES
- LOST/DESTROYED CLOTHING OR POSSESSIONS
- RESISTANCE TO ATTENDING SCHOOL
- DROP IN SELF-ESTEEM

## ACCEPTANCE AND RECOGNITION GOES A LONG WAY

Submitted by Jennifer V. Arambulo, job coach, Marion and Dillon County BDSN



Jennifer V. Arambulo

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. People with disabilities are a vital part of our community. It is very important for companies to recognize and be more accepting of people with disabilities within the workforce. Individuals with disabilities may have challenges that limit their functionality, but it doesn't mean that they are not capable of working and definitely does not mean that they cannot do

the job. When companies recognize and practice diversity and inclusiveness in the workforce, not only are they giving opportunities to people with disabilities, but they are also teaching other employees, its clients and customers that a disability is NOT a disadvantage. The acceptance and recognition, that people with disabilities are as capable as somebody who has no disability gives the individuals that we serve a certain pride and a sense of achievement.

The Marion-Dillon County Board of Disabilities and Special Needs (MDCBDSN) agree that diversity and inclusivity are a big part of any strong workforce. People with disabilities are not a disadvantage, they may have limitations but they have a lot to offer and they can be as capable as any worker.

Maxwood Furniture, Zaxby's, KFC, Bojangles, Walmart and Dollar Tree are just a few of the businesses that our board has partnered with within Marion and Dillon counties. These businesses recognize a diverse and inclusive workforce. They tap on the strengths of our individuals that work with them and use them where they are able to do their best.



Front Row (L-R): Darrell Baccus, Vandelle Brown, Jonathon Floyd, Lawrence Ford, Travis Boyd; 2nd Row (L-R): Gerald Williams, Chris Quick, Taylor Yarborough, Brittney Davis, Don Ford, Hunter Legette, Ja'Quan Reaves, Chrissie Taylor, Lavesa Felton and Willie Woodberry

One of our goals is to make sure that our clients are not given any kind of special treatment when they are accepted for employment. A few of our partner businesses may give them accommodation with their schedules and their working hours but the individuals that we serve are expected to perform just like any of their employees. In fact, one of the individuals that we serve is now working full time at Walmart and receives all benefits that Walmart gives to all its full time employees. We have individuals working at different businesses in the area and most of them are receiving the same rate of pay as all the other employees in the same position.

The MDCBDSN's motto is, "Branching Out to Become Independent," reflects its commitment to empowering people to reach their fullest potential.

## REMOVING BARRIERS THROUGH TRAINING AND SUPPORT



Eric Yates

**DARLINGTON**-Darlington County Disabilities and Special Needs Board is fortunate to employ a dedicated and capable workforce. Many adults with intellectual disabilities and special needs find it challenging to secure and maintain employment. Our agency is committed to providing adults with special needs vocational training and support to remove barriers to employment. One beneficiary of such training and a valued employee of the

Darlington County Disabilities and Special Needs Board is Mr. Eric Yates.

Yates graduated from Darlington High School in 2014, at the age of 18. He attended Vocational Rehabilitation where he was placed within Darlington High School for janitorial training. He later went to Darlington Habitat Restore to train and work. He sorted clothing and completed janitorial duties there as well. Walmart later employed him, where he collected shopping carts, restocked and ensured the store was clean. He then worked at Piggly Wiggly in the Darlington area. He cleaned, bagged groceries, escorted customers to their vehicles and collected the carts. He left there and started working for Oakhaven Nursing Center. He was part of the janitorial crew cleaning bathrooms and floors. He took these positions with the hopes of having something permanent. Those did not pan out for him.

Yates is now 27 years old and attends Bridging the Gap (BTG), a vocational training center and place of employment for adults with special abilities operated by the Darlington County Disabilities and Special Needs Board. For almost a year, Yates has embraced the training offered him and has used his skills to secure employment on the agency's janitorial enclave. The enclave consists of multiple adults with intellectual disabilities and special needs who have many abilities to perform, successfully, a host of jobs. Yates states he really enjoys his job and takes pride in his work. He has been a participant of the program for almost a year and says he really enjoys the job and activities the program provides. He loves working on the janitorial crew where he vacuums, mops and takes out the trash at the various locations which he works. He is a dedicated worker and participant who takes pride in doing his job.

Yates is a bright young man with endless possibilities of having a bright future. Attending BTG affords him the ability to socialize with others as well as provide employment. Because of employees like Yates, Darlington County Disabilities and Special Needs can contract with multiple businesses in our community to provide value added and mutually beneficial employment opportunities for those we serve. Darlington County Disabilities and Special Needs Board thanks our community business partners for providing Yates and many others real employment opportunities.

Yates's future goals include getting married and starting a family! He has a strong religious background, work ethic and a great personality. Having these attributes along with a calm disposition will take him far in life. Yates is something of a food connoisseur; he enjoys experiencing culturally diverse foods. His current focus is to learn how to cook and drive. Kudos to Yates for demonstrating to us and others, in the words of Arthur Ashe, "Success is a journey, not a destination."

## A PLACE TO CALL "HOME"

Submitted by Robert Kearns, PADD chair



Kimberly Tumbleson  
executive director

Many adults with an intellectual or related disability seek a place where they can live as independently as they are able: a place where they are safe: a place where they can enjoy friendships. PADD is such a place. A place many of the residents now call "Home."

PADD is an abbreviation for Presbyterian Agency for the Developmentally Disabled, Inc. PADD is a mission of the Presbytery of New Harmony, incorporated in the year 2000 as a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit. The PADD mission is, "To provide the

highest quality of life and the greatest possible level of independence for each resident within the context of a community based residential facility." PADD is a qualified provider for the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs.

PADD currently has two homes in Florence able to serve a total of 10 female residents. A third home is opening soon. This third home will provide residential opportunities for four men.

Within the home, the residents each have their own private room, with internet, cable and phone. Furnishings are provided by PADD. The common areas are shared. Meals are prepared by staff, or the residents may elect to "go out" and eat at local restaurants.

The residents all attend a day program that is appropriate to their abilities and desires. They also go on outings together. The residents enjoy activities such as shopping, movies, bowling, religious services and community events. Transportation for all activities is provided by PADD. In addition to these there are group activities enjoyed inside the home.

All of the residents have their own health and wellness professionals to support them. PADD staff is responsible for monitoring resident health, keeping appointments, transportation and the administration of prescribed medicine. The distribution of medicine to the residents is closely monitored by a registered nurse who reviews the medical records frequently.

The physical safety of our residents is a priority. All of the PADD homes are equipped with sprinkler systems. Security systems and protocols are in place. There is a 24/7 awake staff to provide ongoing care.

Financial support for PADD comes from many sources: Medicaid, resident's Social Security, private and corporate donations, grants and The SC Housing Trust Fund.

The Board of Trustees, our staff, our residents and their families, greatly appreciate the community support we have received over the years from Florence and the larger PEE DEE region. We are always interested in discussing new ways to involve our residents in the community. Although challenging to arrange and maintain there may be opportunities for some of our residents to engage in compensated work in the future.

Kimberly Tumbleson is the administrator and executive director. Tumbleson has been with the PADD mission for 15 years and has become like family to many of the residents who have lived at PADD for almost as long. In addition to caring for our residents and their families, Ms. Tumbleson manages a staff of 13 individuals, which includes an activity director, residential counselors and a nurse. Several staff members have been with PADD for over ten years.

For additional information on the PADD organization, volunteer opportunities, residential possibilities, employment, or any other aspect of the mission, please contact our Executive Director, Kimberly Tumbleson. E-mail [ktumbleson@paddsc.org](mailto:ktumbleson@paddsc.org). Cell: 843-687-7046. Mailing address is PADD Wren Home, 2350 Regional Road, Florence, SC. 29501. PADD is on the internet at [www.paddsc.org](http://www.paddsc.org), and also on Facebook.

## SERVING PEOPLE CREATING CHANGE

Submitted by Beth Franco, executive director, Disability Rights South Carolina



Beth Franco

**COLUMBIA** - Disability Rights South Carolina (DRSC) envisions a society where all people, regardless of the type or severity of disability, are productive members of society in which competitive, integrated employment is the first and preferred option.

DRSC's mission is to protect and advocate for the legal, civil and human rights for people with disabilities.

DRSC is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system and the Client Assistance Program (CAP) for South Carolina. We are here to help people with disabilities understand and defend their rights. We provide a variety of services to include client assistance, training, abuse & neglect investigation, legal assistance and advocacy for change.

### Employment for People with Disabilities

DRSC helps people with disabilities when they face barriers to work. These efforts include:

- Helping people get necessary services from the state vocational rehabilitation program or the commission for the blind.
- Assisting people who need accommodations to get the education or training they need to go to work.
- Advocating that employers provide accommodations needed because of a person's disability.
- Helping people who receive SSI or Social Security Disability to understand their rights and to overcome barriers to work.

### Client Assistance Program

In 2017, the CAP came to DRSC. This program has expanded our efforts to ensure people with disabilities have the supports and services they need to help them work. Using CAP funding, we assist individuals who receive or want to receive services from the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (VR), or the South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) understand their rights to services. We also use CAP funding to help people understand their employment rights, such as their rights to reasonable accommodations and to be free from disability related discrimination. People should contact us when they have been turned down for services by VR or SCCB, need a better plan for VR or SCCB to help them go back to work or need to better understand their rights. We can also help if people are not receiving the services, they need from independent living centers.


### Reasonable Accommodations for Employment

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to make reasonable accommodation for a qualified individual with a known physical or mental disability. Potential reasonable accommodations include job restructuring, reassignment to a vacant position, part-time or modified work schedules, assistive technology, or aides or qualified interpreters. Please see link to our fact sheet regarding reasonable accommodations for employment, <https://www.disabilityrightssc.org/reasonable-accommodation-and-your-rights-as-an-employee-with-a-disability>.



FULL LIFE. FULL FORWARD.  
**FLORENCE**  
SOUTH CAROLINA

**Mayor's Youth Initiative (MYI)**  
Resources Event for Parents & Youth



**SCAN ME**

**Active Members of the of Mayor's Youth Initiative:**

- City of Florence
- Florence School District One
- Dept. of Juvenile Justice
- Pee Dee Mental Health Center
- Florence Parks & Recreation
- Heart of Life
- My Brother's Keeper
- Purely Positive Network
- SC Gets Lit
- Miriam's P.A. Resources & Services
- Florence Family Support Center
- Lighthouse Ministries
- Florence Housing Authority
- D.A.P.S. Mentoring Program
- PACE Center for Girls
- Community Empowerment Center
- SC Department of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Mayor's Youth Initiative is a strategic partnership aimed at promoting the health, well-being, and success of the youth of Florence, South Carolina. Resources for families and youth include job connectivity, housing, mental health, financial assistance, education, parent services, health, literacy...etc. **Scan the QR code to learn more!**

## FLORENCE MAYOR'S YOUTH INITIATIVES SEEKS TO FIGHT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

by Adalia Ellis



Mayor Teresa Myers Ervin

In 2020, The Honorable Teresa Myers Ervin, mayor of the City of Florence, introduced the Mayor's Coalition for Humanity. Under this umbrella is the Mayor's Youth Initiative (MYI), which is a strategic partnership aimed at promoting the health, well-being and success of youth in Florence, SC. Partners with the MYI tackle homelessness because Florence has homeless youth, mainly due to the instability of parental employment and the inability to maintain a

residence.

"We find that if we attack youth issues through the family unit point of view, we are able to help youth. This would mean taking a wholistic approach to solving problems that includes youth homelessness," said Ervin.

Ervin regularly meets with MYI partners, which is co-chaired by Dr. Ronald Murphy of Francis Marion University and Beverly Woods of Florence School District 1 and is comprised of 16 partnering organizations.

Dr. Murphy works closely with Homeless Connect; an event held on the first Friday of every month and is intended to provide the homeless community with resources to improve themselves and their situation. Situations that are a reality when school is in session. Students who do not have a permanent home have trouble getting transportation to school.

Ervin said, "When the bus does not come by to pick them

up, it not only affects their ability to get to school, but also their performance in school. A couple years back, a study was done that showed that when families own their home, the children do better in school."

A solution to the transportation issue is collaboration between the MYI and Florence School District 1. At the beginning of the year, it is more of an issue as young people are identified and transportation is arranged. Young people are uniquely affected by homelessness and their education is affected by the stress of not having a place to live, food insecurity and lack of access to the internet, which is a growing method of getting classwork done outside of school. Lack of education, constant stress and patterns of survival-based behavior then fuels the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

There are numerous steps being taken by the City of Florence and various organizations to meet both the immediate needs and long-term solutions. Some of those short-term solutions are being addressed by the school district.

"I will give our school district credit and say that they are





doing a lot to make sure that young people have access to online information,” compliments Ervin. “Students do have notebooks now that they can take and utilize. The Florence Library is another place where students can go to have internet access. We do have some of our community centers that have access for internet and computers as well.”

Historically, the Florence Mayors, starting with former mayor, Frank Willis’ administration, have introduced coalitions which highlight an area for which they would like to concentrate to contribute to the betterment of the city.

The Mayor’s Coalition Against Homelessness was an initiative under former Mayor Stephen Wukela. Wukela’s signature coalition program was, No One Unsheltered, and it still exists. Ervin, while a councilwoman, requested funds be set aside to provide equal access for organizations who provide direct services to the homeless. The program was designed by Consultant Richard Savage and implemented by the City of Florence’s Commander Anson Shell. Overall, \$75,000 was set aside to assist homeless shelters and nonprofits that combat homelessness. Organizations that provide homeless services will be reimbursed by the city. This program still exists. Ervin feels it is vital to keep it in place as both coalitions collaborate.

Ervin said, “Because we believe that if you see a child, who’s acting out, you usually can trace it back to the home or peer pressure or the environment, and when I say ‘environment’ that includes the school setting. We want to be able to do two things if we see it, to intervene and break the cycle. But most importantly, we want to support the family in order to create strong families. We should prevent situations that lead to negative activity, high risk or criminal activity.”

There are individuals and organizations partnered with the

MYI that assist with employment for parents and youth. They specialize in teaching people about how to get and keep a job and to be prepared for college. In addition, mental health services can be provided, the police department does community outreach to help educate, mentor young people and build relationships.

The mayor continues, “We have individuals who provide meals. We have organizations that provide assistance with rent or light bills. We have organizations who have come together to truly meet all the needs of our citizens, and we’re coming together because I truly believe that we have all that we need in our community to be strong families, but we need to be sure people have access to the knowledge. Once they get access to the knowledge, they have people there who can help them go through the process and the system to get what they need. So, where government can no longer assist, we can do a warm handoff with the services they provide. So that’s the Mayor’s Youth Initiative.”

Another partnership being spearheaded by Ervin under the MYI is with area businesses and higher education as a means of reducing crime through access to jobs. She and her deputy city manager are working together to approach various industries asking questions such as, how can we partner with you, and what can you do as a company that would allow a young person to come and do an internship with you?”

Through the MYI, young people could go through training with organizations that specialize in job preparedness.

“We allow them to go through training where they learn skills that are needed in the workplace. We can actually help to recommend youth so the company will take a look at them. We want to work with our industries, and our industries want to work with us because our industries want to see the citizens here do better, especially young people. Because no one benefits when there’s a lot of criminal activity, and we have got to do all we can to decrease those activities. We want to intervene early so they would know that there are opportunities. The great thing about this, we have that relationship with Florence School District 1 so we can help to bridge that gap from high school to work, or to either of our institutions of higher learning.”

“The ultimate way to prevent youth homelessness is to have stability on the home. I encourage our citizens to please visit the website. See how you can partner. It might be that you are already doing something. What can you do to make a difference for all of our futures? So please get involved. Whatever talents you have, utilize them to make Florence a better place.”

For more information or to become involved, visit [www.florencemayorsyouthinitiative.com](http://www.florencemayorsyouthinitiative.com)



## LETTING THEIR HEARTS LEAD THE WAY *by Adalia Ellis*



*Robin Sanders*

Ladies on a Mission is a nonprofit organization that gives back to the Florence and Marion County communities with a focus on serving those who are unhoused. Robin Sanders, executive director for Ladies on a Mission, was born in NY, raised in Mullins, SC and calls Florence home. She is the owner of Sanders Cartoon Mascot, an entertainment party service. She and her children provide

entertainment for birthday parties wearing character costumes. She followed her heart and started the nonprofit based on her passion to give back to the community. Although men already do a lot, Ladies on a Mission is based on what women can do when they work together to affect change. "Homelessness is an unfortunate situation but there are nonprofit organizations like Ladies on a Mission who are striving and pushing to make sure there are no homeless but it isn't enough so we keep working. The path out of homelessness is more teamwork, more faith and belief that God will see his children through the hard times and good times."

One of the biggest challenges for the nonprofit is acquiring funding. They have been persistent about trying to get funding but have had to use their personal funds to meet the needs they see in the community. "We knew from the beginning it would be hard but we still decided to keep going and come out of our pockets which is our greatest victory because we still can help our people especially the homeless. They still eat, they still are supplied with some of the things they need. We try our best at what we do no matter how many setbacks there are and that is our biggest victory."

The organization draws inspiration from Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Despite the ups and downs, their faith in God allows them not to stop serving their community. Sabrina Bethea, nonprofit member says, "We have a mission and desire to help the youth, elderly, mentally ill, drug addicts and incarcerated individuals." Another nonprofit member, Michelle Davis says, "We have a mission in our hearts to help the homeless and families who don't have enough income for them and their children to live and survive off of."

For Sanders, having a team of ladies to serve with, united around helping those who are homeless, has been amazing and she is so grateful to them. One of the members, Shannon Dunson says that "Even though we don't have the funding that would help us, that hasn't stopped President Sanders, she still keeps going and pushing."



*Ladies on a Mission*

## SALVATION ARMY GIVING A HAND UP NOT A HANDOUT *by Jennifer Robinson*



*Heather Steverson*

Homelessness is a concept that many cannot fathom. People live in homes with running water, lights and units which cool and heat their homes, as well as closets filled with clothes and garages with cars. However, in close proximity, are people who live under overpasses as temporary homes. One organization that has taken note and acted on this problem is the

Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army Pee Dee Region Command located at 2210 Hoffmeyer Road in Florence, has been serving their local community since March 23, 1887 (135 years – longer than Florence, SC has been incorporated). Their emergency homeless shelter is not just for putting a "head on a bed." They believe in "a hand UP not a handout" approach. The Salvation Army provides meals and basic material needs while offering case management and programs to help individuals gain independence. The emergency social services department helps to aid in the prevention of homelessness. The Salvation Army of the Pee Dee works to spread awareness and to help our neighbors in need. Heather Steverson, business administrator for The Salvation Army of the Pee Dee Region shares proudly about their programs and service. The current programs that provide services to the community are:

**Emergency Social Services** - Assists with food pantry needs, utilities, rent, mortgage, clothing and furniture vouchers.

**Disaster Services** – Aids those who lose their homes due to storms and fires.

**Emergency Homeless Shelter Men and Women** – Grants shelter for two weeks. Clients are then eligible for the "Level Up Program." This is a process that works closely with clients, to teach budgeting, help with housing assistance, searching for employment, etc.

**Adult Rehabilitation Center** – A no cost, six-month residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation program.

**Character Building Programs for Youth** – Music instruction from basic to advanced

**Community Care Ministry** – Volunteers with seniors in adult day care, nursing homes, physical rehab and hospitalized youth.

**New programs** - The Red Kettles is the Salvation Army's largest and most recognized campaign. The Red Kettle and Bellringers are both virtual and in-person and ring in the season to help those in need during Christmas and receive Christmas meals and gifts. Majors Charles and Shirley White created the Angel Tree Christmas program in 1979. It has become one of The Salvation Army's highest-profile Christmas efforts. The Salvation Army officers worked with a Lynchburg, VA shopping mall to provide clothing and toys for needy children at Christmas time. Since then, the tradition has spread across the country and is now the cornerstone of The Salvation Army's Christmas assistance efforts.

The Salvation Army of the Pee Dee Region stays very active serving six counties, Florence, Darlington, Dillon, Chesterfield, Marion and Marlboro. When anyone shops at the thrift store, .96 cents of every dollar STAYS local. They could not do what they do without the support of our generous community and the volunteers that help make things happen!



## CARING & SHARING BEGAN AT THE BACK DOOR by Robin Lewis



Carl Harmon

**HEMINGWAY-** “The word of God says if you have the ability to help someone and don’t do it, it’s a sin, so we look to see who we can help.” Carl Harmon is the Founder and backbone of the Caring & Sharing Food Bank located in Hemingway, SC. They serve Williamsburg, Georgetown and Florence counties, and a small part of Marion County. Harmon says, “But we really cover the whole world, and when we help, God keeps

the donations coming in so we can do even more.”

The Caring and Sharing Food Bank celebrated 25 years in May 2022, and serves more families than any other food bank in the state. Not only do they provide food to people who need it, but they have sent over 50,000 Bibles around the world. They got Bibles into Russia and China on two trips through underground means. They also serve eight children’s homes and hospitals in the southeast. Bibles have been sent to Russia, Burma, China, Uganda, Haiti, Cuba, India, Romania, Honduras, Mexico, Belize, Nicaragua, Guatemala and the Philippines.

How did all this far-reaching ministry begin? At the Harmon’s back door more than 25 years ago. He said that all the food they gave away at the back steps of their home was spiritual seed that has produced the state’s largest food pantry today. The current goal is to fill the warehouse in advance of hurricane season so they’re ready if areas get flooded. Harmon said, “We don’t wait for someone to ask for help. When we see a need, we load up and go. Very few people have to come to us before we get to them.” For Harmon, it’s about people and leaving a legacy that says God wants His children to provide for others in need.

In addition to the Harmons, another Hemingway local, Sel Hemingway, is the new assistant manager. They are now working to designate an individual in each county to help find people who are unable to get to the warehouse for food distribution. Harmon said he wants to find those who have fallen through the cracks.



Caring & Sharing facility

They are also doing more to help others financially than ever before. “People on fixed incomes can’t handle everything that life costs them so we want to help.”

They are blessed by corporate sponsors like Duke Energy and Santee Electric because they see

what is being done for people in the community. They have also partnered with Franklin Graham and Samaritans Purse for helping Ukraine war refugees, KY flood victims, tornado victims and even helped raise money for a kidney transplant patient so the individual could reopen his restaurant. Harmon says it’s all about communities coming together.

Caring & Sharing currently needs to have their parking lot repaved and are planning to organize a fund raiser to get the needed dollars. In addition, Harmon is available to speak to organizations and churches about the work. To hear his heart for people and the importance of every individual is a real blessing. he said, “God will answer prayers! But to get one answered quickly, ask Him to help you do something for someone else.”

Harmon is concerned about a future food shortage. “Now, instead of one item, we are giving two items. We’re not slowing down because of it. Exactly the opposite. We’re speeding up!” If your church is organizing a mission trip, Harmon wants to provide Bibles. He says, “That’s one thing we don’t need to vote on. We want to partner with you to send Bibles. What keeps me going is to see that what we do is making a difference in the lives of people near and far.

To donate to Caring & Sharing Food Bank or to contact Carl Harmon, mail your tax-deductible donation to Caring & Sharing, PO Box 910, Hemingway, SC 29554 or email Harmon at [harmonicareandshare1@gmail.com](mailto:harmonicareandshare1@gmail.com). The Help Line number is 843-558-7966.

## LEARNING TO BE OF SERVICE AT AN EARLY AGE by Adalia Ellis



Rev. J. D. Blue Sr.

**HARTSVILLE -** Rev. J. D. Blue Sr. is pastor of the Second Missionary Baptist Church in Hartsville, SC. He shares five sons and nine grandchildren with his wife of 48 years, Debra Burch Blue.

Growing up he learned about service to those in need from his mother. “I chose to focus on homelessness because I remember growing up, there were people in our community

that were homeless. My mother would take them in, she would give them a warm place to sleep, something to eat and help them get back on their feet.”

He has taken this lesson learned from his mother and made it a part of his life and the work of his congregation at the Second Missionary Baptist Church. The church, with the help of the community, provides services such as shelter, food and clothing and hygiene products. For those who have drug addiction, they provide transportation to Rubicon.

It is important that the larger community understands that “most of us are only a few paychecks away from being homeless.

All it takes is a few missed checks and any of us could find ourselves in the same situation. They also need to know that the homeless are people just like you and me.”

There is no one way that people become homeless. There are many factors that can be unique to each person, so the solutions also vary. “If it’s mental illness that brought that person to be homeless, then they need to get help, medication and guidance that they need to rectify the situation. If it’s poor financial decisions that brought them to the point of homelessness, then they need to get the financial literacy that they need to keep them from making the same mistake again when they get their feet back on the ground. But we as a community need to be there to offer the help and support that they need.”

As the number of those who find themselves without permanent housing grows, so does the need for adequate space. Getting the city to understand this is one of the biggest challenges to increasing the space needed.

Just as there are challenges there are also victories, “It is a victory when I come in contact with a person who has been homeless for most of their adult life, and we can get in touch with their family members, reunite them and send them back home. I also consider it a victory when I run into someone who has been homeless, has been through the shelter and now has a place that they call home.”



## FEEDING THE HOMELESS by Sarah Carter



Paul Jones, executive director

Perhaps the highest priority need that homeless people face is hunger. Without a stable place to cook, eat and store food, it is a daily challenge to stay nourished. Paul Jones, executive director of the Manna House of Florence, states that his organization provides over 750 meals a week, including about 260 of them to homeless individuals. Asked about the causes of homelessness in our area, Jones explained that there are several underlying causes, with disability and addiction being the most prevalent: “Many of the people we serve that are homeless, I believe have some sort of mental disability or dependency issues. Some chose to be homeless, while others find themselves put out of current living situations because of drug or alcohol use which makes it hard for them to sustain a healthy living arrangement with others. Homelessness is not the main problem; many have made decisions or have underline problems that lead to homelessness.” Solving the root problem of homelessness involves motivating individuals to seek help for their behavior problems and obtaining the skills to maintain housing once it is available to them. Jones calls on our community members to get involved with the Manna House and other service organizations to mentor and assist homeless individuals with emotional, financial



Jackie Admill, pantry manager and Julia (volunteer)

and technical support. “Although finding housing helps, convincing them to get help through counseling and rehabilitation are tools that can keep the homeless in homes. If the community can encourage those in need to find the proper organizations for their needs and the community continues to stay involved in the process, homeless individuals can succeed. Many don’t have family, and family or family-like support can increase the odds of them not going back to the street.”

The Manna House of Florence is located at 450 Jarrott Street and is open Monday-Friday for breakfast (8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.) and lunch (10:30 a.m. -12 p.m.). Emergency food service is available Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. -11 a.m.

Volunteer applications are available on the Manna House website ([florencemannahouse.com](http://florencemannahouse.com)).

For more information contact Executive Director Paul Jones at the Manna House (843-667-6077).

## A PASSION FOR HELPING OTHERS UTILIZING HER GOD GIVEN TALENT



Roselind Hughes

**LAKE CITY** - The phrase, “Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life,” seems to describe how Roselind Hughes went from volunteer to the newly appointed director of the Courtney McGinnis Graham Community Shelter House of Hope of the Pee Dee in Florence, SC.

Hughes, who attended Clemson University and majored in chemical engineering, always had a passion for helping others and her current position allows her to utilize her God given talents. The mission of the House of Hope, which is a Christ-centered community, is dedicated to meeting the needs of homeless men, women and their children. “My daily duties as director are to ensure my staff is available and has what they need to serve the guests. I spend a lot of time talking to potential guests about their situation, informing them of our services and how we may or may not be able to serve them. If we are not the right place for them, recommending other options that would better serve them.”

For residents who stay at the community shelter, Hughes said what she likes most about her position is the various services the agency provides for the guests. “Being able to minister to the guest; not only through ensuring they have a safe place and food, but by meeting them where they are, listening to their needs and story and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” The community shelter is an emergency shelter, and can house men, women and children. Their stay can range from seven days (but it doesn’t have to be consecutive days), in a 30-day period. “Residents can stay up to 30 days if actively working with case management. We provide the guests information we have about housing which includes applications we have access to,” said Hughes. The shelter can provide daily, temporary housing for approximately 40 individuals. The shelter

also provides basic needs such as food, clothing, shoes and toiletries.

There are various reasons the residents seek shelter at the community shelter, Hughes noted, some of the reasons men, women and families request emergency shelter are:

- Working, but not making enough to afford rent
- Rental property sold so they have to vacate
- House fires
- Previously fled domestic violence and need shelter after leaving a domestic violence shelter (we are not a domestic violence shelter, but sometimes guests seek shelter with us after they have stayed at a domestic violence shelter and are no longer in immediate danger)
- Mental illness
- Addiction
- Unfortunately, they have made bad money management decisions

“Residents are often referred to the community shelter by hospitals, libraries, law enforcement, churches, concerned citizens, various agencies and even former residents of the shelter,” Hughes stated. The shelter works with other agencies to provide services, as well. “DHEC periodically comes on site to provide vaccinations and we share that information with our guests as well as other agencies who service guests who are experiencing homelessness. Information about free clinics to help with medical and dental needs is provided. Our agency works with schools to ensure children at our shelter are registered and attending classes, as well as providing



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## A PASSION FOR HELPING CONT'D

bus transportation for the school-aged residents. Bible study and church services at Whosoever Church located beside the shelter, are both offered.

As a former volunteer, Hughes understands the importance of volunteering with the agency, as well as donating items, and monetary gifts. "We have many volunteers who give their time as receptionists, feed our guests, clean, just to name a few of the wonderful things that volunteers do at the agency," said Hughes. She suggested that anyone who wants to become a volunteer, should go to the website at [hofh.org](http://hofh.org) and complete the application or give them a call at (843) 731-9315. "Monetary donations are always welcomed, appreciated and needed as we are funded by donations," she said.

The desired result once residents exit the community shelter is that each resident experiences a positive life change that will give them the needed push to make it to the next step. Residents are encouraged through structured programs, which have been

recommended/provided by outside agencies, which focus on spiritual growth, education, employment, life management and recovery from substance abuse. Upon exit, residents will live housed and out of poverty permanently and have a personal relationship with Jesus.

In her position as director, she is inundated with various issues throughout her day that are attached to individuals going through immediate crises. She leans heavily on her faith to keep her grounded. "Through prayer and my relationship with God-Yahweh, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit. God sent me to the House of Hope and placed me in this position. I don't treat it as a job; I work unto the Lord. At the end of almost every day I go home and lie down on the floor in my prayer closet so God can minister to and restore me after all that I experience and pour out during the day," she acknowledged.

Hughes, who is single, attends St. Michael Holiness Church in Lake City, where she is a licensed minister. A hobby she enjoys is creating craft projects.

## HOPE FOR THE COMMUNITY by Jennifer Robinson



Casea David

Hope. It's a small word but it holds much power. Especially when people need it in desperate times in their lives. Where are people to turn when they are in emotional, physical or financial crisis? Thirty-four years ago, a couple from Winston Salem, NC saw the desperation of homeless people who were being turned away from other shelters in Florence and created House of Hope.

Since its inception, they have secured places to build or revitalize to turn into places of safety for thousands of displaced people. In 1991, the original shelter, the New Life Rescue Ministry was established for men. The name was later changed in 2006, to House of Hope and expanded to a women and children's home for long term recovery. Ten years later an emergency shelter was opened after a popular community homeless advocate, Courtney McGinnis Graham, saw a need to house those who couldn't find places to rest during extreme weather conditions or critical life situations. Unfortunately, she passed away in 2015 and The Courtney McGinnis Graham Shelter was established in 2016.

And just earlier this year, the House of Hope opened Home, Opportunities, Progress, Encourage (HOPE) Village. HOPE Village is a community of tiny homes that serve as long term transitional housing for women and children with plans to extend to men in another part of the property. The goal is for women to be empowered through independent living and learning life skills. The criteria to be eligible to reside in the homes is to be homeless and have been in treatment for substance abuse.

The homes are 11x20 campus style, same design living spaces with living rooms, sinks, cabinets, bunk beds, stand-alone closets, bathrooms and soundproof walls. Casea David, HOPE Village director, says she gets emotional thinking about the effect of the tiny homes on the clients. They are provided amenities that encourage their independence and develop their pride. The clients have their own addresses with keys to the mailbox and key fobs to the day center located on the campus. The day center has a playroom for the children, a computer lab with WIFI access and a full kitchen. David was very proud to share about their communal garden where they grow vegetables and herbs. They will also have a modernized bus stop built near the homes for easy access to transportation. She speaks to the residents of the Village, and they often express their appreciation. She said, "the women talk about

the relief they feel from the previous life situations and how they are the happiest they have ever been." It truly is a second chance at life.

Case management of each client is required to determine progress and help them on their journeys. A 24-month program was created to establish policies for the residents. They are not required to have jobs but are provided resources to search for employment. Unlike other shelters or other forms of controlled housing, residents can come and go as they please but there is a 10 p.m. curfew. Rules were established for client's safety and Village efficiency. No clients are allowed to stay off campus while they are clients of HOPE Village. They are required to go to church every Sunday and attend Celebrate Recovery or Reformers Unanimous and we encourage them to get a mentor while they are in this season of their life. They have 24-hour security onsite and cameras all over HOPE Village. Their savings program gives clients a chance to save money for a car or housing upon leaving HOPE Village. They provide unlimited passes through PDTRA. We also have a huge playground coming Oct 8.

The vision of the programming is to teach life skills through psychological assessment, anger management workshops, parenting classes, teaching job interview skills, professional etiquette and social relations. They are taught money management through a savings program. David said, "they want clients to be equipped with what they need to transition out but to leave better than they came." Clients are also encouraged to volunteer as a way of giving back to the community what they have received through HOPE Village and the House of Hope.

HOPE Village staff is always on site to assist with needs clients may have. The program has traditional standards in most cases but provide very modern amenities and programming to match the needs of the people who come to their gates hopeless and afraid.

The House of Hope organization welcomes donations of any kind that will further their mission of sheltering those in need. There are also volunteer opportunities for those who want to serve. Visit [www.hofh.org](http://www.hofh.org) for more information.



Home Village Campus-A recovery program out of homelessness

# CELEBRATE WORLD FOOD DAY WITH FIVE WAYS TO FIGHT HUNGER

Submitted by Kitty Finklea, RDN, AFAA-CPT registered dietitian nutritionist/diabetes educator certified personal trainer HopeHealth



Kitty Finklea, RDN, AFAA-CPT

Each year, World Food Day is celebrated on October 16, to bring awareness to hunger and food insecurity around the globe. With the pandemic, supply chain issues, and record high food prices, hunger and food insecurity has seen an increase globally this year, impacting 345 million people in 82 countries.

Food insecurity means access to food is limited or uncertain. In the U.S. over 34 million people are food-insecure, including 9 million children. Research indicates higher risk populations for food insecurity, are lower income individuals, single women with children, the elderly, people residing in a rural areas, African Americans, Native Americans and Hispanic populations.

Many individuals and families may not qualify for government nutrition assistance programs and look for help from food banks and soup kitchens. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and higher food prices, donations to food banks have decreased. With the increased need, the United States Department of Agriculture recently invested 2 billion dollars to include food banks and school meal programs, but even this large amount of funding can take time and is designated for federally funded programs. There are many non-profit groups providing food for the hungry that may not be eligible for these funds and depend on local donations.

Looking closer to home, it's estimated that one in ten South Carolinians is affected by food insecurity and hunger. Making the choice between paying a bill to keep the lights on or buying groceries to eat is not an easy decision.

While solutions can be complex, there are steps an individual can take to help fight hunger and food insecurity. First, research what is going on with government nutrition assistance programs, food banks, soup kitchens, food packing programs at schools, community gardens, your church or religious organization or other giving programs in your area. Find out what the specific needs of an organization are.

Next, figure out how you want to get involved. Is it a one-time project/donation, or do you want to develop a relationship with an organization? Decide what you want to do and make it happen! Share on social media and other outlets to get the word out. Here are five ideas to consider helping fight food insecurity:

**Volunteer.** Make time to volunteer at a local soup kitchen or food bank, drive for Meals on Wheels, pack food for school kids, or other organizations. Investigate what an organization

needs besides food such as other hands-on work, as well as administrative or marketing assistance. Explore the opportunities offered by HopeHealth Volunteers.

**Donate.** Donate to a hunger related organization on a regular basis or sponsor a family through the Salvation Army or other organizations. Donations could include food or money or both!

**Become an advocate.** Help make hunger in SC a priority in Washington by contacting your Congressman and Senator to show support for hunger related legislation and continue to advocate and build relationships with your legislators.

**Contribute to or start a food drive.** When you see a food drive, donate! Or start a food drive for an organization that needs food and network with friends and family, church, at work and with any civic organization you're a member of to collect food.

**Start or work with a community garden in your area.** Many local schools have community gardens or contact the City of Florence to apply for a community garden grant.

<https://www.cityofflorence.com/local-foods-initiative/community-gardens/garden-grant>

Want to explore more? Here are a few of the many organizations in our area who provide food to those in need:

**Manna House**

A community soup kitchen and food pantry providing food and nutritious meals for families in the Florence area.

**Harvest Hope**

A South Carolina food bank that rescues food from grocery stores and makes it available for people in need by delivering food to food pantries, shelters and soup kitchens.

**Help4Kids Florence**

This program serves Florence schools and provides 2000 food bags each week for hungry kids to have food over the weekend.

**Senior Citizens of Florence County**

Provides Meals on Wheels to homebound senior citizens and also has group dining sites in several locations in Florence County.

**FoodShare**

Provides a box of fresh produce for a minimal fee. While not yet in Florence County, they do serve Williamsburg, Lee and Chesterfield Counties.

Kitty Finklea, RD, AFAA-CPT is a registered dietitian/nutritionist at HopeHealth Diabetes Center at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence and a certified personal trainer. She received a degree in dietetics from Winthrop College. Finklea specializes in diabetes, weight management, and eating disorders. She enjoys helping clients and families achieve their goal of optimal health and energy.

## HIGHWAY TO HOPE H2H CONNECTING TO THE HOMELESS by Susan Carter



health care to children and adults. Program Coordinator Bernard

In recognition of the large number of people who cannot access mental health treatment easily, Pee Dee Mental Health has developed a new outreach program, Highway to Hope (H2H) Mobile Crisis Response Unit. H2H uses an RV to provide integrated mental and primary

McIntosh describes how the program began and who it serves. "The H2H Program is a Mobile Response Unit that serves rural communities in the Pee Dee area who have been devastated by the impact of Hurricane Florence in 2018, and are in need of mental health, substance abuse and primary healthcare services. We have three regions. Our MHPs have worked with all populations including the homeless. We have found that homeless people do not only exist in areas typically associated with chronic homelessness such as underneath bridges or around community centers. The homeless population also includes those that are staying with family members or friends without means to have their own homes. H2H has set up our mobile units in rural areas and we've provided handouts in other communities to provide

## HIGHWAY TO HOPE CONT'D

awareness about the services we can offer and share other services our agency can provide. We encourage families to let us know of anyone who they feel can use our assistance as they go on with their day-to-day challenges.”



LaTonya McFadden

LaTonya McFadden supervises the program and provides services that assists patients, including homeless individuals, with needed mental health treatment and referrals to other community supports such as food and clothing resources. McFadden emphasizes the significant impact of housing instability on an individual’s self-esteem. “Our mobile clinic is used in the community to bring mental health services to individuals who

do not have easy access to health care. Being homeless, whether for a brief period or as a chronic condition, is a life-altering traumatic event that creates major stress in any person’s life regardless of age.” H2H serves a varying number of people each week as they rotate their site locations in Florence and Darlington Counties and community events. For example, churches, grocery store parking lots, First Friday events and school health fairs are some of the places Pee Dee Mental Health has served new and unhoused people in our area who would not have had the financial resources and means of transportation to present at a clinic location.

McFadden describes a full range of services that are provided by H2H. “H2H provides patient education, individual counseling, psychiatric assessments, crisis intervention, suicide prevention, care coordination and peer support services. Our mobile care team provides these services to individuals at local (homeless) shelters, free clinics and community events such as First Friday/ Homeless Connect. Our care team is also instrumental in steering individuals to appropriate community agencies and resources. We also make needed referrals for patients to other mental health

programs which include our Supportive Housing, Community Housing and Individual Placement and Support (IPS)-Supportive Employment Program.”

Reasons for homelessness in the Pee Dee include a shortage of affordable housing, unemployment, financial difficulties, inappropriate living conditions, family and relationship breakdowns, mental health issues, drug and alcohol addiction and domestic violence. McFadden notes that our community can address these concerns through advocacy. “Advocacy means working with people experiencing homelessness to bring about positive changes in policies, programs on the local, state and federal levels. We can also work with various sectors in our community such as city/county officials, direct service providers and the business community to develop workable strategies for responding to homelessness. Other significant things our community can do is provide affordable housing, push for homeless prevention programs, provide more aid to the homeless, work on reducing waiting periods for housing placement and recruit, support and retain landlords.”

Empathy for homeless individuals is central to McFadden’s vision for how and why we should care for and help the homeless. “While the causes and solutions for homelessness are complex, there is much that we can do to help. There are many ways that we can make a difference for some of the men, women and children who are homeless. It begins with realizing that most of us are just a pay check away from living on the streets. It takes one failed relationship or the death of a loved one to turn our life upside down. Even the most level-headed person can find themselves losing everything with no one to turn to so, it’s not about the decisions we make, it’s mostly about the circumstances that we find ourselves in, to which there is no easy way out.”

If you would like to offer your business, event, church, school or other community building as a site location for H2H, please contact Bernard McIntosh or LaTonya McFadden at our Florence office (843-317-4073).

## PRODUCTIVITY AND EDUCATION IS KEY TO TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

by Susan Carter



Pastor Thomas and his wife

**EFFINGHAM** - Caring for the Pee Dee region’s housing insecure population requires the involvement of multiple community resources to provide the food, clothing, education and addiction treatment that can help lift individuals out of both poverty and homelessness. Regeneration Center, a shelter for homeless men with a history of incarceration and drug addiction, is a comprehensive resource located in Effingham and operated by Thomas. The facility has been open for four years and has a 15- bed capacity. Referrals come from hospital emergency rooms, the Palmetto Center (an inpatient addiction rehabilitation facility), Bruce Hall, and federal

and state parole boards. Thomas adds that, during the pandemic, Generation stayed open unlike many facilities serving the homeless and, as a result, took in individuals from Florida as that state did not have available housing. Currently Generation has 11 residents participating in a structured program that includes Bible study, two Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings most days, meditation and exercise. Residents receive vocational assistance once they have their addiction issues under control. McCall Farms, QVC, McLeod Regional Medical Center, Vocational Rehabilitation and McDonalds have all offered training and employment to Generation residents. In addition, Mercy Medicine provides dental care as needed allowing residents to experience better health and increased self-esteem through an improved appearance. When asked about the causes of homelessness in the Pee Dee, Thomas cited untreated mental health issues and physical disabilities as frequent correlates. “It is important that individuals prescribed medications for chronic conditions receive them timely so that they have a fair opportunity to succeed in the shelter. Unfortunately, this does not always happen when individuals arrive at the facility, causing conflicts and setbacks for the individual and those trying to help the resident.” Communities need more transition services to help people succeed post incarceration urges Thomas. “Productivity and education of both the formerly incarcerated and the people who want to help them are key to tackling homelessness.”

**WORKING TO ENSURE WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY INCLUSIVENESS**

By Les Echols



Director of Diversity Equity & Inclusion, Kelvin Waites, City of Myrtle Beach

**MYRTLE BEACH** - October is Crime Prevention Month and Diversity Works had the opportunity to speak with retired Police Chief Kelvin Waites, about his unique blend of skill, education and experience. Waites currently serves as Director of Diversity Equity & Inclusion for the City of Myrtle Beach, SC, where he has started to build DEI programs and initiatives for the area.

Waites served in the U.S. Army as a Morse interceptor in the Military Intelligence Corps before starting a career in law enforcement in 1997. Among his 24-year law enforcement career, Waites cites his high points as serving as the deputy chief of police and the interim police chief at the Horry County Police Department. Throughout his career, Waites’s philosophy on crime prevention is based on Sir Robert Peel, who established the London Metropolitan Police Force in 1829, and is coined as the “Father of Modern Policing.” He believed that the key to preventing crime is gaining the support of the community. He also believed that law enforcement and the community play a role in prevention.

Waites’s career in law enforcement culminated in historic fashion, with him becoming the first African American police chief at the Georgetown Police Department in Georgetown, SC. Waites retired from law enforcement in August 2021, and started a successful coaching practice called, Waites Lifted Life & Leadership Coaching, LLC, which allows him to collaborate with leaders across all industries to make them better leaders. After retiring from law enforcement, Waites started a career as Executive Director with AMIkids Georgetown. AMIkids is a nationwide nonprofit organization dedicated to helping youth develop into responsible and productive citizens. AMIkids’ mission is to protect public safety and positively impact as many youths as possible through the efforts of a diverse and innovative staff. The organization works in partnership with youth agencies, local communities and families.

Waites discussed how his journey led him to take on his current role. “After briefly working with AMIkids, I was called to walk in my true purpose as director of DEI for the City of Myrtle Beach. In my new role, I have the honor of working with our staff to ensure that we have a workplace that is inclusive

for all, and that the inclusiveness spills over into the community we serve. Both internal and external partnerships are critical to our success. Collectively, our goal is to model and uphold the City of Myrtle Beach’s core values, and continuously develop and strengthen DEI competencies,” Waites explained. “Some of our initial goals for the City of Myrtle Beach were to complete an in-house assessment of our workforce to address any gaps, challenges or opportunities that we may have to improve. For us to make any improvements we must figure out where and who we are. Our initial focus is internal as we strive to create an environment that makes our employees feel that they have value and that they can come to work and be accepted for who they are,” Waites continued.

Waites explained that his DEI philosophy is to help people realize that it’s not just about race. “I believe that when we get stuck into just seeing it as race, we miss opportunities. Opportunities to learn about different cultures, opportunities to see people with disabilities or who have different sexual identities, socioeconomic status, way of thinking and the list go on and on. DEI is not a bad word, or something that we should be afraid of, but instead it’s about getting people to open their eyes and hearts a little bit wider to see all people for who they really are, while trying to get a better understanding of one another. Realizing that we were all humans before we were affiliated with any political party or other groups. By having conversations with people that we traditionally wouldn’t talk to, ideally, we will have breakthroughs. My favorite saying is, “Don’t just be good, be good for something, and I truly believe that as it relates to DEI, we all have the responsibility to be good for something.”

Waites has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Organizational Management from Charleston Southern University. He graduated from the prestigious FBI National Academy (class 248) in Quantico, VA. He has been married for 28 years to Chelice Waites, and the couple has two children, Jasmin and KJ. Jasmin is a prosecutor for the 15 Judicial Circuit Solicitor’s Office. She is a graduate of both Furman University and the Charleston School of Law. His son KJ (Kelvin Jr.) works for the SC Department of Social Services and is a graduate of Methodist University. Lastly, Waites has a four-year-old granddaughter, Nolyn, who he describes as, “the coolest person that I know.”

Waites can be reached through his website, [www.kelvinwaites.com](http://www.kelvinwaites.com), or at the City of Myrtle Beach, Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

**CRIME PREVENTION MONTH**

- **AVOID GOING OUTSIDE ALONE**
- **DO NOT CARRY OR DISPLAY LARGE AMOUNTS OF CASH**
- **PARK IN WELL-LIT AREAS**
- **LOCK VEHICLES EVEN WHEN PARKED ON PERSONAL PROPERTY**

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT CRITICAL FOR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT Articles by Les Echols



Corporal Oscar Merchant III

There are times when law enforcement receives negative connotations throughout various media outlets as well as in communities-at-large. But the Florence community consistently sees law enforcement officers like Corporal Oscar Merchant III of the Florence Police Department. Merchant can often be seen patrolling, and showing by example, that law enforcement is a key component to maintaining peaceful communities, while fighting crime in the City of Florence.

Merchant is a native of Mullins, SC, where he graduated from Mullins High School in 2007. After a brief stint as a firefighter with the City of Mullins, Merchant began college at Coastal Carolina University, before joining the Florence Police Department in 2012. Merchant started by discussing the overall importance of law enforcement to any respective community. "While we as law enforcement might not necessarily be looked upon in the best fashion at times, it's something that's needed because there are people that need us and counterpart to that, law enforcement needs the community. We can't be everywhere all the time, so we count on the community to be our eyes and ears. When we develop trust and admiration from the community, we can effectively go out here and handle things that need to be handled. If you look at any good thriving law enforcement agency, the community is generally the backbone behind it. Not to mention the support of community leaders such as the City Council, the Mayor and The Housing Authority. I could go on, but essentially the people in the community serve as a pyramid of supporters and allies helping to guide us," said Merchant.

We asked Merchant to discuss some of the positive aspects of law enforcement, such as some of the programs they do to help citizens in need. Some of these projects and programs the general public may not be aware of, such as a feeding program that the Florence Police Department recently started with Serve and Connect. Through this program, community members can receive a box of food that provides one person four days of meals or a family of four one day of meals. Merchant spoke specifically of how inspiring it was to him to work with his fellow officers on these projects. "Seeing the officers in this community go out of their way and go door to door asking people if they need food, and letting them know that we provide the service, it's moments like these that make it inspiring to be an officer," Merchant commented. The Florence Police Department also helps people in need with gifts every Christmas, often with personal donations from their own pockets.

Merchant continued to speak highly about the community and how everyone can help them continue to serve effectively. "Just to reiterate we want the community to continue to be the people that they are and appreciate law enforcement because we do appreciate our community. If you happen to see one of us, stop and talk to us for a bit. Also, law enforcement is a great career, if anyone is interested. We are always looking for people, but I am not going to simply say we are looking for as many good people as we can find. One thing our Chief, Allen Heidler says is that we may not be maxed out on quantity, but we are excelling on quality. Being appreciated like that creates a sense of morale inside and outside the department, and that is one of the reasons our agency continues to thrive," concluded Merchant.

To learn more about law enforcement opportunities at the Florence Police Department, contact the City of Florence Human Resources office at 843-665-3158 or visit, [www.cityofflorence.com](http://www.cityofflorence.com).

## FROM A CHILDHOOD DREAM TO REALITY



Mullins Chief of Police Michael Bethea

**MULLINS** - Chief Michael Bethea is the police chief of Mullins, SC. With a population of fewer than 5,000 residents, Mullins is a close-knit community that embraces its local law enforcement. The importance of law enforcement in small and rural communities is that residents get to know the officers and build a positive rapport with them.

A resident of Dillon, SC, Bethea has been employed by the City of Mullins for 39 years. Bethea stated that he has wanted to be a police officer as long as he can remember. "I have never wanted to do anything else," said Bethea. "It started with my next-door neighbor, who was a law enforcement officer. I would see his uniform and I knew, I wanted to do that. He began to mentor me, and following his advice, I stayed well-behaved, clean and out of trouble. And as I became an adult, I knew I could pursue my childhood dream of being a law enforcement officer."

Bethea stresses that he is passionate about law enforcement and that one of the things missing now, is youth looking to law enforcement as mentors and role models. "Unlike me, many kids now have role models that they look up to who are athletes and musicians, not necessarily law enforcement officers. While I respect athletes and entertainers, law enforcement is also a great career. And part of that comes with mutual respect between

citizens and those of us in uniform," Bethea continued.

"With that said, communication and positive engagement is key. I'm a believer that if we don't look out for one another, who else will? Many people don't know their surroundings, which is a problem. We should know our surroundings and what's going on when we get out of cars, and even at home. Invest in alarm systems and cameras, which are all now reasonably inexpensive. They will capture whatever information you cannot," Bethea commented.

Bethea smiled as he talked about Mullins. "I can only say good things about Mullins. Mullins has been good to me and gave me my start. We have a great Mayor and council who are pro law enforcement and residents who are supportive.

Bethea has been married for 41 years and has three sons and 10 grandchildren.



## A CAREGIVER'S LOVE, IMPACTS THOSE SHE CARES FOR

by Adalia Ellis



Jameca Singleton

According to the South Carolina Department on Aging, over 770,000 family members are caregivers to elderly or sick relatives. One of these people is Jameca Singleton. When she was five years old, she went to live with her grandfather, Clinton Brown. He immigrated to the U.S. from Jamaica's Westmoreland Parish to be able to provide for his family.

Singleton describes her relationship with her grandfather as inseparable from the age of five. "My grandpa was not only my grandfather, he was my best friend. Big Man (his nickname) was very funny and smart. He would always have a joke and smile for everyone that crossed paths with him. When his health permitted, we spent a lot of summer months going fishing, crabbing and shrimping. He enjoyed his daily drive outs to the store to play his lotto (although he was the slowest driver on the road) and cooking his own meals."

She arranged and organized transportation to and from doctors' visits, picking up his prescriptions and setting medication reminders. She also was his advocate and was his voice when interacting with medical professionals and family members. "My grandfather passed away on November 3, 2020, from Covid-19. He was aware that he was ill and made his desires well known to me and his treatment team. It was very hard to fulfill his last wishes, but I knew that I owed it to him."

Singleton, who considers herself the matriarch of her maternal family, is currently caring for her uncle, godmother and grandmother while also pursuing a Master of Social Work at Limestone University. "What sparked my interest in Social Work was providing care for my family and working professionally serving the geriatric population as a Certified Nursing Assistant."

She balances her studies and caring for her family members by taking courses online which gives her the flexibility she needs to do both. She also balances her life by practicing self-care through getting pedicures, reading books and making sure she gets enough sleep. What is also helpful is having a support structure. Although she is the primary caregiver, having a solid support structure is vital to not become overwhelmed while also filling any gaps. "It is important to have a social support structure. I didn't have much familial social support due to the majority of our family not living in the country; however, I received help from external sources in the community. I have learned working with the medical professionals as the primary caregiver of my grandfather; they want what is best for my loved one as well as me. They try their best to accommodate and address my concerns."

She also has learned important lessons about advocating for those she is caring for. "I feel that it is important that other caregivers need to know the person who they are caring for baseline and non-verbal cues. What I mean by this is paying attention to your loved one and how they act during their regular routine of the day. Small differences such as mood changes can potentially indicate something can be wrong. If you know something is out of the ordinary make sure that it is addressed and if the provider is not willing to look into your concerns, identify the next person in charge such as an office manager or your local state appointed Ombudsman."

If your loved one has appropriate mental capacity, let them answer questions that their doctors have at appointments and give them the option to let healthcare professionals know to follow up with their primary caregiver.

Make sure that you have a signed release of information



Jameca Singleton alongside her grandfather Clinton "Big Man" Brown

allowing you to be able to know what's going on in your loved one's care regimen and or speak to your loved one about being their power of attorney and the different types of restrictions that can be put in places that do not overlook their wishes."

Singleton may be one of the 770,000 caregivers who are providing care because of their love for those closest to them, but her story is unique in the way her love impacts those she cares for. Her grandfather knew best this deep love. She wishes that all of us could be so blessed and fortunate. Family caregivers provide acts of humble service in a myriad of ways and are vital to the strength of our communities.

## I SAW THE NEED

Submitted by Cooper, the Naomi Project



Caregiving often creeps up on you. I met a woman who only had one daughter and when she needed help this daughter was overwhelmed by her own family and I was asked to help. I started by taking her to church with me, taking food, picking up medicine and providing an ear for her to confide in. This woman was also raising a granddaughter and I helped provide the necessities for her. Helping her meant that I found someone to maintain her house. A cleaning lady was hired and she helped organize for this woman and she became her friend also. What I took away from this is the fact that I was more motivated to help others.

My aunt was not being treated well, but after she came from a stay at the hospital, I talked with her and offered to help. She wanted me to help because the obstacles were still there. I decided to go a step further to find a safe place for her to go and be taken care of. I went on a regular basis to make sure that she had all the things she needed. She was so appreciative during this time because she was not in my life when I was growing up. This went on for several years and upon her death it gave her peace to know that someone was there to take care of her.

Caregiving has many challenges and also many rewards. But remember you need to honor your own needs as well as commit to caring for someone else.



#NationalFamilyCaregiversMonth



# CAREGIVER OF A CHILD WITH A PEANUT ALLERGY



*Kirsten and her family*

(BPT) - While many of us may know someone living with a peanut allergy, what most of us may not know is how much it can impact daily life and key moments that we often take for granted. Peanut allergies can be a lifelong condition, and reactions to peanuts can range from mild to potentially life-threatening. Some children with peanut allergies may not want to participate in certain activities due to the potential of accidental exposure.

Kirsten and her family have lived with peanut allergy for 13 years since her son Maddox was first diagnosed and have had to learn to navigate events such as birthdays, traveling and even family holidays to avoid accidental exposure to peanuts. This has required constant vigilance daily as practicing a strict peanut-free diet alone might not be enough, since even a small amount of the allergen can prompt an allergic reaction. Maddox is currently taking PALFORZIA® [Peanut (*Arachis hypogaea*) Allergen Powder-dnfp]. PALFORZIA is a treatment for people who are allergic to peanuts that can help reduce the severity of allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis that may occur with accidental exposure to peanut. PALFORZIA can cause severe allergic reactions called anaphylaxis, please see below for important safety information.

Despite his peanut allergy, Kirsten has been committed to making sure that Maddox and their family can still enjoy doing the things they love. Below, she shares six proactive tips for caregivers of children with a peanut allergy to consider.

## 1. Vacations/travel

Kirsten and her family have visited many places - they make sure to carry injectable epinephrine and ask everyone they are traveling with not to bring any food containing peanut. If traveling by plane, train or bus, contact the company to find out their peanut allergy protocol and board early to wipe down your child's seat, seatbelt, tray table and controls. If traveling to a foreign country, Kirsten has found it helpful to learn how to say "peanut allergy" in the country's language or to bring laminated cards to hand to waiters with peanut warnings in the country's language.

## 2. Summer camp

It is important to inform the camp staff before camp begins about your child's allergy and the potential for allergic reactions. If it feels necessary, you can hold a call with the camp personnel to discuss your concerns and share an emergency action plan that includes your allergist's contact details, epinephrine and a recent picture of your child so people who are unfamiliar with your child know what they look like. Kirsten expressed how important it is for children to be able to recognize the symptoms of an allergic reaction and understand how to advocate for themselves. You should discourage your child from sharing foods, encourage them to read every label and be sure they know which snacks they can't have. If the camp does not give out name tags where you could include a warning about your child's peanut allergy, make sure they are wearing a medical alert bracelet or necklace. Lastly, make sure your child or your child's counselor carries injectable epinephrine in case of an emergency.

## 3. Sports

At Maddox's sporting events, Kirsten always comes prepared with plenty of snacks for during and after the game. Kirsten has found it helpful to have their coaches send an email home to all parents before practice starts asking them to please not share any food with the team that she has not approved of first. Since Maddox plays baseball, peanuts, a staple at ballparks, can be a big issue. Because of this, Kirsten is constantly reminding the coaches and other parents throughout the season of Maddox's peanut allergy and stays close during halftime and post-game activities to monitor any snacks being passed around. She shares that sunflower seeds have served as a great alternative to peanuts, and they are always sure to bring extra in case anyone forgets and brings peanuts.

## 4. Birthday parties

Since birthday parties are common events in children's lives, the risk of accidental exposure for children with peanut allergy at these events is clearly present. As a little boy, Maddox would go to birthday parties but wasn't allowed to eat the cake - or anything for that matter. Kirsten would go with him to the parties and bring foods he could eat - typically cake or something fun so he did not feel left out. Kirsten typically calls the host beforehand to find out what they are serving. She also notes that you must always carry injectable epinephrine with you just in case.

## 5. Holidays

Holiday gatherings are an important time for many families to be with loved ones. Prior to parties, Kirsten calls the host to find out what kind of food they are serving. If you are able, ask the host to take pictures of/keep the food labels so you can read the ingredients. If the holiday dinner is buffet style, Kirsten makes sure Maddox can be served first to limit cross contact. Kirsten usually gives Maddox a snack or meal before the event so that he is not tempted to grab appetizers that may contain peanut. As she does with birthday parties, Kirsten will also bring a peanut-free dish or dessert so Maddox has something to look forward to that he knows he can eat. These proactive tips for holiday dinners also hold true for any large gathering such as summer barbecues and picnics.



*Maddox*

## 6. Peanut Oral Immunotherapy (OIT)

No matter how hard families try to remain vigilant, accidental exposure to peanut can still occur. Kirsten wanted to do something proactive to help manage Maddox's peanut allergy in addition to avoidance alone. When she heard about an FDA-approved treatment that could potentially be an option for her son, she was eager to learn more and find out if it could be a fit.

PALFORZIA is the first and only FDA-approved OIT that is intended to gradually decrease sensitivity to small amounts of peanuts that may be hidden in foods. PALFORZIA does NOT treat allergic reactions and should not be given during an allergic reaction. You must maintain a strict peanut-free diet while taking PALFORZIA. Peanut OIT is an approach that can help reduce the severity of allergic reactions by introducing small daily doses of an allergen into an individual's diet to gradually build up to larger amounts over time. While Maddox must continue to avoid peanut and carry injectable epinephrine, Kirsten is grateful for PALFORZIA because it can help reduce the severity of allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis that may occur if Maddox was accidentally exposed to peanut.

## PARENTS OF A SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS, TOO



As the parent of a special needs child, you know how rewarding—and challenging—caring for your loved one can be. And even though you've got it all under control right now, you can't help worrying about the future. After all, someday your child will have to go on without you, and you know how expensive it can be to maintain your child's quality of life. That's why a special needs trust (also called a supplemental needs trust) can be a tremendous source of comfort.

A special needs trust is a legal instrument that helps concerned parents like you set money aside for your child's future care. Best of all, it does it without reducing your child's eligibility for public assistance programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI)<sup>1</sup>. For obvious reasons, it is important that it be prepared with the input of qualified tax and legal advisors. Let's take a look at how these trusts work:

### **A trust protects your child's assets—and eligibility.**

If your child relies on government assistance, it's important to know that many of these programs have strict asset limitations (usually \$2,000). A special needs trust can keep your child from exceeding these limits by making sure any assets he or she would

otherwise inherit go directly into the trust. That way, you don't have to worry about jeopardizing your child's eligibility for assistance, and you can be sure that any money you earmark for his or her care will be used exclusively for that purpose.

### **You can fund a trust with a wide variety of assets.**

You can use almost any combination of assets to fund your special needs trust: stocks, bonds, real estate—even the proceeds from a life insurance policy (provided you name the trust as the beneficiary). In fact, a whole life insurance policy can be a cost-effective way to fund the trust, since they both pay a death benefit (provided premium requirements are met) and any cash value they generate will continue to grow tax-deferred until your death.

### **Make sure you use a qualified professional.**

Your child's future is too important to leave anything to chance. While special needs trusts have been around for years, they are complex legal instruments that have to be set up properly. Be sure to work with an attorney who has plenty of experience in this area, as well as a thorough knowledge of wills and estates.

It takes a special person to care for a special needs child—and to adequately prepare for the child's future. With a special needs trust, you can take comfort in the fact that you have done everything you can to give your child the resources he or she will need to lead a long and happy life.

This educational third-party article is provided as a courtesy by Julie A Cord Agent, (CA Ins. Lic. #4166847) New York Life Insurance Company. To learn more about the information or topics discussed, please contact Julie A Cord at [jacord@ft.newyorklife.com](mailto:jacord@ft.newyorklife.com) or 317.289.3010.

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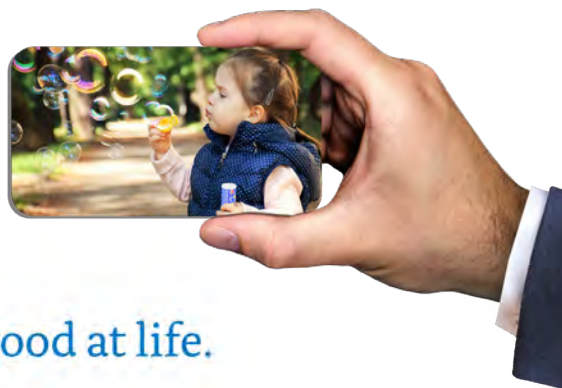
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Our company is founded on the principles Jordan modeled the day that mill worker's dress was torn -- integrity, character and the principle of treating people right and doing the right thing. This foundation has endured over the years, and while we've grown from helping customers and small businesses across three different centuries to financing modern corporate

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## BUDGET FRIENDLY FALL ACTIVITIES

With the leaves changing colors and that nice cool crisp feeling back in the air, the autumn season has finally arrived! Are you looking for ways to enjoy the fall without falling into debt? Well, get your pumpkin spice, grab a football and pick up that rake in the garage, because we're about to explore some great ways to enjoy the fall traditions on a budget!

**1. Go Apple Picking:** One of the most iconic fall activities, apple picking is a great way to get outside, get some delicious and healthy fruit and enjoy the harvest season! By checking out your local orchard you can enjoy a fruitful afternoon with the family and walk away with some delicious juicy apples to snack on, all for one low price!

**2. Have A Bonfire Night:** Bonfires are the perfect way to warm up on a cool autumn evening, and the perfect occasion to invite your friends over to roast marshmallows and hotdogs on an open flame. You can save by having everyone bring a s'mores ingredient, and you can even go hunting for sticks to fuel the fire in the woods!

**3. Tailgate From Home:** You don't have to buy those pricey tickets to the big game to enjoy a tailgate with your friends and family! Watch the game from home and grill burgers from your backyard. Plus, if you party potluck style, you can split food costs by having everyone bring a tailgating treat.

**4. Carve Pumpkins:** Fall means it's time to start looking for the perfect pumpkins for carving! Whether you create a more traditional jack-o'-lantern or try a new artistic direction on your pumpkin, the whole family will have fun carving their own creation. It can be tempting to go to a pumpkin patch to pick out your pumpkin, but you can save some money if you purchase from a grocery store where pumpkins are less expensive.

**5. Spooky Movie Night:** Fall is the spooky season after all, so why not plan a movie night where you watch a few of your favorite Halloween movies? Most low-cost streaming services have Halloween film collections. You can also use the apples you've picked and the seeds from pumpkin carving to make tasty snacks like caramel apples and toasted pumpkin seeds as your film fest snacks!

**6. Play In the Leaves:** Who doesn't love raking up a big pile of leaves and then jumping into them? Your kids will love any play time they can get in the leaves, whether they're just doing a cannonball into the colors, or building their very own leaf fort. And all it costs is a little afternoon yard work. Plus, if you want to teach the value of a hard-earned dollar, you can have the kids help bag the leaves once they're finished playing and give them a few dollars for a job well done!

Feeling that Fall fever yet? However you enjoy the season, there are plenty of great ways to find fun activities that save on your fall budget! And don't forget, if you're looking for an affordable way to take a fall adventure Palmetto First has you covered with various loan options available!

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# NOT INVESTING? NO WORRIES: FIVE SIMPLE TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED



(BPT) - If you're unsure of how to start planning for your financial future through investing, you're far from alone.

In fact, it might surprise you to know that 80 million Americans are interested in investing but don't know where to begin. Yahoo Finance even reports that 54 percent of millennials have less than \$5,000 of their money invested into stocks, bonds, real estate or other holdings. While many feel they lack the funds, others are intimidated or simply don't know how to initiate solid investments. But that lack of action could hurt their financial standing later in life, according to the report.

At the recent Create & Cultivate 2022 LA Conference, Maya Sudhakaran, head of Growth and Acquisition of Plink, noted that, "One of the biggest things I've learned is that perfection is the enemy of good. There is so much intimidation and fear associated with dipping your toes into the world of investing, that most people don't do it." Fortunately, investing doesn't have to be complicated, time-consuming or financially burdensome, and it's never too late to learn. With that in mind, here are simple suggestions for getting started.

Invest money you won't need today (or tomorrow). The market has historically trended upward over long periods, but it can be unpredictable in the short term.

That's why it's safer to invest money you won't need for immediate needs like your rent, groceries, car payment or emergency savings. Instead, use the funds available after you've paid your monthly bill, whether they amount to \$10 or \$100. That rule of thumb lets you plan for the future without jeopardizing your everyday financial well-being. Understand you can start investing with just \$1. This allows for you to learn by doing versus feeling like you can't start investing at all. Until recently, the only way you could buy stock was by having the funds to buy an entire share, plus transaction fees. With new investing app Plynk, you can invest in a stock (or exchange-traded fund or mutual fund) with as little as \$1 by buying a "fractional share." In essence, you're able to put your money into a portion of a company's stock rather than having to buy the whole share, helping you learn about investing by actually investing.

Invest manageable amounts on a regular basis. Rather than waiting till you have a sizable amount like \$1,000 to invest each year, make the process seem more doable by setting aside \$20 a week or \$100 a month. That may seem even easier if you arrange for recurring investments; you'll still have control of what you buy but won't need to log in every time to place a trade.

Don't try to time the market. The choice of whether to sell or take a loss is yours but consider this: Even professional money managers struggle to time the market successfully over short-term periods. That's why successful investors tend to tune out short-term "noise" and stay focused on their long-term goals.

Rather than trying to time the market, focus on choosing investments you believe in - then stick to your plan.

Be patient with yourself. Try not to get down on yourself if you're

investing schedule gets off track - that happens to everyone at some point. Just acknowledge it, reflect on it and get ready to regroup tomorrow, next week or next month. What matters isn't that you missed a milestone or delayed making moves, but that you started in the first place. Understand that any progress adds up over time, no matter how small the increments.

You don't need to be a financial expert to start on the path toward achieving your future financial goals and to begin investing. Thanks to Plynk, the new, no-experience-required investment app for novices, you can begin with as little as \$1. Even better, during the Learn & Earn promotion, available from August 18 through October 20, you can earn up to \$50 in bonuses: \$10 just for signing up with a brokerage account and linking your bank account, and up to a \$40 investment match for learning by doing via the targeted articles in the app.



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## WANT TO BECOME FINANCIALLY HEALTHY?

(BPT) - Could your finances use a checkup? If so, you're not alone. According to the Financial Health Network, "Financial Health Pulse: 2021 U.S. Trends Report," nearly two-thirds of Americans struggle with financial health. But what does that mean? The study considered factors such as people's ability to pay bills, their amount of short-term savings and their credit scores. If you're not sure how healthy your finances are, here's one starting point - do you have enough savings to cover at least three months' worth of expenses in an emergency? If you answered no - or if you're not even sure what three months of expenses would be - chances are you could benefit with help to manage your finances smarter.

**Here are some ways to improve your financial health.**

### Know your expenses

One of the first things financial advisors will tell you to tackle is budgeting. In the simplest terms, having a budget means you know how much you need for expenses each month (and throughout the year, as some expenses aren't monthly).

The Digit app calculates smart amounts of money to move from your spending account into a dedicated bills account throughout the month, helping you keep those funds separate for expenses like rent, utilities or subscriptions. Digit also helps you budget by keeping money for spending separate so you won't overspend cash you'll need later in the month and avoid that crunch before payday.

### Make saving effortless

But, we're human. And budgeting is difficult to do manually and not most people's idea of a good time. To stay on track and save for longer-term goals (plus that emergency cushion), some financial advisors might recommend using technology to automate your savings so you don't even have to think about it.

### Save for multiple, specific goals

Another interesting finding from the Financial Health Network study was that people who saved for specific goals set more aside than those who

simply saved. So instead of planning to generally "save money," it helps to identify concrete, measurable goals like:

- \* Paying off a particular debt
- \* Building an emergency fund or retirement fund
- \* Making a big purchase
- \* Saving for vacation

Consumers are feeling the impact of inflation, which is why now more than ever it is important to find ways to set aside more money and have the peace of mind that comes with it. Evaluating your personal finances and planning can feel overwhelming, but technology can be your partner and help you achieve your financial goals without having to think about it.

### Plan for the long term

When you're ready to consider longer-term goals, Digit also makes investing as easy as possible by helping you contribute to your portfolio for long-term wealth and retirement at your own pace. The tool knows about your expenses and goals, smartly splitting up your deposits for bills, savings and long-term investments.

Using the right technology tools can help make your financial life easier and help you be more financially secure today and in the long run.



# ABB ANNOUNCES NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Submitted by Samantha Strickland, marketing coordinator



McKayla Smith

**MURRELLS INLET** - Anderson Brothers Bank continues to expand its lending team with the recent promotion of McKayla Smith. Smith is based in the Murrells Inlet office.

In her role as a Consumer Lender, Smith will assist customers with the various financial services offered by the bank including consumer and automobile financing. "Whether someone is in the market for a new car, boat, recreational purchase or unsecured loan, we can help with that!" said Smith.

Smith joined Anderson Brothers Bank in April of 2021, bringing with her over eight years of consumer lending experience. Her previous positions as teller/CSR at the Grissom office put her on the path to her new position as consumer lender.

"We are pleased to transition McKayla to the Murrells Inlet branch in her new role as a consumer lender. McKayla has a wealth of experience as a consumer lender from her prior roles. She also has a wealth of banking knowledge as she was just recently promoted from her CSR role in the Myrtle Beach, Grissom branch" said Jeff Williamson, vice president consumer finance director. "We are excited to see McKayla shine as a leader and lender as she is a culture first, customer servicing minded team member. We look forward to seeing great things from McKayla!"



Rusty Prince

**MYRTLE BEACH** - Another new addition to the ABB team is Rusty Prince as our newest lender. Prince will be based in the bank's Market Common's office located at 2711 Agnes Lane, Myrtle Beach.

In his role as Loan Officer, Prince will assist customers with various financial services offered by the bank including consumer and personal loans, reviewing customer's credit and building relationships with businesses in the community to help them achieve success.

Prince resides in Horry County with his wife and children. He is a graduate of The University of South Carolina Salkehatchie, and he brings with him over 12 years of finance experience.

"We are pleased to bring Rusty Prince in, as a consumer lender, for the Myrtle Beach, Market Common's office. Rusty has already had a great career in the world of consumer finance, and we are looking forward to adding him in with an already strong team at the beach" said Jeff Williamson, vice president consumer finance director. "We are excited to see Rusty shine as a leader and lender as he is a culture first, customer servicing minded team member. We look forward to seeing great things from Rusty!"



ANDERSON BROTHERS BANK

### About Anderson Brothers Bank

Anderson Brothers Bank is a full-service community bank offering a complete range of competitive loan services and deposit products. Founded in 1933, this family-owned bank blends the elements of traditional personal service, local market awareness, and advanced technology to meet the financial needs of its customers. Anderson Brothers Bank offers 25 branches conveniently located in 17 communities throughout the Pee Dee, Coastal and Low Country regions of South Carolina. The bank's main office is located at 101 North Main Street, P.O. Box 310 in Mullins, South Carolina. For additional information about Anderson Brothers Bank, call (843) 464-6271 or visit [ABBank.com](http://ABBank.com).

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# OVARIAN CANCER SURVIVOR, MY STORY AND GOD'S GLORY

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Black, DOD, founder/CEO Lydia's Nest Community Resource and Development Center



Dr. Barbara Black, DOD

**JOHNSONVILLE** - As a nurse, I was always caring for others. But the tables were turned when I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in December 2016. This diagnosis came roughly after losing everything to a fire in August of the same year. I was getting back into the groove of having another home and I was so excited about trying to furnish that home and making it ours. A week later, I started having severe pain in my lower abdominal area. The next day, I went to my OB/GYN. A few days later I woke up in a recovery room, post-biopsy and post-surgery, with my husband and doctor at my bedside looking grim. Diagnosis: #Ovarian Cancer. I was completely blindsided. I went from being one of the strongest women I know to the weakest. There were no words to prepare my family or me for the emotional trying experiences ahead. The distressing news didn't stop there. There would be more to come.

It was on Dec 23 when surgery and now I had a new goal in mind. That goal was to spend Christmas at home with my family. Hey, we just got back together after the tragedy of losing our home because my daughter was living with my sister, my son was living with a couple that was gracious enough to take him in until we found a place to stay, and my husband and I live in our storage room behind the house. So, at this point all I wanted to do was to spend Christmas in our home as a family. After begging the doctor to let me go home, I was released from the hospital that next day, Christmas Eve.

We had a great Christmas just being together. I began to look forward to healing and continuing with making our



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house a home. I was starting to get excited again as the days went by. Well, in January at my follow up appointment, I found out that they did not get all the cancer and I would have to see an oncologist in Columbia. I remember my doctor telling me that it was a complicated situation and he wanted to make sure that I had the best Oncology doctor, so he was going to refer me to SC Oncology Associates in Columbia. Now, I was really worried. It was the name of the place that scared me. I got my appointment with the oncologist and found that I needed to have another surgery. You can only imagine the feeling I got at this time. All I could think is, "not again, when will this end." I began to ask God all kinds of questions. Why me? How much more do I have to go through? When will this season of my life end? It just

seemed like I was in a season of pain, distress and disappointments. All I could think about was what would my family do without me. But the one thing I never lost was hope.

I had a tough time pulling myself together, but I knew that I had to. Not for me, but for the people that needed me. I made it through my second surgery, and I am now five years cancer free. I was blessed that my cancer was discovered early and was limited to both ovaries and had not spread to distant sites in my body. I made it through by trusting God, having a positive attitude, supportive family and a medical team that I trusted. There is life after ovarian cancer. You must keep the faith. Stay away from reading negative things online. Your case is yours and it is different from everybody else's.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OVARIAN CANCER

### RISK FACTORS

Many factors can increase or decrease a woman's risk of developing ovarian cancer.

**INCREASES RISK**

FAMILY HISTORY OF BREAST, OVARIAN OR COLON CANCER

GENETIC MUTATIONS, LIKE BRCA

POST-MENOPAUSAL

40+

INCREASED AGE

**DECREASES RISK**

PREGNANCY

BREASTFEEDING

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE USE

**#1** CAUSE OF GYNECOLOGIC CANCER DEATHS

**#5** CAUSE OF CANCER-RELATED DEATH IN WOMEN

**#11** MOST COMMON CANCER IN WOMEN

**EVERY 23 MINUTES** another woman is diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the U.S.

**21,750 NEW CASES** will be diagnosed this year

**13,940 WOMEN** will die this year

**1 in 78** WOMEN will develop ovarian cancer in her lifetime

**SURVIVAL RATES**

○ MORTALITY ○ SURVIVAL

**YEAR 5** 48%

**YEAR 10** 35%

**CURRENTLY THERE IS NO EARLY DETECTION TEST FOR OVARIAN CANCER**

A PAP TEST WILL NOT DETECT OVARIAN CANCER

Most ovarian cancer cases are diagnosed when the disease is advanced.

**ONLY 15%** of cases are diagnosed in the early stages.

**KNOW THE SYMPTOMS**

BLOATING

DIFFICULTY EATING

PELVIC / ABDOMINAL PAIN

URINARY FREQUENCY

If these symptoms occur for **MORE THAN 2 WEEKS** and these symptoms are new or unusual for you, see a gynecologist and ask about ovarian cancer. Research shows that seeing a gynecologic oncologist for surgery and treatment significantly improves outcomes.

# CHAMPION FOR HISPANIC HERITAGE EMBRACES DEI AT MUSC Submitted by Helen Adams



Dr. Hermes Florez, chair, Dept. Public Health Sciences (Photo by Sarah Pack)

**CHARLESTON** - When public health scientist Hermes Florez, M.D., Ph.D., decided to move from Miami, where Latinos are the majority, to Charleston, where they make up a much smaller percentage of the population, some friends were surprised.

“A lot of my former mentors said, ‘Are you sure that that’s the right move for you? And I said, ‘Why not? It’s a great opportunity.’ There are a lot of misconceptions about the deep South. I realized that Charleston is quite diverse, and you really can embrace those values.”

Florez, born in Venezuela, is proud to be part of that diversity. “I am very honored to be a champion for Hispanic heritage,” he said, as the nation prepared to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

Florez brings that sensibility to his role as chair of the Department of Public Health Sciences at the Medical University of South Carolina, where he works to improve the health of people of all backgrounds. “I fully embrace diversity, equity and inclusion in the Department of Public Health Sciences and the College of Medicine’s initiatives. I’ve had the opportunity to address some of the challenges that the Hispanic community has for access to care with my work at the free medical clinic on Johns Island and for the prevention and management of diseases more prevalent in Hispanics such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.”

Florez, an endocrinologist, volunteers at the Barrier Islands Free

Medical Clinic and sees patients at the Ralph H. Johnson Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. All that while leading the public health sciences department, where he has overseen important changes during his first two years.

“We’ve gone through the accreditation of our public health program, national accreditation with the Council of Education for Public Health. We have also improved our ranking on NIH funding,” Florez said, referring to the National Institutes of Health.

He’s currently waiting to hear if the NIH will fund a proposal to enhance MUSC’s recruitment of minority faculty in biomedical research.

Florez is also trying to get more young people from minority groups interested in public health science. “We go to the high schools here. You go to the community. You incentivize them. You say, you have the opportunity to participate in topnotch research at MUSC and obviously with other academic partners across the state then you sort of nurture them through college, and then eventually they will come hopefully to any of these colleges in MUSC and maybe do graduate studies, postgraduate training and then the pipeline for minority faculty. And then we have the critical mass.”

Public health science involves preventing diseases, helping people live longer and improving health by addressing environmental threats. Florez is leading by example. “It is important to give the opportunity to minority faculty, staff, students and community partners to appreciate that one of their own, in this case a Hispanic public health physician scientist, can respond to the call to serve as a leader.”

You can read the full article at <https://web.musc.edu/about/news-center/2022/08/31/champion-for-hispanic-heritage-embraces-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-efforts-at-musc>.

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**Robin DiAngelo, Ph.D.**  
*Affiliate Associate Professor of Education, University of Washington*  
*Author, White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*

**Isabel Wilkerson**  
*Pulitzer Prize winner*  
*Author, Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*

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## HYDRATION IS KEY FOR SUSTAINING HEALTHY LIVING

*Submitted by Kendrea Robinson, FNP-C*



*Kendrea Robinson*

As fall approaches, we encourage you to focus on sustaining healthy living. This is the perfect time to focus on maintaining an exercise routine, eating healthy balanced meals and snacks and as always staying hydrated.

During this season, many people are at risk for colds. It is essential that individuals take vitamins daily. If you are a person who does not like to consume multi vitamins or medications, then vitamin infusions are a fantastic way to get vitamins

into your system. Studies show that when ingesting any food and or vitamins your body does not absorb 100 percent of what is being ingested.

It is important to fuel your body with proper hydration that is safe and effective to help individuals enhance their immunity and energy. As you learn more about the unique ways to stay healthy it is essential to learn your body. Know what dehydration symptoms are, such as fatigue, dizziness, headaches and more.

Remember hydration is the key to nutrients being able to travel through your body, detoxifies the body and helps organs regulate properly. Hydration also helps keep joints moist; in return helps to minimize exacerbated pain. Hydration decreases premenstrual syndrome. In addition, it helps with the blood circulatory system in the body.

Dehydration can be caused due to many different illnesses such as UTI, viruses and more. Surprisingly, depression is a risk factor for dehydration due to not being in the mood to sustain a healthy lifestyle. One of the many reasons people lose weight when depressed.

As you move throughout the day remember to make sure that you drink as much water as you can when you have down time. Take time to incorporate exercise in your daily lifestyle. Starting now is perfect because you do not have to get ready when summer arrives.

If you do not like drinking water, there are many ways to make drinking water enjoyable. Some of the many ways include adding fruits or vegetables. Create challenges within your environments with other individuals. You can also add lemons, limes and other fruits and vegetables to your water which will also help enhance the detox within the body.

If you have problems getting in the proper amount of fluids, dealing with symptoms, despite the amount of water you intake or need a really good RESET to your healthy journey, schedule an appointment with Practical Purpose Solutions. Also, if you are having cosmetic surgeries, it is essential to schedule your hydration session before and after surgery to prevent dehydration which is a complication, post-surgery.

So, remember to HYDRATE, HYDRATE, HYDRATE and DO NOT FORGET TO TAKE YOUR MULTIVITAMINS. EAT HIGH NUTRITIOUS FOODS AND DRINK PLENTY OF WATER!!



Practical Purpose Solutions

# MUSC HEALTH OFFERS LIFE-SAVING BLOOD CLOT PROCEDURE

Submitted by Dr. Abdallah Kamouh, director of cardiology



Dr. Abdallah Kamouh

A pulmonary embolism is a condition in which one or more arteries in the lungs become blocked by a blood clot. The clot, or embolus, can form in a matter of hours and travel through a vein in the leg to the lung, creating a life-threatening condition. “If not treated, between 25 and 30 percent of patients can die; the mortality rate drops to 8 percent if patients are treated effectively,” says Dr. Abdallah Kamouh, director of cardiology at MUSC Health Florence Medical Center.

Kamouh, an interventional cardiologist, was among the first to treat patients in the Pee Dee region using a large-Bore pulmonary aspiration thrombectomy (PT), an advanced procedure technique removing the clot from the lung arteries. He used PT to treat patients with large clot burden in shock status, with rapidly worsening respiratory conditions, who are not able to be treated or who have not responded to the clot-busting drug tPA.

In a pulmonary thrombectomy, surgeons insert a large, hollow catheter into a vein in the patient’s leg and, using guided imaging, thread it up throughout the right side of the heart into the lung arteries to suction out the clot. While suctioning the clot, most of the blood will be filtered and returned back to the patient. A large amount of well-formed clots is usually removed during the procedure, and imaging will confirm significant improvement of blood flow to the lungs.

“The treatment can be challenging to perform, but lifesaving for patients. Pulmonary thrombectomy has shown to improve the patient’s clinical symptoms significantly in the short and long term. It improves function in the right side of the heart, lowers blood pressure in the lungs and in the short term can prevent a stay in the ICU and gets the patient out

of the hospital quicker,” says Kamouh.

The inpatient procedure, performed while the patient is awake under light anesthesia, takes about one to two hours. Patients typically remain in the hospital for one to two nights, he says. Time is critical, Kamouh says. “The longer the clot is lodged in the artery, the more difficult it is to treat. If it’s older than 48 -72 hours, the efficacy of the procedure will decrease significantly.” Often, this procedure is performed within 24 hours of diagnosis.”

Common signs of a potentially fatal clot are severe shortness of breath, chest pain, acute anxiety, dizziness or passing out and rapid heart rate. About 25 percent of patients with pulmonary embolism die suddenly. Someone can develop a clot at any age, Kamouh says. Those most susceptible include individuals who have recently had surgery and have to be still in bed for days, people who sit for long periods of time without moving, such as passengers on long flights and women who take birth control pills.

Kamouh says the advanced pulmonary aspiration thrombectomy is a definite improvement over prior treatments that provided only limited efficacy. This newer technology has shown promising data in ongoing clinical trials especially given the advantage of the rapid and complete evacuation of proximal and large thrombi. “The clot-busting tPA, although efficacious in some cases, carries significant risk mainly major life-threatening bleeding that’s why many physicians are often hesitant to use it, especially in patients at risk.”

Pulmonary thrombectomy for qualified patients has fewer complications and significantly reduces morbidity and mortality. “Not only is it life-saving; it is life-changing.”

Dr. Abdallah Kamouh is an interventional cardiologist at MUSC Health-Cardiology in Florence. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 843-674-4787 or visit [MUSCHealth.org/florence](http://MUSCHealth.org/florence).

# THE EMERGENCY ROOM: WHEN TO GO, AND WHEN NOT TO

Submitted by Manny Gupta, DO, MBA MUSC Health Florence Medical Center



Manny Gupta, DO, MBA

Chest pressure. A mysterious rash. An unexpectedly high temperature in a child. Understandably, all these can cause anxiety, sending us in search of the fastest care available, which many believe is the emergency room. Wait times at ERs however, particularly ones at large trauma centers, can be long if someone’s condition doesn’t appear to be a life-threatening emergency. The good news is that less expensive, faster options are available in many communities.

We talked with Dr. Manny Gupta, emergency physician at MUSC Health Florence Medical Center for advice on when to visit your ER and when to choose an alternative that is faster, less costly and more efficient.

**Q. When should someone go to their local emergency room for treatment?**

**A. Someone who is showing signs and symptoms of a heart attack or stroke should get to the ER immediately. Heart attack signs include chest pain, shortness of breath, passing out, dizziness, feeling faint, sweating, and chest pressure. Signs of a stroke include difficulty talking, incoherent speech, weakness on one side, stumbling or**

**falling and facial drooping.**

**Other conditions requiring emergency treatment include sudden loss of vision, severe respiratory illness with difficulty breathing and high fever or low blood pressure, trauma, broken bones, drug reactions, acute lacerations, first-time seizures or successive seizures and high fever and headache.**

**Q. What conditions are better suited for an urgent care setting or primary care physician?**

**A. A rash, redness or swelling can be treated by your doctor or an urgent care clinic. Cough, cold, congestion, minor fever, burning with urinating, diarrhea, constipation and migraines all can be managed safely by outpatient or urgent care.**

**If you have a primary care physician or a pediatrician, contacting your doctor’s office and discussing the symptoms with your doctor or a nurse is the recommended first option. Physician practices sometimes have a doctor or a nurse on call 24/7 specifically for these kinds of after-hours situations.**

**Q. What are the advantages of having a primary care doctor?**

**A. Urgent Care locations are staffed by doctors, physician assistants and nurses, and the clinics are safe, efficient and less expensive alternatives to the ER. Clinicians treat patients six months and older for non-life-threatening illnesses and also have onsite lab and radiation services. They are also open evenings and weekends and**

## THE EMERGENCY ROOM CONT'D

cost about the same as a visit to your regular doctor.

**Q. Does MUSC provide other options?**

**A. Yes. MUSC Health provides in-patient and online visits. MUSC Health Primary Care clinics offer same-day sick visits, online video visits and regularly scheduled appointments.**

MUSC Health Virtual Care is another easy way to talk with a healthcare provider through online video and non-video interviews that last between five and 15 minutes. The virtual care option is available to people of all ages and requires patients to fill out an online questionnaire. The responses are reviewed by MUSC Health providers, who typically respond to the patient in less than one hour. This virtual care option is available 24/7 and does not exceed \$25.

**Q. What else would you tell someone who needs emergency treatment?**

**A. If you think you need emergent care, don't hesitate to go to the ER. Just don't drive yourself or a family member. Instead, call an ambulance. The EMS crew can assess your situation and call ahead to alert the emergency staff, which is critical if a patient is having a heart attack or a stroke. We take pride in what we do, and we want to make sure everyone is taken care of. Regardless of which MUSC Health facility you choose for your treatment and care, be assured that MUSC Health is committed to delivering the safest patient-centered care possible.**

## MUSC HEALTH MARION MEDICAL CENTER NAMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Submitted by John Russell, marketing manager & media relations



Shametra Swaringer,  
MSN, RN, CCRN

**MARION** - MUSC Health Marion Medical Center is proud to announce Shametra Swaringer, MSN, RN, CCRN, has been named executive director of MUSC Health Marion Medical Center. Formerly, she served as critical care services director in the Florence Division.

Swaringer is responsible for ensuring continued excellent care to the community. As executive director, she will have direct responsibility for the hospital, and nursing leadership.

She has more than 16 years' experience with MUSC Health Florence Medical Center, and the hospital formerly known as Carolinas Hospital System. Swaringer's clinical knowledge, coupled with her experience as a passionate and trusted leader, ensures MUSC Health Marion Medical Center continued success.

Swaringer is a graduate of Florence-Darlington Technical College. She also completed a Bachelor of Science at Francis Marion University and her Master of Science in nursing at the University of Phoenix.

"Please join me in congratulating Shametra on this new role," said MUSC Health Florence Division Chief Executive Officer Jay Hinesley. "She will focus on bolstering a strong culture, bringing additional efficiencies to operations and standardizing processes between the hospitals in the Florence Division."

## MUSC HEALTH FLORENCE MEDICAL CENTER WELCOMES DR. RIBAL AL ARIDI

Submitted by John Russell, MUSC Health Florence Division marketing manager



Ribal Al Aridi, M.D.

MUSC Health Florence Medical Center welcomes endocrinologist, Dr. Ribal Al Aridi. She earned her medical degree from the American University of Beirut, in Beirut, Lebanon and completed a residency in Internal Medicine followed by a fellowship in endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism at University Hospital's Case Medical Center in Cleveland, OH.

Aridi has more than eight years of experience in endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism. She is board-certified and trained to diagnose and treat patients for a variety of hormonal diseases such as diabetes mellitus, pituitary tumors, adrenal disorders, thyroid diseases and osteoporosis, among others.

She is a member of the Endocrine Society and the American Association of Clinical Endocrinology and is a certified clinical densitometrist.

Aridi is accepting new patients at MUSC Health – Endocrinology in Florence. To schedule an appointment please call (843) 679-4221 or visit [MUSChealth.org](https://www.muschealth.org).

## ARE YOU ON TARGET WITH A1C?

Submitted by Ribal Al Aridi, M.D. MUSC Health – Endocrinology



### What is A1c?

Hemoglobin A1c test is a blood test that measures your average blood sugar levels over the previous 2-3 months. Another name for the test is HbA1c, A1c, or glycosylated hemoglobin test. It is one of the commonly used tests to diagnose diabetes mellitus and prediabetes. Also, if you have diabetes mellitus, it is used to monitor how well your blood sugar levels are being managed. The higher the A1c level is, the poorer the blood sugar control and the greater the risk of developing diabetes complications.

### What are the A1c Values?

An A1c value of 5.7-6.4 percent falls in the prediabetes range. An A1c of 6.5 percent or higher using two separate tests indicates diabetes mellitus.

### What are factors that can affect A1c test accuracy?

Some factors affecting accuracy are pregnancy, blood loss, blood transfusion, anemia, end-stage kidney disease, to name a few. In these situations, your doctor may look at your daily blood sugar readings to decide on treatment adjustment.

### What is your target A1c level, and how often does it need to be checked?

Your doctor will decide on your target A1c based on your age, medical problems (co-morbidities) and low blood sugar history. If you have prediabetes, A1c is typically checked once a year. If you have controlled diabetes mellitus and you are not using insulin, A1c is checked on average every six months. If you have uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, A1c is checked every three months to decide on a treatment adjustment.

Aridi is an endocrinologist who specializes in diagnosis and treatment of diabetes mellitus and other hormonal diseases, adrenal disorders, thyroid diseases, osteoporosis and pituitary tumors. Aridi is accepting patients. For more information, please call MUSC Health – Endocrinology in Florence at 843-679-4221 or visit [MUSCHealth.org/florence](https://www.MUSCHealth.org/florence).

# HOPEHEALTH CELEBRATES NATIONAL HEALTH CENTER WEEK

Submitted by Sheridan K. Murray, BS BA publication coordinator



*Hemingway Open House*

**HEMINGWAY** – HopeHealth hosted a grand opening brunch at HopeHealth in Hemingway for community leaders and local elected officials as part of the August 7-13, National Health Center Week celebrations. National Health Center Week is held every August to bring awareness to the importance of community health centers like HopeHealth.

Attendees enjoyed the August 12, event which consisted of grand opening festivities and tours of the new Hemingway facility. The event also featured speakers from HopeHealth representatives, local council members and the Mayor of Hemingway.

“We are excited to extend our services to the Hemingway community,” stated Falecia Miller, associate vice president of clinical operations for the southern region. “As a Federally Qualified Health Center, we are charged with making the impossible possible. Through strategic steps and community engagement, we are able to offer high quality health services to yet another rural community. The community, HopeHealth senior leadership staff, providers like Dr. Steve Reeves and clinical staff are excited about the future of the Hemingway office and what we will continue to offer in the way of a holistic plan of care.”

HopeHealth in Hemingway provides excellent primary care and support services to patients of all ages, such as prevention and management of chronic conditions, minor illness treatment, immunizations, health screenings and more.



*Shyam Tantry, MD*

## HopeHealth Endocrinology

Endocrinology is a specialty that offers diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the endocrine system, such as diabetes, hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, and adrenal insufficiency.

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# NATIONAL HEALTH CENTER WEEK



*Sallie Bachman, chief of staff, speaking at the event.*

**LAKE CITY**– HopeHealth celebrated National Health Center Week by hosting a legislative reception at the new HopeHealth in Lake City, August 11 from 5-7 p.m. National Health Center Week is held every August to bring awareness to the importance of community health centers like HopeHealth.

The legislative reception was well-attended by community leaders and elected officials who serve Clarendon, Florence, Orangeburg and Williamsburg counties. The officials were invited to share in the grand reopening of HopeHealth in Lake City, exploring the new facility and its amenities.

HopeHealth partnered with Dramatic Coffee Beans for the event. The youth development organization based in Lake City performed a short skit about the school-based clinics HopeHealth offers. Nicole Echols, director of external affairs, stated, “We have partnered with Dramatic Coffee Beans in order to highlight our school-based clinic in Lake City and all of the new and creative things we are doing to provide quality health care to the students of Florence School District 3.”

HopeHealth in Lake City’s new 6,700-square-foot space holds a medical clinical suite and a separate dental suite, with dental services now provided by Colin Spencer, DDS and Jenna Doyle, DMD. HopeHealth in Lake City provides quality care services to patients of all ages.



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# PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS

Submitted by Megan White Millhouse, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC nurse practitioner, HopeHealth



Megan White Millhouse,  
DNP, APRN, FNP-BC

In the United States, National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month has been recognized in October since 1988. During the month, we take the time to honor and remember those who have lost a child during pregnancy or infancy and the mental health impacts of those losses.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, miscarriage refers to a loss before the 20th week of pregnancy, while a stillbirth happens at 20 weeks and later. National Advocates for Pregnant Women (NAPW) states that 15-20 percent

of all pregnancies will end in a miscarriage or stillbirth. This means that in the U.S., nearly one million women who get pregnant each year experience such losses. While these losses are common, this does not diminish the difficulty of each experience.

Pregnancy and infant loss impact one in four women. African American and American Indian women are disproportionately affected: they are twice as likely to experience pregnancy loss as compared to White, Asian and Hispanic women. Most cases are not preventable; they occur due to chromosomal abnormalities or improper growth and development of the fetus.

While it is important to know that most cases are unavoidable, there are some key risk factors to note. These include advanced maternal age (pregnancy at age 35 or older), obesity, diabetes, hypertension, thyroid disease, autoimmune disorders and kidney disease.

There are key methods you can employ to reduce your risk:

- Establish with a PCP for general health screenings and to optimize control of any chronic medical conditions.
- Take a daily prenatal vitamin containing at least 400 mcg of folic acid.
- Maintain a healthy, balanced diet.
- Exercise regularly.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy BMI.
- Stop use of any alcohol, illicit drugs and tobacco during pregnancy.
- Limit caffeine to one to two cups per day during pregnancy.
- Avoid infection and ensure immunizations are up to date.
- Prevent foodborne illness by avoiding shellfish, raw fish (i.e., sushi), undercooked or raw meats, processed meats (including deli meat and hot dogs), unpasteurized milk and cheese and raw eggs.

If you or someone you care about has lost a child at any point during pregnancy or infancy, please remember them and help raise awareness this October for Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month.

If you are looking for a health care home for primary and specialty care, reach out to HopeHealth to become a patient by calling (843) 667-9414 or visiting [hope-health.org](http://hope-health.org).

Megan Millhouse is a nurse practitioner serving patients at HopeHealth in Orangeburg.

Millhouse earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice, Master of Science in nursing, and Bachelor of Science in nursing from the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC. She also has a Bachelor of Science in biology from College of Charleston. Millhouse focuses on management and prevention of chronic diseases including hypertension, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Millhouse is an Orangeburg native and is passionate about providing care for Orangeburg residents.



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# CARESOUTH CAROLINA'S GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY IN CHERAW

Submitted by Denise L. Jones, communication specialist



Representatives from CareSouth Carolina and community leaders gathered to celebrate a groundbreaking ceremony for its newest facility.

**CHERAW** - Representatives from CareSouth Carolina as well as community leaders gathered on Thursday, August 25, to celebrate a groundbreaking ceremony for its newest facility.

Located at 812 State Road, in Cheraw, SC, the location will provide much-needed space and relieve overcrowding at the current location – 715 S. Doctors Drive, Suite E – according to CareSouth Carolina CEO, Ann Lewis.

“Although CareSouth Carolina has had groundbreakings for three other new buildings over the past several years, this groundbreaking in Cheraw is especially exciting,” Lewis said. “The location is great and having this new building will solve the significant overcrowding problems in our current location. We look forward to expanding services and introducing new ones.”

Welcoming remarks came from CareSouth Carolina CMO, Dr. Stephen Smith and Emmanuel Temple Church of Deliverance, Bishop Jerry Hardison, delivered the invocation.

Cheraw Mayor Andy Ingram thanked CareSouth Carolina for their work. “On behalf of the town of Cheraw, we welcome this new healthcare facility to our community, and we want to thank CareSouth Carolina for

your commitment to provide quality healthcare to citizens of the Cheraw area,” he said.

SC Representative Richie Yow also praised CareSouth for its commitment to serving the residents of rural areas like Cheraw. “CareSouth is part of small town, rural South Carolina that has grown our medical care. Home-grown care with its staff that is making a difference in the lives of our community, the lives you’ve touched with the children in our schools, and we’re just so thankful for you,” Yow said.

“This is a great day for Chesterfield County,” added SC Representative Pat Henegan. “I always say, ‘Let the work I’ve done speak for me,’ and CareSouth Carolina lets its work speak for itself.” Henegan, who is also a CareSouth Carolina board member, called it a “day of celebration,” and said, “We are thrilled to share the day with our patients, our nurses, our other staff members, the entire community.”

CareSouth Carolina’s Chief of Community Health also attended the event. “This is great for Cheraw and the communities around, to be able to bring this facility here, and especially the location to make things more accessible to everyone,” Bittle said. “We’re just glad to be here. We’re open to everyone. No one leaves here without being seen, and no one leaves without their medication.”

CareSouth Carolina is a private, nonprofit community health center delivering patient-centered health and life services in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. CareSouth Carolina operates centers in Bennettsville, Bishopville, Cheraw, Chesterfield, Dillon, Hartsville, Lake View, Latta, McColl and Society Hill. Services provided by CareSouth Carolina include family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, women services, OB/GYN, HIV/AIDS primary care, dental, chiropractic services, pharmacy, geriatrics, social services, clinical counseling, laboratory, 4D ultrasound, X-Ray, migrant services and veteran’s choice provider.

## Convenient Locations:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
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| Bennettsville Pediatric Center<br>210 W. Main Street<br>Bennettsville, SC 29512<br>843.479.1200       | Lake View Center<br>103 N. Kemper Street<br>Lake View, SC 29563<br>843.759.2189                                     |
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| Bishopville Center<br>545 Sumter Highway<br>Bishopville, SC 29010<br>803.484.5317                     | McColl Health & Wellness Center<br>3080 Highway 15-401 E<br>McColl, SC 29570<br>843.523.5751                        |
| Bishopville Pediatric Dental<br>101 Harris Street<br>Bishopville, SC 29010<br>866.815.9845            | Society Hill Center<br>737 S. Main Street<br>Society Hill, SC 29593<br>843.378.4501                                 |
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| Chesterfield Center<br>204 Perry Wiley Way<br>Chesterfield, SC 29709<br>843.623.5080                  |   |
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| <b>SOCIETY HILL</b><br>737 S. Main Street<br>843.378.4148  | <b>CHERAW</b><br>715 S. Doctors Drive, Ste. A<br>843.865.4080 |   |
| <b>LATTA</b><br>122 Latimer Street<br>843.627.6261         | <b>CHESTERFIELD</b><br>204 Perry Wiley Way<br>843.927.1030    | <b>MCCOLL</b><br>3080 Highway 15-401 E<br>843.523.6212    |

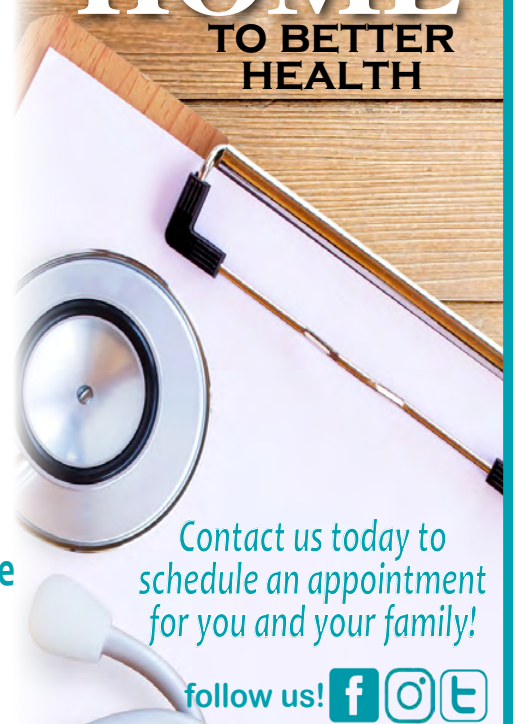
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## CARE SOUTH CAROLINA RECEIVES OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT GRANT

Articles submitted by Denise L. Jones, communication specialist



**HARTSVILLE-** CareSouth Carolina recently received a grant for \$664,179 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, according to Marek Calhoun, community services director for CareSouth Carolina. Calhoun said the money will be

used over a three-year period to fund outreach and enrollment strategies aimed at educating families about the availability of Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and directly assists families with the application and renewal process.

“This was a very competitive grant,” said Calhoun, adding that CareSouth Carolina was the only recipient in the state. “In all, 36 organizations in 20 states were awarded this funding, but we were the only one in South Carolina,” he said.

Since grant funding initiatives began in 2009, more than 330 awards to eligible entities have been issued for approximately \$265 million to community-based organizations, states and local governments. Connecting Kids to Coverage outreach grants share the common goal of reducing the number of children who are eligible for Medicaid and CHIP but not enrolled.

“At CareSouth Carolina we’re in a position to enroll individuals in Medicaid and CHIP,” said Calhoun. “One of the things we do is reaching out to those in our community who may not even realize these programs are available to them. I think it’s important for not only individuals as adults to have access to quality healthcare whether or not they are insured, but it’s even more important for our children to have access to health insurance so they can have a long and healthy life.”

## SECOND ANNUAL TELEHEALTH AWARENESS WEEK



Telehealth Service

**HARTSVILLE -** The second annual Telehealth Awareness Week was observed September 18 – 24. CareSouth Carolina provides telehealth services through each of its offices, as well as within several schools in the area.

Telehealth, the provision of healthcare remotely by means of telecommunications technology,

remains a lifeline for diverse patient communities and healthcare providers across the nation, ensuring access to safe, affordable and quality care whenever and wherever it is needed.

“Telehealth provides a convenient way to have access to medical care,” said CareSouth Carolina Virtual Care Manager Kaitlyn Hughes. “Telehealth services saves time, avoid exposure to viruses and germs as well as allowing access to services that otherwise may not be available.”

“I believe Telehealth Awareness Week comes at a wonderful time to not only bring awareness to services that CareSouth Carolina offers all year, but especially this time of the year as we enter into flu and RSV season,” Hughes added. “By providing telehealth services to patients CareSouth Carolina is breaking down barriers and providing expanded access to care.”

In 2021, CareSouth Carolina began installing and managing telehealth equipment in many of our area schools. Students have the opportunity to have a virtual visit with a nurse practitioner or physician without ever having to leave the school. Unlike the ROADS school-based mobiles which are designed for scheduled wellness visits, telehealth services are available on demand, as the need arises, and are designed more for acute, episodic care.



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## HOPEHEALTH WELCOMES NEW PROVIDERS

Submitted by HopeHealth

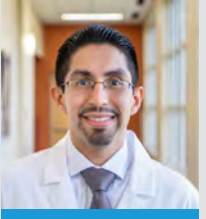


Haley Jackson, CPNP

### Haley Jackson, CPNP

Haley Jackson is a pediatric nurse practitioner providing care for patients of HopeHealth Pediatrics in Florence. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the Medical College of Georgia and a Master of Science in Nursing-Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Primary Care from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She graduated magna cum laude in both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Jackson has a passion for children's well-being and is a member of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars.



Francisco X. Barrera, MD

### Francisco X. Barrera, MD

Francisco X. Barrera is an endocrinologist providing care for patients at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence. He completed his fellowship in diabetes and metabolism at the University of Miami/Jackson Health System in Miami, FL. He earned his doctorate from the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua in Managua, Nicaragua. Barrera is fluent in English and Spanish, and the recipient of

the Harry Kurz, MD Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching by an Internal Medicine Resident. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Clinical Lipidology and a member of the Obesity Medicine Association and the American Board of Obesity.



Jenna Doyle, DMD

### Jenna Doyle, DMD

Jenna Doyle is a dentist serving patients at HopeHealth in Kingstree and HopeHealth in Lake City. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Human Health Sciences from University of Kentucky and a Doctor of Dental Medicine from University of Kentucky College of Dentistry. With a heart for volunteering, Doyle is involved with many charities and received the National Health Service Corps

Scholar award and the American Association of Public Health Dentistry-Community Dentistry and Dental Public Health award.



Colin Spencer, DDS

### Colin Spencer, DDS

Colin Spencer is a dentist serving patients of HopeHealth in Lake City and HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Applied Health Science from Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL, and a Doctor of Dental Surgery from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry in Detroit, MI.

### Charlene Chalmers, MD



Charlene Chalmers, MD

Charlene Chalmers is a pediatrician at HopeHealth Pediatrics in Manning. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Psychology from the University of Georgia in Athens, GA, and a Doctor of Medicine from Mercer University School of Medicine in Macon, GA. Chalmers completed her residency at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC. She is a member of the American

Academy of Pediatrics, the South Carolina Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association. She has served as an educator and administrator at a primary school in Berega, Tanzania and is currently the director for Lighting the Way Tanzania, a nonprofit that supports the continued education of children in Tanzania.

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Dr. Jennifer Evans Scott

## HOPEHEALTH INTRODUCES NEW PROGRAMS AND ONLINE PLATFORM

Submitted by Sheridan K. Murray, BS BA publication coordinator



Cindy Averitt

HopeHealth Volunteers is a new volunteer program which allows service-minded community members to explore ways to give back, develop skills, form new friendships and improve their mental and overall health. The program is led by Cindy Averitt, manager of volunteer programs at HopeHealth. Averitt came to HopeHealth after a 30-year career with the Florence Family YMCA, where she worked directly with volunteers for a multitude of special events.

In an effort to reach more potential participants, HopeHealth has posted its volunteer opportunities, special events and outreach activities online, increasing the ways in which individuals and groups can get involved. This mobile-friendly and web-based system is called, "Get Connected." HopeHealth's new platform does more than just allow the community to give back by responding to volunteer opportunities; it also gives opportunities to build lasting relationships.

Volunteer opportunities listed online include assisting guests as greeters and guides, helping with events and outreach opportunities and providing social support and comfort. Potential volunteers can go to [hope-health.org/volunteer](https://hope-health.org/volunteer) to explore these opportunities and more.

On the importance of HopeHealth Volunteers, Averitt said, "HopeHealth is present in communities where people need medical services, and we are working hard to grow this program to help more people live better, healthier lives."

For more information about volunteering with HopeHealth and "Get Connected," or to schedule a volunteer interview, contact Cindy Averitt at [caveritt@hope-health.org](mailto:caveritt@hope-health.org) or call 843-432-2942.

## HOPEHEALTH PRESENTS AT SC PHARMACY ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

Submitted by HopeHealth



Chief medical officer Ed Behling, RPh, MD and Clinical Pharmacist Alanna Scott, PharmD

Chief Medical Officer Ed Behling, RPh, MD and Clinical Pharmacist Alanna Scott, PharmD, presented at the 2022 South Carolina Pharmacy Association's Annual Convention. The convention, held in Charleston, SC from June 24-27, helped advance the SCPhA's mission to serve its members, enabling them to advance the

practice and science of pharmacy.

The presentation featured the integration of pharmacists into the primary care setting, utilizing HopeHealth as a case study. Behling and Scott shared information about the value HopeHealth's clinical pharmacy team has added to patient care, improving outcomes while also serving as a time-saving measure for providers. The physician/pharmacist team discussed the different perspectives that physicians and pharmacists have when approaching patient care. "These perspectives are both helpful and important to providing excellent patient care from a collaborative health care team," Scott shared.

Of her time at the conference, Scott states, "It is an honor to take part in the care of our patients and serve alongside our excellent team of health care providers at HopeHealth. I enjoyed sharing some of the highlights of this experience with my colleagues and peers at the South Carolina Pharmacy Association Annual Convention."

## PLANNING FINAL ARRANGEMENTS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW by Glaciera Brown Mason

The death of a loved one is the most devastating and traumatic experiences one goes through. In life, we know we are mortal and, death, which transcends race and ethnicity, is a certainty. If we live, surely, we will die. The most selfless act one can give to those they leave behind is proper planning.

Famed American lawyer, the late Johnnie Cochran coined the phrase, “preparation, preparation, preparation.” The normal cycle of life and death has been exacerbated by the current nationwide pandemic, which has shown us how important preplanning for transition is. Often, the subject most chose not to discuss, but the reality is, discussion is necessary. The same way in which we plan for a vacation to ensure everything goes smoothly, is the same level of intention that should be used when planning for end-of-life issues.

This information is shared to educate and encourage preplanning, and to arm you with information to successfully navigate the business of making final arrangements while dealing with loss and overwhelming grief.

The timing and occurrence of death is not within our control. Therefore, how does one plan for it? With intention! What we can control is to make certain that our affairs are in order. Whether the transition is from illness or is sudden, often, the preparation is overwhelming, challenging and frightening. Add to that scenario, a nationwide pandemic taking up residence in our world, and transitions from other health challenges which occur at a rapid pace. According to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, there have been over 17,591 deaths alone from COVID-19 since 2020.

Over the last two years the funeral industry has been inundated. It is important to take a look at planning for final arrangements. In doing so, we ask ourselves questions like, do I have a plot, who do I call if my loved one passes away at home, what arrangements do I make preneed, do I hold services at a funeral facility or in the church, do I bury or cremate and what’s the cost of it all? One fact often overlooked, is, there is only so much landmass where final remains may be interred. Hence, the rise of crematory burials has increased.

Recently, Diversity Works met with two local funeral facilities, the oldest minority-owned funeral home and one of the newest in the Florence area, Ideal Funeral Parlor and the Draper G. Myers Mortuary, to gain insight on what consumers need to know about



preplanning when faced with the death of a loved one. R. Douglas Hawkins from Ideal Funeral Parlor and Draper G. Myers, of Draper G. Myers Mortuary, funeral directors, gave important information about the compassion and care given to grieving families and their perspective on this topic.

Death, no matter how sorrowful has no respect of person. Unless one has intimately been involved and experienced managing the aspects of planning for interment, they are void with the knowledge of what it takes to bury or cremate someone.

History tells us that the funeral hearse, in days gone by, often served as both the funeral hearse as well as the ambulance service. This was true at Ideal Funeral Parlor, located at 106 E. Darlington Street, Florence, SC, one of the oldest minority-owned businesses in the Florence area. Established and respected in the community, Ideal Funeral Parlor began in August 1939, providing the full range of compassionate care services to the Florence community. The funeral directors and embalmers of Ideal Funeral Parlor have over 50 years of experience. Their staff provides a welcome and comforting experience for grieving families and assists all faiths and ethnicities in executing final arrangements in and out of state.

The Funeral Service Board, a part of the Labor Licensing Review Board, is the organization that regulates the funeral industry. Each state has its own funeral service board which makes its rules and regulations concerning licensing and continuing education. South Carolina law dictates that a licensed funeral director must be present at all funeral and burial services, wherever a body is present, and, that any funeral merchandise, caskets, funeral services and embalming must be sold through a licensed funeral director.

A path to grief recovery for a difficult time most certainly involves preneed - preplanning your arrangements before the need arises. This can be done in as much detail as desired however, the more detailed, preneed arrangements are, the more successful, wishes may be carried out.

One of your first calls once a transition occurs is to a funeral director. Prior conversations with a loved one are important. Questions such as what funeral home you want to handle final arrangements, what type of service is desired; church or humanistic service – a service that does celebrate life, are key.

Cost is the second most driving factor in a lot of decisions that are made in families when a person transitions. Preplanning gives families the opportunity to prepay for elements of services which can be prepaid. Did you know that only active-duty U.S. military service member’s interment are covered by the Veteran’s Administration, or, that the cost of interment for persons transitioning who may be poverty-stricken are not offset? Further, each county has a small indigent fund that can be attributed to disposition - funeral/burial or cremation, entombment-an above ground burial - crypt or cryogenics. The South Carolina Office of Victim’s Assistance will pay a portion of disposition for victims of a crime.

Decisions on final disposition – what happens when a person expires, i.e., burial, cremation, interment or another method of



R. Douglas Hawkins

## PLANNING FINAL ARRANGEMENTS CONT'D



*Draper G. Myers*

Draper G. Myers Mortuary, where, like Ideal Funeral Parlor, both cremation and in-ground burials are arranged, has hung out his shingle as one of the newest funeral services in the Florence area. On a Tuesday, in February, the Florence Chamber of Commerce joined in the ribbon cutting ceremony at Draper G. Myers Mortuary, LLC located at 615 Dargan Street in downtown Florence, SC.

Myers, a 41-year-old entrepreneur in the Florence area originally from Evergreen, SC, is no stranger to the funeral industry, having spent 20 plus years learning and apprenticing in the business. He attended mortuary school in Atlanta, Ga, and has been immersing himself in the field. His path has been filled with positive people from family members to mentors who took good care of him and allowed him to lean on them during his journey. Myers credits many, too numerous to name one by one, who have inspired and looked out for him. He is grateful particularly

disposing of an individual's remains, are also important conversations to have preneed. Additional preneed conversations involve cost for burial, cremation, removal, storage, obtaining death certificate information and transportation are all necessary. The location of funds, such as insurance policies and bank accounts, is important. In the midst of overwhelming grief, these are the important times when experienced and knowledgeable funeral directors who practice compassionate care become invaluable.

to his late grandfather Tennie 'Mossy' Myers and his mother, for his work ethic. Myers credits Funeral Director R. Douglas Hawkins as a mentor from which he obtained much of his teaching and experience from, in his 13-year affiliation with Ideal Funeral Parlor. His experience has also been enriched by the five years he spent working at Backus Funeral Home in Florence. When speaking about his new business, Myers shares, "We service all ethnicities and faiths. Our goal is to provide compassionate care to all who need our services." In addition to being a new entrepreneur in the Florence area, Myers is also the owner of a casket company, providing burial caskets for those in need. Myers advises families selecting a funeral home to care for their family's needs, "choose a funeral home that takes the time to educate you, that is compassionate and where you're not just a number."

Planning for final arrangements is a necessary and important aspect of managing the business side of funeral services. Fortunately, there are options. For the utmost in compassionate care, professionalism and available services, contact Ideal Funeral Parlor at 843-662-3581; [www.idealfuneral.com](http://www.idealfuneral.com) or Draper G. Myers Mortuary, LLC at 843-799-0216; [www.drapergmyersmortuary.com](http://www.drapergmyersmortuary.com) for preneed arrangements specific to you and for those you love.



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## LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES 2022 GOOD NEIGHBOR OF THE YEAR *by Glaciera Brown Mason*



*Retha Salters-Brown*

Lighthouse Ministries of Florence selected Retha Brown as the 2022 Good Neighbor of the Year! With the backdrop of the beautiful Florence Country Club, Brown was honored in a lovely ceremony, witnessed by well-wishers, co-workers, family and friends. Beaming at the success of the evening, Executive Director Cecilia L. Meggs shared, “This year we celebrated our sixth Annual Good Neighbor Gala, and we were honored to award Retha Brown as our Good Neighbor of the Year. A Good

Neighbor is someone who is a friend or advocate of Lighthouse Ministries who donates either their time or money and is active in our community by supporting the client base we serve. Retha has been an active supporter and a Board Member of Lighthouse Ministries. She continues to be an advocate for Lighthouse Ministries by helping to secure grants and presenting first time home buying to families in our programs.”

Brown is the seventh child, born to the late Eddie and Tena Myers-Salters. She is a graduate of Williamsburg Technical College where she received an associate degree in business, and Francis Marion University and Limestone College where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration.

Committed, caring, dedicated, warm and a longstanding member of the Florence community are only some of the accolades Brown possesses which compliment her 22 years of experience in community development. Over the past 17 years, Brown has served as a community relations manager with the City of Florence. She is a certified Housing Urban Development (HUD) counselor and has completed both the HUD Certified Region IV Part 58 Environmental Review Certification and



LIGHTHOUSE  
MINISTRIES

the South Carolina Association of Counties for local government.

Brown’s expertise and compassion shines bright in her career as liaison to low-income residents, living in low-wealth areas within the City of Florence. Brown has facilitated and presented during numerous homebuyers and community education workshops and assisted in financial literacy, budgeting, credit restoration and other aspects of homebuyer training. Our Good Neighbor Brown expressed joy when she said, “I find it gratifying when individuals receive keys after successfully purchasing their first home.”

Serving the community with dignity, Brown garners respect when implementing five main objectives: to go into neighborhoods, establish relationships, listen to the concerns of residents, to develop trust within the community and to encourage neighborhood pride. That strategy has yielded proven results. Brown’s motto: “Do all the good you can, for all the people you can, in all the places you can, for as long as you can.” With this level of service, the intrinsic rewards are massive for Brown and all who are fortunate to work with and be a recipient of her efforts. Her work in the community as an agent, representative and former board member are only a few good reasons this selection and honor is so well deserved.

Brown is the widow of the late Pastor C. “Ronnie” Brown. They are the parents of three wonderful daughters, Towanda (Tyree) of Florence, SC, Lashonda (Steven) of Greenville, SC and Charita of Charlotte, NC. Brown is also, the proud “Meme” of six beautiful grandchildren. She is a dedicated member of New Ebenezer Baptist Church, Florence and enjoys theater, live concerts, reading and shopping. Congratulations Retha Salters Brown!

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## WHY YOUNG ADULTS SHOULD INVEST IN LIFE INSURANCE

(BPT) - Life insurance is for people of all ages, not just parents and grandparents. While life insurance needs vary by age and stage of life, it's a good idea to invest in a life insurance plan while you're young. If you're in your 20s and 30s, life insurance may not seem necessary, but it's a useful tool to have at any age. Check out these three reasons provided by State Farm® why life insurance should be a priority for young adults.

### 1. The best time to get coverage

As a young adult, life insurance probably isn't top of mind, but it's the best time to get coverage. Since you're young and likely healthy, you'll typically qualify for more affordable premiums. Because you have a relatively long-life expectancy, insurers see you as less risk than older individuals.

You don't have to apply for an expensive, comprehensive policy. Start with a small policy in your 20s that fits your budget to build the foundation of your financial security. You can always expand your coverage throughout your life.

### 2. Planning life and expanding coverage

When you experience a life change, like marriage or kids, you should evaluate and expand your coverage as needed. By the time you're in your 30s, you may have children and a mortgage or plan, which makes the financial protection offered by life insurance more important than ever. For example, life insurance coverage can help cover your children's education costs if tragedy hits and you are no longer there to provide for them.

If you don't have kids or a house payment but are planning to expand your family or purchasing a home, don't wait to bolster your coverage. Now is the time to make sure you are fully insured, as rates typically rise with age.

### 3. Security and peace of mind

It's not pleasant to think about you or a family member passing. Still, should the unexpected happen, you'll want to be covered. Too many families are at risk of financial insecurity should their primary wage earner pass away. In fact, the association found that 44 percent of U.S. households would feel financial hardships within six months of their primary wage earner's passing.

A life insurance policy provides your family with security in the event of your passing and provides you with peace of mind knowing they'll be covered after you're gone. In addition to paying for college and providing income to your loved ones, it can help them cover funeral, burial and cremation costs. The average funeral typically costs around \$8,000, a hefty expense to try to cover when you're already grieving the loss of a loved one. Final expense insurance (or burial insurance) can help relieve the financial impact of a funeral.

These are just three reasons why you should invest in a life insurance policy while you're young and can qualify for lower premiums. If you want to protect your future now but have questions about what coverage you need and can afford, call an insurance agent today.



## STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF FALLING



(BPT) - When you're active and youthful, it's easy to forget that you may be losing some strength, flexibility and balance as you age. Because these changes happen gradually, you may be unaware of the added risks of falling. That risk can sneak up on you as you're busy enjoying life.

The facts don't lie, falls are the leading cause of both fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans, and over one-fourth of older adult falls each year.

Fall injuries can include hip fractures, broken bones and head injuries. Every year, medical costs spent on fall injuries are about \$50 billion, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). But falling is not an inevitable part of aging. Many falls can be prevented by taking simple, proven steps. Here are five ways you can reduce your risk.

**Start with a checkup.** The first step is to understand your risk for falling. The National Council on Aging offers the Falls Free CheckUp, a simple online questionnaire that is based on research and guidance from the CDC. In a few short minutes, you can answer 13 yes or no questions, receive your falls risk score, and get easy steps

you can take today to reduce your risk. You can even download your results to discuss with your doctor and sign up for a reminder to retake the Falls Free CheckUp six months later to see if your risk level has changed.

**Remove hazards.** A whopping 60 percent of all falls happen at home. That's why it's a good idea to walk through your home with a fresh, critical eye to determine whether any areas should be addressed. Floors should be clutter-free, with throw rugs either removed or held down with double-sided tape. All stairs should be well-lit and equipped with strong rails. Bathrooms, tubs, showers and toilets should be equipped with grab bars. Another great option is an in-shower chair used in combination with a hand-held shower head.

**Keep on top of your health.** Having regular checkups with your doctor will keep you aware of any changes that may have occurred, such as muscle weakness or issues with your vision, balance or gait. People with mild hearing loss are nearly three times as likely to fall as others. The symptoms of chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and arthritis can also increase your risk of falling.

**Stay active.** Ask your doctor which kinds of exercises may help you reduce the risk of falling. Senior centers, YMCAs, Area Agencies on Aging and gyms often offer classes geared toward fall prevention, with many focusing on mobility, balance, strength, flexibility and/or behavioral changes that may help you.

**Monitor your medications.** Certain prescription and over-the-counter medications can cause dizziness, sleepiness or dehydration. Interactions with other medicines can also increase your risk of falling.

Learn more about how to stay independent and injury-free at [NCOA.org](http://NCOA.org).

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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:

"Bethea 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



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# THE PEE DEE NPHC PRESENTING A UNITED FRONT

by Les Echols



The Pee Dee branch of the National Pan Hellenic Council (NPHC) attended the debut of, "The Woman King," a movie based on real events about the Kingdom of Dahomey in Africa. Nearly 100

members of the NPHC organizations were in attendance to support the critically acclaimed movie, directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood, and featured a mostly Black cast. Prince-Bythewood is known for her work on, "Love and Basketball," and the "Secret Life of Bees."

There are nine historically Black Greek Letter organizations that make up the NPHC. Collectively, these organizations are referred to as, "The Divine Nine," or D9. The Pee Dee NPHC has been very active in Florence and surrounding communities with food giveaways, social gatherings and education sessions. One of the most amazing things about the collective NPHC is their camaraderie and support of one another. "We may joke around, but at the end of the day, there is no rivalry. We are all one big family wearing different colors," said Nicole Dixon, past president and current treasurer of the Pee Dee NPHC and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated.

As of this writing, "The Woman King," was the number one movie in America. The movie, starring highly decorated actress Viola Davis, is loosely based on events that took place in the 1800s. Davis is the only African American actress to attain the "Triple Crown of Acting," having won an Academy Award, an Emmy Award and a Tony Award.

The next NPHC movie day will be the viewing of, "Black Panther 2," on November 13, at 3 p.m. at the Swamp Fox Theater in Florence, SC. For more information, contact Pee Dee NPHC at (843) 687-5095.

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SPEND LOCAL.  
ENJOY LOCAL.**

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**City of Marion  
Annual Holiday  
Prelude & Community  
Tree Lighting Celebration**

**Thursday, November 17th**  
Holiday Fashion Show — 7-9pm

**Wednesday, November 23rd**  
Music Festival featuring "Level 10 Band"  
Main Street Commons — 7-10pm

**Saturday, November 26th**  
Holiday Market  
Main Street Commons — 10am-1pm

**Thursday, December 1st**  
Walk Through Wonderland  
Amazing Grace Park — 5-7pm

**Thursday, December 1st, 8th, 15th & 22nd**  
Late night shopping & Carriage rides  
Downtown Marion — 5-7pm

**Saturday, December 3rd**  
Holiday Bazaar & Winter Wonderland  
Amazing Grace Park — 10am

**Sunday, December 4th**  
Marion Christmas Parade — 5:00pm  
Annual City Tree Lighting Celebration — 6pm  
Marion County Courthouse  
Fireworks at Withlacoochee Park — 7pm

**Saturday, December 31st**  
HMRA Casino Night  
The Grove — 7pm

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# The Blackberry Raven

## INGREDIENTS:

- 2 oz. Dark Lambrusco
- ½ oz Dry Sake
- ¼ oz Chambord
- ¼ oz Lychee Juice
- ¼ oz Fresh Lemon Juice

## Directions:

1. Pour Sake, Chambord, Lychee Juice and Lemon Juice into a shaker with ice.
2. Shake vigorously.
3. Remove the top, add chilled Lambrusco and stir. Add ice to a rocks glass. Strain the contents of your shaker into the rocks glass.
4. Replace top and pour into a frosted glass!

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