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# DIVERSITY WORKS

APRIL 2023 VOLUME 13 ISSUE 2

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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 employees that represent best practices in workforce diversity and supplier choices. We feature articles on those displaying inclusionary vision in and for the marketplace and who encourage and provide role models for others.

Through editorial content and other signature promotions, Diversity Works© is a vessel to inform the readership on appreciating and accepting the physical, social, cultural and other differences in one another and to promote better outcomes through interacting with those unlike ourselves. Our mission is to promote the concept of 'community,' in the workplace, to stimulate literacy and save the planet via recycling printed material.

This platform serves our present age with a focus on the Pee Dee region of South Carolina which includes the counties of Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, Sumter and Williamsburg. The magazine targets the general public and is rapidly expanding statewide and globally. Our chief demographic consists of 54 percent male and 46 percent females, middle to top-level management, professorship and fellowship positions.

### OUR VISION

To create a more collaborative world where balanced diversity is practiced, to encourage a return to reading and to protect the environment by recycling the ink and paper products our materials are printed with.

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# FROM THE EDITOR'S HEART



Glacia Brown Mason  
Editor

Welcome to Spring! It's the time when things gone dormant, rejuvenate themselves and reminds us of nature's beauty. It's also a great time when readers can find a space under a tree or on the lanai to absorb all that Diversity Works has to offer. Whether you're reading with us online at [www.diversityworkssc.com](http://www.diversityworkssc.com), or have copy in hand, Diversity Works genuinely appreciates your readership.

Nothing pleases us more than to be able to say, welcome back! In this newest issue, you'll find what's happenings in and around the Pee Dee. At Diversity Works, we strive to consistently include content and advertisements that are readable, well organized, interesting and, that which keeps our readers, intrigued, informed and updated

about business, education, health, lifestyles and more.

We invite you to read the plethora of great articles in the six regular and special sections with feature stories highlighted, beginning with our cover story. We hope you read with interest about our neighbors in the City of Lake City. With a new African American female mayor, the first to hold the position, The Honorable Mayor Yameika Robinson's vision is shared along with the dedicated staff led by City Administrator William A. Hall, assigned to carry out the mission to increase the progress the city is experiencing, making Lake City a place to live, work, play and visit.

But first, Florence residents welcome spring with great pride in the news that our city has earned the prestigious Great American Main Street Award, which is the top award that recognizes communities for their excellence in commercial revitalization! Congratulations Florence!

As you move through the business section, you'll find what author, Simma Lieberman teaches about how organizations grow dramatically and exponentially increase their market share when they add diversity. Business entrepreneurs and managers alike can read, learn and share with others the article, "Three Keys to Unlock and Hire Diversity of Thought."

In the metaphor of the power of planting a seed, Diversity Works hopes you'll plan early to attend its fifth biennial Diversity Focus Training and Luncheon, November 9, 2023. Employees, companies, community leaders and organizations are encouraged and welcome to attend. More information will be available in coming editions. Stay tuned!

Our business section shares incredible stories about the people, employees, present and past who add value to the workplace through their work ethic, people skills, knowledge and abilities. Kudos to those who put their best foot forward for their careers and ultimately help businesses grow.

Alert! Alert! If you have a high school graduate in your midst, hurry and have them apply for the Finklea, Hendrick & Blake 2023 Scholarship. Thanks to the award-winning local law firm for making scholarships available to the area's future leaders! The deadline is April 17, so don't wait.

In our education section, join in congratulations as Francis Marion University (FMU) is recognized as a Military Friendly School because of its consistent work with military veterans and their dependents. For those in continuing education studies, be informed that FMU has added the degree of Doctor of Psychology to its curriculum. Our sections are brimming with stories as we continue to congratulate Claflin University and Florence Darlington Technical College (FDTC) as the recipients of scholarship dollars from the Savannah River Mission Completion and Blanchard Machinery, respectively.

A lot is happening in Pee Dee education, as we continue to spotlight and congratulate, among others, Florence 1 Schools' new Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Courtney Clayton. We extend well wishes to others in education, FMU's new Provost, Dr. T. Alissa Waters; Becky Hubbard's appointment as Horry Georgetown Technical College's (HGTC) new chair and professor of teacher education; HGTC Alumni Dana Crowell named North Myrtle Beach's new chief of police and read with interest how the Marion County School District is mitigating teacher recruitment and retention for the district.

It is said that "service is the rent we pay for our time on earth." The Holy Bible even tells us in 2 Corinthians that it is better to, 'give.' Even the IRS gives us credit when we give. So maybe, just maybe there's something to be said for the act of service in volunteerism and giving. If we love our neighbor as ourselves,

then there is no question, right?

Our special section on celebrating volunteers in community service recognizes and shines a light on the people in our communities whose positive impact is invaluable to the community and organizations they serve. I continue to be amazed and grow an appreciation for community people, doing extraordinary acts of service. Be prepared to be astonished with good vibes as we highlight and raise our level of awareness and appreciation in celebrating volunteers and community servants. Take note as you beam while reading, how our neighbors, friends and family take their place of honor in stories like, MRMC naming Linda Mallik its 2022 Volunteer of the Year; another among many you'll find is the story of the positive impact Dorothy Lee makes by sharing her time, experience and wealth of skills with her community at Care House; read the story of FMU's African American Faculty and Staff Coalition's Diversity Award given to Dr. Charlene Wages. Inspired yet? Read further and learn the selfless service rendered by Brenda Murphy as she takes her seat as the first female elected President in 80 years of existence of the SC State Conference of the NAACP.

You'll notice a common thread that solidifies our understanding of the gift of service and why these volunteers do what they do. Look for it when you read the stories of community members like Janice Bogan who volunteers with Lighthouse Ministries of Florence and has a passion for helping others. Profound words begin this story and couldn't be truer, "there is no better way to stay motivated than to find something you're passionate about." The women and men who serve communities daily are our police, fire and EMS public servants. In the City of Hartville, they hone their skills, package their courage and work tirelessly every day for the community. Honored during Black History Month in Hartsville, thank you for your service to the community.

Area youth are benefitting from the community service of a group of professional volunteers at G-Lab Legacies, Inc., (Gentleman Learning and Building Legacies), where they provide a sturdy foundation for young men to have positive role models. Read their story, learn all they give back and possibly be inspired to volunteer.

There's always more at Diversity Works, with three months' worth of content to last you until our third quarter. In between your reading, notice the beautiful graphic advertisements from our partners. Make note, utilize and share them.

Recognized within our special sections are stories that inform us on sexual assault and child abuse prevention. Stay informed by reading stories from the Care House and more. Keep reading to be edified on Autism Awareness Month with stories by Dr. Christopher Ong as he explains the diagnosis, treatment and prognosis for individuals on the autism spectrum. Further, read "Beyond the Spectrum," by the Milestones Clinic.

If it's true that health is wealth and that we're better patients when we're more informed, you'll get great mileage from our health section. Be informed when you read the knowledge shared by MUSC orthopaedics doctor, Dr. Thesselon W. Monderson as he shares risks and treatment options for carpal tunnel syndrome; or take notes as Dr. Nick Everetts explains the benefits of physical therapy for Parkinson's disease. Keep your pen and paper handy and be sure not to miss the MUSC Health article, "Nine Things to Know About Testicular Cancer," during Testicular Cancer Awareness Month. Important informational articles like these and so many more are contained within our health section. Read HopeHealth's Dr. Jon Docherty's article about Lupus, what it is, who it affects and its symptoms.

Alert! Alert! If you are a Medicaid recipient, read HopeHealth's articles of information to ensure you protect your health coverage. Do it today!

Finally, our lifestyle section which is always full of interesting and enjoyable reads and upcoming events, which, if we participate, adds to our quality of life, here in the Pee Dee. Read and get ready as Anderson Brothers Bank presents the City of Dillon and Dillon County Chamber of Commerce's 2023 Celebrate Main Street Festival, Saturday, April 29.

As the hub and the largest city in the Pee Dee, Florence residents and visitors will have great access to our city as it welcomes back, the ever so stylish unique cultural gathering with a bit of mystery, the 2023 Le Diner En Blanc, May 20. Another event you may not want to miss is, an 'Evening with Fantasia.' This Grammy Award winning NC native will perform at the Florence Center on June 24. Mark your calendars for these fantastic and fun upcoming events. Until next time, happy reading and remember, Diversity Works for all of us!

Glacia Brown Mason  
Editor





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# THREE KEYS TO UNLOCK AND HIRE DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT By Simma Lieberman



*Simma Lieberman, “The Inclusionist” helps leaders create inclusive workplace cultures where everyone can do their best work. She is also the host of the podcast, “Everyday Conversations on Race for Everyday People.”*

My clients often tell me they’d rather focus on hiring diversity of thought than on demographics. They don’t understand how to hire real diversity of thought.

Diversity of thought is crucial in any organization that wants to provide breakthrough products and services, and meet the needs of today’s diverse market.

However, too often leaders in organizations use the term, “diversity of thought,” as a way of not seeking out more people of color and women from different backgrounds.



It’s often a guise for only hiring people who are like them. The diversity of thought that results in more creativity, new ideas and breakthrough products and services comes from hiring people who look different than you, from different backgrounds with different cultural experiences and perspectives.

In my coaching practice, I find that these same leaders and people involved in the hiring process don’t have a strategy to access a diverse pool of candidates. They end up looking in the same places they did before. They also lack the skills,

experience and strategies to develop relationships with people who are different.

If you always recruit from the same places, with the same methods, you will always get the same people who look like you.

You have to know where the candidates are and have a long enough lead-time to get a good selection of candidates. With so much new technology, that information is easily accessible. It takes effort and a willingness to change.

If you want to be ahead of the competition and bring in more innovation, then you must think with a new mindset and be open to different strategies.

Here are three keys to unlock diversity of thought in hiring and ensure you access a more diverse candidate pool who will meet your needs for revolutionary ideas to be seen as leaders in your industry.

## 1. Do your research

Research and develop a list of colleges that historically have large numbers of women, people with disabilities and people from different cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds. Send recruiting teams to those schools and/or learn how to use the new tools that weed out bias in hiring.

## 2. Train recruiters to be culturally intelligent

Train your recruiters to be culturally intelligent so they know how to communicate and develop relationships with people from different backgrounds and dimensions of diversity. It’s always better if you can send out recruiters who are diverse in different ways and can communicate effectively across differences. I just heard from a female Asian candidate that everyone on the interviewing panel were white men much older than her. She didn’t get the job, nor did she want it after the interview. She was highly qualified and got two offers in the same industry as a result of final interviews with more diverse panels. The first company missed out on a genius.

## 3. Venture out

Consider going outside your industry to meet new candidates. Some industries tend to be more mono-culture or overwhelmingly single gender. Identify the skills you need in your organization and determine where else you might find people with those skills.

A CEO of a facilities management company wanted to hire more female managers in a heavily male-dominated industry. He was tired of going to industry events with very few women, so he decided to change tactics.

Instead of recruiting from his industry, he started attending meetings of women in real estate. “I wanted to find women who would bring different experiences so we could get fresh ideas. I looked for women who understood property management from the client’s perspective and would challenge the way we’ve always worked.

“We now have several women in decision making positions as a result, and we’ve been able to better serve our clients.”

Organizations grow dramatically, and exponentially increase their market share when they bring together people who are different from each other. If you build an employee base from a diversity of cultures, religions, sexual orientations, genders, ethnicities, etc. and provide opportunities for them to share different experiences and talents, you’ll hear perspectives that will result in new ways to solve problems and create new products. One of your jobs as a leader is to access and mine that diversity of backgrounds, experiences and thought, or your organization and the people in it will fall behind.

The choice is yours. Hire creatively.

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Submitted by McCall Farms

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Our products you will be proud to feed your family...



Starting with a vision of providing authentic soul food in a can, Glory Foods has grown to become the leading retail brand of Southern-style vegetables in the country.



Using only the freshest sweet potatoes from nearby farms, Bruce's Yams are triple-peeled and canned within hours of harvesting. On the Bruce's Yam website, you can find many recipes that are delicious and nutritious.



Veg-All has been serving up memories for families all over the country since 1926. Throughout the years, our original seven-veggie blend has become a trusted ingredient that has inspired family favorite recipes for generations. See for yourself why so many families trust Veg-All at their dinner tables.



In 1985, David Holmes sold his canning operation in Georgia to McCall Farms. All of our products and ingredients are grown here in the US. We are committed to working with local farms as much as possible. As a result, 80% of our produce comes from farms located within 150 miles of our canning facility. The remaining 20% comes from reputable growers throughout the US.



Boiled Peanuts have always been our first language. They're already cooked (boiled) and ready to savor right out of the can. You can heat them if you like but some like them cold out of the can. They are fresh and go straight to the can the same day they are pulled from the ground. That means they are plump, moist, and filled with nutrients.



When it comes to feeding your family, we know it is important to give your loved ones a meal filled with flavor and nutrients. This is our goal with our authentic southern beans.



When you think spinach, you think Popeye! Only the highest quality, most nutritious and best-tasting spinach is good enough to carry the Popeye name. That's why every can is committed to making strong bodies and happy tummies.



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# CityU 2023

## Accepting applications this fall!



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Receive insight from the source about your local city government with presentations from various city departments.

### GET CONNECTED:



Meet other citizens and connect with the people in your community to build lasting relationships.

### GET INVOLVED:



Develop your interest in local government by serving on a volunteer board, commission or committee for the City of Florence.

### LEARN ABOUT YOUR CITY!

CityU is an educational opportunity for local citizens to learn how the City of Florence functions as a municipality.

This six-week course is a general government class designed to give participants a unique learning experience and provide a behind-the-scenes look at the daily operations in the City of Florence.



Scan the QR code to visit the CityU website



Or visit

[www.cityofflorence.com/city-university](http://www.cityofflorence.com/city-university)

## CITY CONNECTS WITH THE COMMUNITY THROUGH CITY UNIVERSITY Submitted by the City of Florence



The City of Florence kicked off the New Year with the introduction of City University (CityU). CityU is a program created as an additional communications tool to enhance transparency and strengthen civic engagement with the citizens of Florence. It is a six-week course designed to give participants a unique learning experience and provide an opportunity for residents to receive a behind-the-scenes look at daily operations. Residents meet the people behind their city government and are given a chance to speak to the city's leadership team one-on-one. The program was originally introduced to the City Council Marketing & Public Relations Committee and staff. They looked at similar initiatives across the state where other municipalities had experienced success, the curriculum was developed and CityU was born!

There was an overwhelming response for participation in CityU and the program filled quickly – a very promising reaction for the future of the program. Participants were eager to gain a deeper understanding of municipal government, as well as connect with other citizens and individuals in the community. The first session was held January 30. CityU participants were selected on a first come/first serve basis, and the limited group size of twenty-five allowed for a more intimate setting with open discussion. Individuals residing or working within city limits were prioritized; however, Florence County residents were encouraged to apply as well.

Each session took an estimated 1.5 hours and was held on Monday evenings. The first session introduced city staff and CityU participants with one another and provided a chance to form new relationships. Participants learned about City Center offices and their locations. Then they were introduced to the city's form of government and the roles and responsibilities of City Council, the City Manager and the Deputy City Manager, as well as functions of the City Manager's Office and work areas which include Marketing and Communications, and the City Center Farmers Market and Commercial

Kitchen. The first session also included presentations from the City's Human Resources and Finance departments. Participants were provided a deep dive into city finances which provided a better understanding of various funds and their limitations. The second session was held at Barnes Street Activity Center and informed CityU participants of operations for Recreation Services, Athletics, and Sports Tourism. These departments are responsible for preparing, executing and overseeing recreational activities for the citizens of Florence, as well as attracting tournaments and events to the city.

The next stop for CityU participants was a visit to Fire Station #4 on Jody Road where participants learned about the city's Fire and Police Departments. Chief Shannon Tanner provided information about the City of Florence's six stations, which serve approximately twenty-one square miles. They not only respond to emergencies such as house fires, vehicle accidents and elevator crises, but they also perform hydrant/hose testing, equipment maintenance, and regular fire safety inspections on new and existing businesses. Chief Allen Heidler shared that the city's Police Department is a State Accredited Law Enforcement agency, comprised of four divisions: Administrative Services, Community Relations, Patrol Services and Support



One of the sessions held at Fire Station #4

Services. The Department is also a community driven group, working with an agency-wide community policing concept and meeting with approximately forty neighborhood and business crime watch associations. The session



## CITY CONNECTS CONT'D



CityU Graduation at the Council Meeting on March 13, 2023

concluded with a tour of the fire station which is one of the fire department's newest facilities.

Session four of CityU took participants on the road for a city bus tour thanks to a collaboration with Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA). The tour highlighted specific areas in Florence that would demonstrate projects and initiatives of the Planning, Research & Development and Community Services Departments. Clint Moore, assistant city manager of development and Scotty Davis, deputy city manager, discussed upcoming projects in Downtown Florence, the process of annexation, and areas referred to as "doughnut holes" – parts of neighborhoods or communities surrounded by the city limits of Florence which have not annexed. As they rode through communities, they also discussed neighborhood redevelopment and participants were shown streetscape and housing stock improvements that have been made in the city's historic neighborhoods.

Session five took place at the Frank E. Willis Pee Dee River Regional Water Plant, setting the theme as participants discussed the Utilities Department, Economic Development and Public Works. The city's Utilities Director, Jerry Dudley, detailed the work divisions that comprise the Utilities Department which include Surface Water, Groundwater, Distribution Operations, Collection Operations, Wastewater, Stormwater, and Compliance. Michael Hemingway, Economic Development and Utilities planning director, shared information

about the city's efforts related to economic development. Participants gained knowledge about the importance of ensuring the city maintains proper volume and capacity of resources to produce and treat water so that we are appropriately prepared for potential companies considering doing business in Florence. Chuck Pope, Public Works director, detailed responsibilities of the work areas (Beautification & Facilities, Sanitation, Equipment Maintenance, Parks Maintenance, and Animal Shelter) that make up the Public Works Department and the services they provide to residents. Services discussed were garbage, recycling and yard waste collection, as well as street and right-of-way maintenance, mosquito control, tree removal or other arbor-related activities, athletic field and facilities maintenance, park maintenance, and special city events as assigned.

CityU wrapped up its final session in City Council Chambers with a presentation regarding volunteer opportunities with various departments and special events followed by an introduction of the city's Boards and Commissions and the need for residents to serve in this capacity. City staff answered remaining questions from participants and ended with a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The survey's results yielded positive feedback, with participants thoroughly enjoying the experience. All who participated stated they would recommend CityU to a friend or colleague, and most participants chose the Bus Tour as their favorite experience during the program.

Due to participants' encouraging response to CityU, another course is planned for early fall 2023. Residents' pursuit to gain knowledge about city government and daily operations validated the need for the program and city staff hopes to continue CityU if there is an interest from the community. CityU provides not only the chance for residents to gain a deeper understanding of the city, but to develop relationships with city staff members, and other Florence residents. Continuing efforts to create various avenues of effective communications for all residents will remain a priority as collaboration and communication is vital to the community's success as we continue striving to propel Florence - Full Life, Full Forward.

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# CARE PROFESSIONALS AT SMITH FUNERAL HOME OF FLORENCE

By Glaciera Brown Mason



Alyssia D. Smith

The loss of a loved one is the most sorrowful time in our lives. It's a time when grief makes time seem to stand still. Memories flooding thru tears and a host of emotions, seemingly too much to bear are all things we endure when death occurs.

The distinctive, personal and compassionate care given to families by Smith Funeral Home of Florence provides comfort to communities across the Pee Dee. For more than 70 years, the dedicated staff at Smith has offered personalized traditional burial, cremation and veteran services. Among the professional staff associated with this long-standing local business is Alyssia D. Smith.

Born in Galveston, TX, her early years were spent as a military child in Mobile, AL. Interested in anatomy at a young age, Smith was introduced to the science by Funeral Director, Ronald Ali of Mobile. Smith's background and experience in STEM makes her a valuable contributor to the successful future of Smith Funeral Home.

As a high school senior, Smith was honored by ASU President William Harris, with an ASU scholarship. While there, she excelled in the university's Inaugural Forensics Program as an Omega Psi Phi (Rho Alpha Chapter) Achievement Week Scholar, STEM Scholar and an ASU Board of Supervisors Scholar. Smith successfully earned a Bachelor of Sciences degree in Forensic Chemistry, in Fall 2014.

With a passion for science, Smith successfully earned an associate degree from Gupton-Jones College in Mortuary Sciences in 2016.

Smith's training has prepared her for future opportunities. She has worked with the DeKalb County Medical Examiner's Office,

performing autopsies for four different counties in GA. She assisted doctors and law enforcement in investigating causes of death of deceased individuals. Smith is employed with McCleod Regional Medical Center as a pathology assistant where she examines body parts to assist pathologists with anatomical diagnosis and microscopic examinations.

With such a laser focused background, this working mom manages work, home and family, while still finding time to lend her experience to Smith. She consults when requested, drives limos when needed, meets with families on pre-planning, assists with embalming and has served as a Lady Attendant. Smith shared, one of the duties she gains fulfillment from is, "helping put the family at ease with what's going on."

Smith is a member of the Florence Alumnae (SC) Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a member of the alumnae step team and gives back to the community as a speaker with Delta Sigma Theta Girls Exploring Math and Sciences (GEMS) chapters.

In addition to enjoying exercise and dancing, Smith enjoys lending her expertise to pique the interest of youth about college aspirations and pursuing STEM professions. She emphasized how women, more notably, African American women are in small numbers in this demanding profession.

Alyssia D. Smith is the proud wife of Co-Owner and Vice President, Licensed Funeral Director and Councilman, J. Lawrence Smith II, and mother to Alyse Journi and James Lawrence Smith III (J3).

To learn more about the services offered by Smith Funeral Home of Florence, 307 S. Johns Street, Florence SC 29506, contact 843-662-7192.

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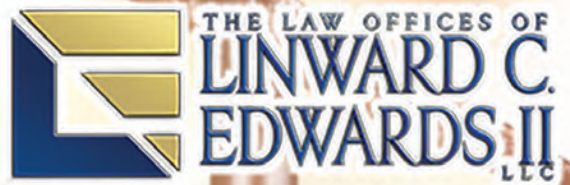
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# RUIZ FOODS HOLDS FIRST DEI KICKOFF EVENT By Dawn "D.A." Goodwin



*Krista Meekins, executive assistant & Office Coordinator of Florence Ruiz Foods*

Throughout the years, Krista Meekins has worked for several companies that had diversity committees. Those organizations often held activities to help show their employees that they were aware of concepts and issues that can drive people apart. Years later, after attending the 2021 Diversity Focus Training through her current employer, Ruiz Foods, Meekins wanted to create something similar at her workplace. Because of her efforts, she succeeded in starting a diversity committee at Ruiz this past October.

Today, Meekins serves as the executive assistant and office coordinator of Ruiz Foods Florence. Meekins is responsible for coordinating the administrative functions of the office to assist in maintaining a high level of productivity. This includes clerical support to the Leadership Team, office and building management, event planning, employee relations, community relations, Ruiz Cares volunteer active and activities and administration of the Florence Ruiz 4 Kids Scholarship and Mini Grants 4 Teachers programs.

From the beginning, Meekins' ideas for the diversity committee were clearly defined and aligned with the goals in mind. She says she sought, "to present ideas to our workforce that would educate and create awareness of DEI issues and concepts that we all face in our everyday lives. In October of 2022, I pitched the idea to HR, gathered volunteers and our DEI Committee



*Ruiz Foods Florence DEI Committee  
back row left to right Stacey Daniel, Brian Harrelsn, Donella Graham, LaSonja Jackson, Aneta Eaddy, Adriana Aldana, Ryan Dill, Jamie Moore, Donna Jackson, Krista Meekins, Tina Rogers, Shanda Blackwell*

was born. Our goal is to have monthly activities centered around a specific topic(s) that are nationally observed during that month. These activities could consist of Lunch & Learns, speakers, training sessions, displays etc. Once we established our purpose, mission statement and goals, we decided a DEI Kickoff Event in January 2023, would be the perfect way to introduce our committee and program to our Team Members."

The first Ruiz DEI Kickoff Event was held January 24, and was facilitated by Diana Murphy-Eaddy from Diversity Works Magazine© and Dr. Cynthia Walters who has many years of experience administering DEI in the workforce. Meekins stated, "We first met Dr. Walters at the 2021 Diversity Focus Training. Those of us that attended the focus training really enjoyed Dr. Walter's discussions and appreciated her communication style. We knew she would be



*Diversity Candy Counts*

perfect to help us get our DEI initiatives started. Her discussion at our kickoff event was a great success—over 100 of our Team Members attended the Lunch & Learn! To commemorate their participation, all attendees received a Ruiz Foods logo tie-dye shirt stating 'Diversity is a fact. Inclusion is an act.' Our committee decided on the tie-dye shirt as each shirt is diverse in its patterns and colors, no two are alike."

According to Meekins, in February the Ruiz DEI Committee created displays that touched on important observations for that month, such as Black History Month. Since February recognizes American Heart Month, the committee wanted to list statistics showing how high blood pressure and heart disease impacts some ethnic groups more than others. They also held a "Wear Red Day," in honor of World Day of Social Justice. All Team Members who wore red were entered into drawings for Ruiz Foods' logo tie-dye shirts and other logo prizes. Over 500 Team Members participated and 50 of those participant's names were drawn in our raffle!

For March, the committee is focusing on DEI definitions, which will be posted throughout the Ruiz Foods facility. "We will be holding a DEI definition word search contest for more prizes," said Meekins. "Additionally, to keep our tie-dye theme going, we are holding a diversity candy count competition where Team Members will guess how many rainbow gumballs, Twizzlers and popcorn pieces there are in several canisters located throughout our break rooms. A diversity photo booth is being set up for our Team Members to 'Show Your Diversity at Work!' where they

can wear tie-dye shirts or any crazy colorful clothing they have. Photos will then be posted on our internal announcement TVs. The purpose of these March activities is to get our Team Members familiar with what DEI stands for, have a little fun and to reiterate that, like tie-dye, we are all colorful and unique."

Ruiz's diversity committee hopes that by holding DEI activities and creating relevant displays, Team Members will get a sense that Ruiz Foods appreciates them as individuals who come from different cultures, have different beliefs and are talented in their own way. "By having these consistent reminders throughout our facility, the hope is to keep DEI concepts in the forefront, to foster a sense of belonging for all, that we are all one team here at Ruiz Foods Florence...that all of our Team Members are valued for who they are," Meekins said.

Meekins described that the committee is looking forward to the 2023 Diversity Focus Training coming this November. "We are proud to be a sponsor of the event again this year and are excited to participate and bring back our experiences to our workforce. In sponsoring this event, along with many other local organizations, Ruiz Foods continues its commitment to support their Team Members and the communities in which they work and live."



*Ruiz Foods Team members sign in for training*



*Diana Murphy-Eaddy director of Diversity Works Initiatives and publisher of Diversity Works Magazine welcomes team members to training.*



*Team members admire their t-shirts Diversity is a Fact. Inclusion is an Act*



*Dr. Cynthia Walters director of Diversity and Inclusion at Prisma Health facilitates training*

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# A DIVERSE LEADER, BRINGS MORE TO THE TABLE WITH GOOD WORK ETHICS

By Les Echols



Chante Speights

Chante Speights of ADP is living proof that an inclusive environment can develop a leader and help foster leadership habits and tendencies. Speights started her journey at ADP in May of 2012, as a temporary associate and was hired permanently later that year. Her career journey has taken off since then. She started in Data Entry, and quickly climbed up the ladder by staying the top performer consistently and was later hired as a team lead. In November 2021, she was promoted to manager of operations, where she currently

manages the Loss Prevention Group.

Speights has learned the value of equity and inclusion through professional experience and dedication. “Growing up, I did not always see great examples of diversity and leadership. However, working at ADP, I have been shown, as well as been, a perfect example of a diverse leader. I have been shown that my work, my insight, my knowledge, and my voice are important. I pride myself in knowing that, sometimes I am the youngest in the room, but with my work ethic, I have shown that I can bring more to the table, Speights explained.

Speights is a part of many inclusive organizations, committees and boards. She is currently a cohort in the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership of Florence Class of 2023, where she was elected by her peers as class officer. She is also a member of Cultivate Resource Group at ADP, which promotes the professional development of African American associates and allies. They focus on empowering, encouraging and networking initiatives and collectively participate in community events, such as The Day of Caring. Speights is also a part of iWin, the International Women’s Inclusion Network at ADP that focuses on encouraging and empowering women to achieve personal and professional success. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the Asiya Jordan Foundation.

Speights’s leadership style is engaging and communicating with direct reports and others. “One thing to know about me is that I firmly believe that open and honest communication is the best thing to have when managing people or working with a group of people,” Speights stated. “I also believe that when associates have clear and concise information, they can do their jobs better. I sit down and talk to my team to gain their insight on things and then we move forward. With this method, I have been able to create trust amongst my team because they understand that I have their best interests at heart. I believe that you should be happy where you work, and communication can make that possible.”

Speights is the proud mother of two boys and a proud alumnus of Wilson High School, class of 2010, where she serves on the board for her class. She earned three associate degrees in marketing, management and accounting, respectively. She has a bachelor’s in accounting and a master’s degree in business management, with a concentration in accounting.

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Submitted by Finklea, Hendrick & Blake, LLC



Finklea, Hendrick & Blake, LLC is pleased to announce that it is accepting applications for the Finklea, Hendrick & Blake Scholarship. This is the second year the firm has sponsored these scholarships. FHB is offering these scholarships in appreciation of the support the community have shown its business. For the fifth year in a row, Finklea, Hendrick & Blake has been nominated as "Best Law Firm in the Pee Dee." Last year the firm was surprised by the overwhelming participation with 84 students submitting applications for the scholarship. Upon reviewing the applications, FHB was encouraged by how many of their applicants were worthy of recognition, humbled by the significant achievements of the applicants and inspired by the many obstacle's students overcame to reach this point in their educational path. This year Finklea, Hendrick & Blake is committed to awarding \$5,000 of scholarships to at least ten applicants.

The firm will be awarding scholarships to seniors graduating in 2023 from high schools in the Pee Dee Region who intend to further their education at a technical college, junior college or four-year university. To apply, the student must click here to download and complete the attached application and return it by mail to Finklea, Hendrick & Blake, LLC., P.O. Box 1317, Florence, SC 29503 or by email to [acribb@finklealaw.com](mailto:acribb@finklealaw.com) by April 17, 2023, 11:00 a.m. The applicant should provide a transcript of his/her grades or a report card and provide proof of acceptance or application to an accredited institution of higher education. Scholarships will be awarded based on the substance of the information shared on the application, interest in a field which directly or indirectly relates to the legal profession, geographical location in the Pee Dee, Godly world view and service to the community.

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*McDonalds franchise Director of Operations, Sheretta German*

**FLORENCE** - The best organizations succeed in large part due to the employees they hire. Employees carry out an organization's mission and are often, the first face to the community they serve. This is the story of a hard-working young woman who worked her way up in a local McDonalds industry franchise.

Sheretta German successfully holds the leadership position at two local McDonalds restaurants in Florence, SC, at 1908 West Lucas Street, Florence, SC 29501 and 3805 West Palmetto Street, Florence, SC 29501. As Director of Operations, German leads teams at both locations. She works closely with senior level managers to ensure financial goals are met, as well as assists in the day-to-day operation of the stores.

Because quality service, utility and safety are paramount in business, German's value to the organization is complimented by her certification as a SERV Safe Instructor and Proctor. In this role, she teaches and administers the SERV Safe training and exam related to

safe food handling for the local franchise. The two McDonalds franchises serves approximately 400 - 500,000 customers annually.

A true testament of hard work and determination, German has excelled at McDonalds. She began working as a crew member for the former owners, Mr. Arnett James III and Mrs. Wanda James, in their Dillon location. German's work ethic and ability to prove herself as a self-starter, landed her the promotion of first assistant. Later, she was presented with the opportunity to serve as general manager at the James' Marion, SC location. German's journey didn't stop there. She continued to show her ability and skill in the food service industry and was given the opportunity to further advance her career as supervisor at the Florence, SC franchise. Later in 2021, Mr. and Mrs. James retired and sold the franchise of two stores to the new owner, Arnett James IV. At that time, German's 22-year career with McDonalds, was again elevated with the promotion to director of operations.

Abraham Maslow said, "In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or to step back into safety." In her new position, supervising a staff of 100-130 employees at two franchise locations, German navigates different personalities while obtaining results. German stated, her history and growth in the business has, "helped with being able to effectively engage with her team." Longevity and experience have taught her how to become, "more patient, a better listener, a mediator and empathetic," she said. Her goal is to continue to create a positive work environment where all employees feel heard and respected. One of her greatest joys is being able to watch her team grow and develop skills they can continue to use in any workplace or at home. She also enjoys the ability to celebrate the success of her team's accomplishments.

German is a native of Dillon, SC and a 2002 graduate of Dillon High School. She is married with two stepsons and is the godmother to three.



# STORM WEEK...WITHOUT THE STORM!

Submitted by Joanna Arnsmeier



SEC Manager of GIS, Dispatch and Procurement Christie Dyson leads storm week safety meeting. Photo by Joanna Arnsmeier/Storm Week

**KINGSTREE** - Storm Week for Santee Electric Cooperative, Inc. (SEC) is about storm preparedness. During this week, safety meetings are called and everyone at the co-op has a refresher about what the actual week of a storm would be like. Processes are worked through, information is given, updates are made, safety procedures are reviewed, and many other storm related conversations are had. At SEC we strive to

provide reliable power to you, and preparing for storm season is one of the ways we make that possible.

## How does SEC prepare for storm season?

The preparation for a storm season does not start when a storm is approaching, SEC prepares for storms year-round. SEC has an

Emergency Restoration Plan (ERP) in place which is a strategic disaster recovery plan to ensure that during a crisis SEC employees will have the tools at hand to respond efficiently and meet the main goal of restoring power as quickly and safely as possible. The ERP is updated yearly, and employees review it regularly.

Other preparation includes trimming right of ways (keeping trees off lines, clearing brush around poles/lines), completing regular routine maintenance, making updates to our system, sectionalizing fuses, reclosers and breakers, overall "system hardening," which means using stronger poles and stronger materials, and of course, ensuring

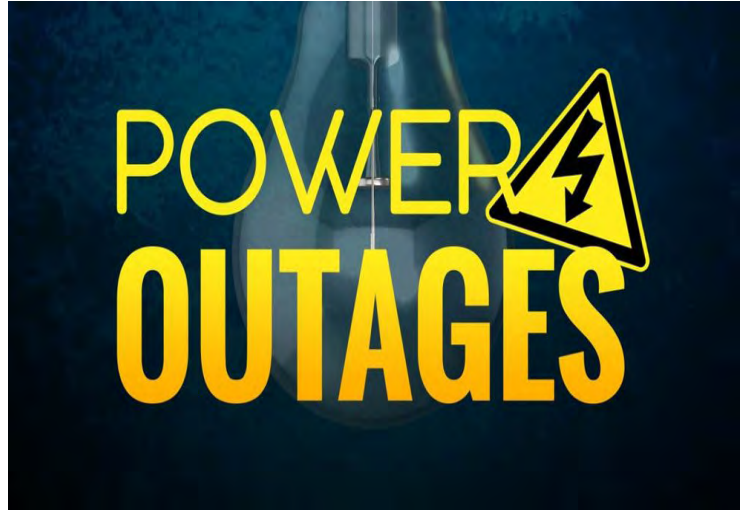


all employees are experts in their jobs.

**We are prepared, are you?**

SEC encourages you to practice safety and preparedness to protect

your families during storm season as well. Talk with your family about what the plan is during a major storm. Make a storm kit, it does not have to be elaborate. Items in the kit could include water, non-perishable foods, a can opener, a First-Aid kit, flashlights and extra batteries, prescriptions and baby and pet supplies. And, as always, view the SEC website and social media page for more storm safety tips!



  
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BRING THE FUTURE

## PEACH COBBLER: SAVE THE BEST FOR LAST By De'Angela Haynes



Melissa Hamilton

**CHERAW** - "Save the best for last," is a phrase and idiom used to describe and to keep something appealing in reserve until the end or the final moment. This normally is used for dessert. People who invented dessert decided to have it after dinner because they were saving the best for last. A great leader of our Pee Dee Region and state, Bishop Michael A. Blue says often that if you look at the shape of the state of SC on a map, it looks like a pie. In the south and other areas, as it relates to dinner or

supper, when do we normally eat dessert or sweets, last. He says that he believes that God saves the best for last as it relates to South Carolina because various ones who have talents, skills and gifts will be the ones to display their creativity, highlighting and putting SC in the scope of the nation and nations around us. Melissa Hamilton is one of those people, who is doing extraordinary things, and it's under her leadership, passion, administrative and bakery skills, that a new Peach Cobbler Factory is coming to Cheraw, SC.

Being a native of Cheraw and coming back to visit, there were so many childhood memories of Hamilton walking downtown to clean and help in beauty salons at the tender age of 14. This is where her humble beginnings started, and she created a passion to be in that industry. After 25 years vested as a Nail Technician and salon owner, she decided to switch gears. During her career as a nail tech, she invested into commercial and residential real estate and obtained her Administrator's license for assisted living, and became a multi-unit franchisee with the Peach Cobbler Factory. Becoming a franchisee was the reason she decided to come back to where it all started and be in a town that she loved so much as a child. She says that they were considered



poor living in the Dizzy Gillespie housing projects, but she never knew that! Some of her best memories still remain from there.

Embarking on this new journey has been far from easy from the mental and financial aspect. It has definitely been a learning experience, but with her tenacity for being goal oriented, strong acumen in business matters and being a visionary and community focused, it is what has made it all worth it.

Hamilton's future plans are to continue to create a legacy for her son and her two granddaughter's, Malayah and Nova because there is definitely more to come!

More detailed information about what's on the menu for the factory can be found on their Facebook profile page, Peach Cobbler Factory Cheraw SC. The vision for this factory is based upon family being a very important thing, and the aim is to bring families together through love and classic southern-style desserts! There will be twelve incredible flavors of cobbler with ice cream. You can trust them with bringing some expertly created desserts! They are dessert experts to the point that you'd almost think your Grandma made it! Hamilton's mission with this peach cobbler factory is to not only bring great tasting desserts, but for the customers to have an awesome and quality experience. As its often said in the newspapers, "Extra, extra, read all about it!!!" The Peach Cobbler Factory coming near you is the best to save for last!





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# HOW INSURANCE CAN PROTECT YOUR SPRINGTIME FUN

Submitted by Barbara Hemmingway, Your Premier Insurance Agent

The graphic features a green and blue bokeh background. At the top is the Hemmingway Insurance logo, a shield with a blue 'H' and orange and blue accents. Below it, the text 'HEMMINGWAY INSURANCE' is written in blue. Underneath, 'ITS TIME TO' is in small blue letters. The words 'SPRING' and 'CLEAN' are in large, white, outlined letters with pink hibiscus flowers and green leaves interspersed between them. Below 'CLEAN' is the word 'YOUR' in small blue letters, and 'INSURANCE' is in large, dark blue, outlined letters at the bottom.

Spring is a time of renewal and a great opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities. However, with the season come several risks that can put a damper on your fun. From accidents to property damage, springtime activities can be dangerous, and it's important to have the right insurance coverage to protect yourself and your assets.

Most often, we are sitting on a goldmine with our insurance coverage. Dust off your old policies and ensure your coverage needs haven't changed. You may even be able to take that much needed summer vacation, or take care of that to-do list when Hemmingway's Insurance reviews your policy. Don't wait until the last minute. Have peace of mind with our many coverage options from hospital indemnity to cancer policies and more. Allow the new season to create a peace of mind for you and your loved one.

While insurance can provide valuable protection against unexpected events, there are also steps you can take to minimize risk and maintain your coverage. Here are a few tips to ensure you are safe and secure this spring:

If you're hosting an outdoor event, make sure you take steps to ensure that your property is safe and secure. Clear any debris or hazards from your yard, and make sure all equipment is in good working order.

When participating in outdoor activities, make sure you wear appropriate safety gear and take steps to avoid accidents. For example, if you're hiking, make sure you stay on designated trails and avoid steep or rocky areas. If you're swimming, make sure you're in a designated swimming area and always swim with a buddy.

Finally, make sure you review your insurance policies regularly to ensure that you have adequate coverage for your needs. As your life changes, your insurance needs may change as well, so it's important to stay up-to-date and make any necessary adjustments.

Enjoy your springtime activities with confidence. So, as you embrace the season of renewal, make sure you're also prepared for the unexpected with the right insurance coverage. Call or stop in my office to spring clean your insurance today.

The advertisement features a dark blue background with a photo of a smiling couple. The Hemmingway Insurance logo is at the top left. The main headline 'ITS TIME TO SPRING INTO ACTION!' is in large white letters. To the right, a quote says 'Now is the time to act if you have no health insurance or have an existing individual plan.' Below this, 'ACT NOW!' is written in large white letters. On the left, it says 'SAVINGS HAVE INCREASED & MORE PEOPLE QUALIFY'. On the right, two icons (a hand holding a dollar sign and a doctor) are next to the text 'PLANS FOR AS LITTLE AS \$0 PER MONTH' and 'INCREASED DISCOUNTS AND LOWER PREMIUMS AVAILABLE'. At the bottom left, contact information for Barbara Hemmingway is provided. At the bottom right, a photo of Barbara Hemmingway is shown next to her name and title 'YOUR PREMIER AGENT'. A quote from her says 'Let me provide you and your loved ones with the best rate in the area! Even if you have existing coverage you may be missing out on better rates and benefits. Contact my office and protect your legacy today.' The website 'www.hemmingwayinsurance.com' is at the bottom left, and the slogan 'WHERE BUILDING FAMILY LEGACIES MATTER' is at the bottom right.

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# WHY “QUIET HIRING” MAY SET BACK YOUR DEI EFFORTS

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**—Since before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trend of quiet quitting had begun to circulate in the news and social media outlets. The phenomenon of quiet quitting is defined as employees who will no longer go above and beyond at work and will instead do exactly what’s being asked of them and nothing more.

I’ve talked about how diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) can help end quiet quitting but still, quiet quitting caused an uproar in the business world as some organizations saw it as a decline in, “hardworking values.” In my view,

quiet quitting was less about employees not working hard enough and more about workers turning their focus toward work-life balance (or work-life blend, as I call it).

Quiet quitting was the predecessor to the Great Resignation of 2020 and 2021. This time, the workers didn’t just coast at their jobs—they acted on their personal and professional ambitions and resigned in droves. This led to an empowering period for workers all over the country who were finally ready to have a healthy work-life blend, ask for increased compensation and enjoy more flexibility.

Fast forward to today, 2023 is bringing a new workplace phenomenon, but this time businesses are the ones calling the shots with “quiet hiring.” This article will explore what quiet hiring is and how it can hinder or derail your business’ DEI initiatives.

## What is quiet hiring?

According to CNBC, quiet hiring is when a business hires temporary workers (or contractors) to fill permanent positions or asks existing employees to fill in-demand roles and acquire new responsibilities without increasing their compensation.

Essentially, quiet hiring is how companies are dealing with major labor shortages without increasing wages or benefits for workers. So, how does this new phenomenon affect DEI and why should businesses be cautious about the consequences of quiet hiring?

## Quiet hiring may cause contract laborers to miss DEI training

Most companies who have DEI training on workplace bias, cultural sensitivity, and building a culture of belonging offer that training to full-time employees—not temporary workers. As more and more businesses use contractors, freelancers and non-employee labor, those workers are often left out of mandatory DEI training. This can cause businesses with good intentions for DEI to lose track of their progress and implementation across all departments. When one full-time employee is tasked to do bias training and a newly hired contractor is not, it creates inconsistency for DEI in the workplace. With contract laborers taking up more and more roles within organizations, the lasting results of missed or skipped DEI training for temporary workers may cause a gap in progress that is yet to be seen.

## Quiet hiring may widen pay and benefits gaps

Some businesses are choosing to quiet hire because of rising demand for employee wages and a recession looming on the horizon. Hiring temporary workers or asking existing employees to take on new roles without additional compensation will inevitably lead to a widening pay gap between contractors and employees as well as between employees in stable roles versus newly reassigned roles. A recent study showed a huge pay gap between temporary workers and

full-time employees—not just in the United States but around the world.

With women, minorities and immigrants already experiencing large pay gaps in the general U.S. economy, hiring those same workers temporarily or asking existing workers to work harder without increased compensation makes the DEI goal to close the wage gap and slow pay inequality that much further out of reach. In fact, asking employees to do more work for the same pay could even be considered, “wage theft.”

One thousand ninety-nine contractors and temporary workers likely won’t receive the full benefits packages usually afforded to full-time employees like paid time off, parental leave or equity stakes. Thus, creating an even larger disadvantage for temporary workers who are performing full-time work without full-time benefits.

## Quiet hiring may increase burnout among workers

With potentially no paid time off for temporary workers and no increase in compensation for existing employees, the opportunity for burnout grows. Burnout is exacerbated when workers are unable to find a work-life blend or get the downtime needed to recover from the heavy demands of work. When employers strip that away from workers or don’t compensate them for their additional responsibilities, burnout is the inevitable result.

In DEI, we advocate for businesses to promote greater work-life blend opportunities to lower or mitigate the effects of burnout. I often advise companies to be generous with benefits like paid time off, parental leave and bereavement. I also advise employers to have greater respect for the boundaries employees set around their private time. Whether a worker is temporary or full-time, having the space to rest, relax, and return to work feeling rejuvenated should not be rare or the exception. It should be the standard.

## Quiet hiring may give international candidates more opportunities

One upside to quiet hiring is that international candidates may be given more opportunities for professional advancement than ever before. In industries like healthcare, where a labor shortage has been prevalent since the pandemic began, skilled workers from overseas are now filling roles that have long been in demand but remain vacant. In this sense, quiet hiring may be an advantage to international candidates and open up more opportunities for skilled immigrants from abroad to find new economic opportunities in the U.S., and to do so legally at a time when they’re most needed.

## Final thoughts

Quiet hiring shouldn’t derail your DEI initiatives when policies and practices are applied evenly amongst temporary and full-time workers. If your company is choosing to hire temporary workers in this current economic climate, be mindful of what opportunities temporary workers are being afforded or deprived of. Are they being included in DEI training like their full-time counterparts? How can your business include temporary workers in the typical employee training and protocols to ensure they don’t get left behind economically, psychologically or professionally?

For current employees who are being asked to do more, how can your organization compensate them fairly for their increased responsibilities or provide other benefits like additional paid time off or longer parental leave? What else can you do to show existing employees that your organization cares about their well-being and that you want them to experience increased workplace satisfaction?

As organizations continue to hire at rapid rates to fill full-time vacancies, keeping DEI at the forefront of hiring and onboarding decisions can help your company stay on track with its initiatives while still adapting to this economic period. Don’t lose sight of your DEI goals as your organization transitions into this new phase of employee-employer relations.





# CAROLINA SUPPLYHOUSE INC. SPOTLIGHTS WILLIE WILLIAMSON

By Glaciera Brown Mason



Mr. Willie Williamson

Carolina SupplyHouse Inc. has been a local family-owned business in Florence since its inception in the 1900s. Like most successful businesses, its employees help the business run like a well-oiled machine. For years, Willie Alphonsa Williamson was a loyal and dedicated employee, and a member of the Carolina SupplyHouse team. He is regarded as a family man, friendly, a good church member and was an excellent employee. "Willie could run our Shipping and Receiving

Department with one hand tied behind his back," said Co-owner and Vice President, William Schofield.

Williamson is a resident of Florence, SC and a graduate of Florence 1 Schools - Carver Elementary, Williams Middle and West Florence High School. He is the son of James and Martha Williamson; a member of Union Chapel A.M.E. of Galivants Ferry, SC; a brother, husband and father. A past times he thoroughly enjoyed was building race car engines and racing the engines he'd built.

On April 14, 2021, Williamson suffered a massive stroke or cerebrovascular accident, where large portions of the brain are denied blood. According to the Centers for Disease Control, "every 40 seconds, someone in the U.S. has a stroke." Williamson's stroke has subsequently affected his ability to participate in the activities of daily living.

Stroke affects the entire family. Often, stroke survivors may need assistance to fulfill basic needs. Although the lives of the Williamson family have forever changed, coupled with a strong faith, they remain hopeful, determined and optimistic. Williamson is progressing and

continues to make big improvements, as demonstrated by adjusting to the new normal of weekly doctor visits and the recent completion of twelve long months of physical therapy, conducted at McLeod Medical Center, Encompass Rehabilitation Center and McLeod Rehabilitation Center of Florence.

Important to any recovery is a strong support system. Williamson's family is fulfilling vital roles critical to his health and well-being. Mrs. Betty Williamson is caregiver to her husband. Included in that care continues to be building relationships with his medical team, overall coordination and taking care of her own needs and health. When asked how she was, she shared that it was hard at first, but she has adjusted. She went on to say, "this has been a life changing ordeal for my entire family but thank God for watching over my entire family. If it were not for God, I do not know how we would have made it."

With the aid of their two adult children, Alexis who lives in Columbia, SC and Demetrius who lives in Charlotte, NC, they have taken a collaborative hands-on-approach to care, to ensure their father's needs are met. The Williamson siblings help out anytime the need requires and don't miss an opportunity to get their dad on an outing.

As you can imagine, some days are better than others, however, Williamson's spirit is strong. His days are spent, exercising his right leg and watching television, perhaps some of those race cars and engine auto shows.

The staff of Carolina SupplyHouse, Inc. continue to hold a good thought for Williamson and his family. "Willie will always be a part of not only the Carolina SupplyHouse Inc., family but the Schofield family as well," said Schofield.

To learn more about advances in stroke research, visit the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke at [www.ninds.nih.gov](http://www.ninds.nih.gov).

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# DOWNTOWN FLORENCE EARNS NATIONAL AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD

Submitted by the Florence Downtown Development Office Staff



Overlooking Downtown During Event  
(Photo credited to True Light Photography)

At the National Main Street Conference in Boston, MA on March 27, Downtown Florence was presented the prestigious Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA), which recognizes communities for their excellence in comprehensive preservation-based commercial district revitalization.

Selected by a national jury of industry professionals and leaders in the fields of economic development and historic preservation, Downtown Florence was recognized for developing innovative and forward-thinking approaches to creating community buy-in through representative leadership and inclusive programming.

Being selected as a GAMSA winner in an unbelievable honor—it's the once in a lifetime achievement (a community can win the award only once) representing the boundless investment, hard work, tenacity and vision from local investors and partners, small business owners

and residents, government officials and leaders and our statewide Main Street network over the last twenty years, and especially over the last decade. Once described as too far gone to be saved, Downtown Florence has become the place to be, to live and to do business in our region, and the program isn't done yet. The award represents a benchmark in the downtown's history and a promise to the community to continue the hard work, the good work, of bringing Florence's historic commercial core back and making it resilient for the future.

"[The] Downtown Florence Main Street [program] sets a national standard for downtown revitalization rooted in community connections," said Main Street America Interim President and CEO, Hannah White. "Their success demonstrates the power of creative approaches to engaging stakeholders, creating a strong culture of volunteerism, and fostering pathways to increased downtown housing, while also championing the preservation of historic community assets."

For decades, Downtown Florence suffered from negative public perception fueled by empty storefronts, racial divides, and a practice of demolishing neglected, yet culturally significant, buildings in favor of new construction. Efforts to address these issues began in 2002 with limited success, until the organization began implementing a community-informed revitalization plan in 2011. Through strategic initiatives to leverage

dedicated volunteers, establish partnerships and support catalytic projects, this plan has generated over 100 units of new housing, 90 new businesses and over \$300 million in investments, all while maintaining an average of \$7 of private investment for every \$1 of public investment.

This recognition comes at such an incredible time. This year, 2023, represents many milestones for not only the local Downtown Florence Main Street Program, but also the South Carolina statewide network. In Florence, 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of Hotel Florence, which is regarded by many as downtown's first major private investment catalyst project which demonstrated the bold vision for the Downtown Florence of the future. This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the downtown Public Art Program, which has funded incredible visual arts displays and added permanent collection pieces to the historic commercial landscape. It's also the 5th anniversary of the Carolina Bank building redevelopment at 185 W. Evans Street and the completion of the Hyatt Hotel and Florence County Judicial Center. Statewide, Main Street South Carolina, a program of the Municipal Association of South Carolina, celebrates their 40th anniversary this year, and Downtown Florence's GAMSA win, marks twenty years since the only SC community, Greenville, to win the award, was recognized as a Great American Main Street.




At just eight blocks, Downtown Florence is a jewel box where locals and visitors can find exceptional local dining, award-winning entertainment venues, whimsical public art, and buildings rich in architectural heritage. **Come see why** Downtown Florence is a 2023 GAMSA Winner and plan your trip at [www.florencedowntown.com](http://www.florencedowntown.com).



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

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

Learn why new and emerging companies put their trust in Thermo Fisher Scientific at [thermofisher.com/patheon](https://thermofisher.com/patheon)



**Chris Goss**  
Head of Pharmaceutical  
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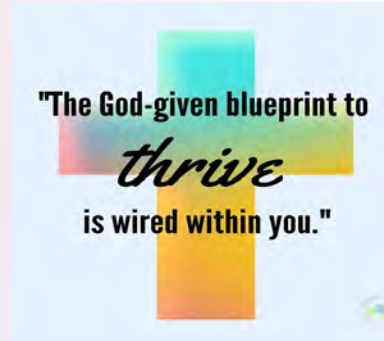


# SHE DIDN'T JUST SURVIVE - SHE BECAME By Robin Lewis



**Robin Lewis**  
Spirit-led Coach, Encourager, Author,  
Retreat Leader, Daughter of the King

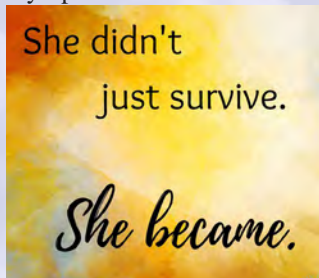
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To learn to thrive, to live the abundant life that God created and offers us, requires that we first submit to Him and allow Him to bring truth and healing where we need it. With what we've endured, the only way to freedom from fear is to seek the heart of God and begin to trust

**HEMMINGWAY** - Have you been through difficult, even disastrous life events that rattled you to your core? Having just lived through the last three years, we all know the pressure of difficulty. Whether you've experienced disease, abuse, rejection or maybe emotional breakdown, you are not alone, and you hold within the ability to do more than survive. The God-given blueprint to thrive is wired within you.

I've been in situations where I was filled with fear and not just for a moment, but for years. I've been threatened with fists, financial ruin and falsehood. I've been manipulated out of my choice, out of my home and even my inheritance. I've experienced days where all I could muster in prayer were lyrics of old hymns I learned as a child. When no one could help me and my only hope was found to be in God alone, these words flowed from my lips.

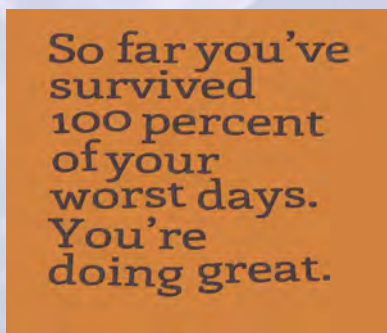


"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I do not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand."

On a watercolor painting of a red sunrise in my office are words reminding me there is more to life, "She didn't just survive - she became." These words helped me continue choosing to become the woman God created me to be. Jesus' words in John 10:10 say, "I have come that you might have life, and life abundant." It's that kind of life I wanted. I wanted to do more than survive; I wanted to thrive.



When we are walking through a hard experience, sometimes we can only hope to continue breathing. We want to make sure our children are safe, we hope there's enough food, or that our physician really does have the answers we are desperate for. Time can

seem to stand still. We hang onto hope especially on days when our faith waivers. When times are hard, we need to remember we are not stuck but on the solid rock, we are not defined by our past but defined by God, and we are not void of power but empowered by the Holy Spirit. We can learn to make choices to go forward, and with encouragement, we begin to have more than a weak version of hope; we begin to grow in faith.

in His love for us. As we learn to focus on Him in the everyday, we become able to cling to Him when difficulties come. As we learn to focus on God, our faith grows and our fears weaken, and we find that this kind of relationship is what we were created to enjoy - one where we are dependent on Him for everything, where life flows from Him to us, and where He helps us defeat our demons.

We find more courage and boldness to be the authentic people we were created to be. We test transparency by sharing our stories and find that others also need the strong arm of encouragement that our words bring. We find that the areas of suffering are linked to our areas of giftedness, and that our calling is many times found where pain and purpose collide. We start to feel more whole.

Jesus was broken and died that we might receive healing. In the same way, the Father uses all our former broken places to show others how they can be healed by coming to Him. If I'd never cried out to God in the middle of the night, I wouldn't know His comfort and protection. If I'd never lost everything, I wouldn't know His ability to provide. If I'd never stood at death's doorway, I wouldn't know His life-giving power.

The abundant life Jesus promised isn't an easy, put-your-feet-up kind of life, but is characterized by living closer to Him so we can live our Heavenly purpose that shouts without words the victory only found in Him. We were created to live a transformed life of unique personality and power. And if Jesus said abundant life can be ours, then we don't let go until that promise is a reality. We can be more than mediocre, for God causes us to be victorious, and we don't have to settle for less. As we continue to choose faith over fear and healing over pain, our lives are changed, and we begin to realize the words Jesus spoke are indeed true for us today.

Many believers are more focused on the fact that Jesus died on the cross than they are on what it means that He was raised from the dead. Made in His image, we can walk in victory over what wants to keep us down! Romans 8:11 says, "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Him from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you."

1 Corinthians 15:57 tells us what God wants for us. Put your name in the blank and make this promise yours: "But thanks be to God, who gives \_\_\_\_\_ the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Dear friend, no matter how difficult life may be right now, don't give up! God cares about everything you've been through and can heal every wound. Let Him walk you out of bondage and into the freedom He designed for you. Be determined today to seek God and the abundant life He can give you. Your testimony is your story of forgiveness, healing and transformation, for within you is the blueprint to thrive! Let's learn to not settle for less when there's more waiting for us through Christ.

For further encouragement, visit our website at [www.robinlewislife.com](http://www.robinlewislife.com).



# TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION Submitted by Dr. Kandace Bethea, superintendent



Dr. Kandace Bethea

**MARION-** In education, springtime brings time for reflection on the current school year and planning for the upcoming year. In planning for a new school year, the hiring of new teachers and filling classroom vacancies is on the forefront of everyone’s minds.

South Carolina data indicates, and education leaders are aware, teachers are leaving the profession faster than ever. Over the last few years, Marion County School District was granted the

opportunity to be part of the Department of Education’s Empowering Educators to Excel (E3) and now E3+grant. One of the E3+ project objectives is to improve the recruitment, retention and promotion of educators. The grant, along with district resources, has provided strategies and ideas to support our efforts of teacher retention.

The first and one very important thing we’ve learned is, “retention is the new recruitment!”

One of the first strategies we implemented are “Onboarding Teams.” Onboarding Teams are welcoming teams made of different school staff members so once a new teacher joins the school family, the Onboarding Team immediately begins their contact. They help with anything the new hire might need. The Onboarding Team can assist with any type of questions from living suggestions, questions about the school, community, electric service, good restaurants, etc. We want to ensure that every single new staff member is welcomed, feels a sense of belonging, and makes a connection with another staff member prior to even beginning their job.

Teacher recruitment and retention is not just a spring and summer event that is driven by one human resource director. An effective retention and recruitment system must be a year-round system that consistently works with college programs, teacher preparation systems, schools and school leaders, teacher groups, recruiting and marketing teams and others. As a district, we use “Stay Interviews” with teachers and year round advisory meetings to gather feedback. This feedback drives changes that assists in keeping teachers in the district. A new strategy for 22-23 is holding hiring interviews at restaurants in nearby cities in the evenings during the work week. If they interview with us, we buy them dinner! This year, our Hiring Fair was held in conjunction with our town’s Chili Cook-Off, a yearly event the Historic Marion Revitalization Association holds which involves chili tasting, live music, corn-hole and more. If a teacher attended our Hiring Fair and interviewed, we sent them to the event with a ticket. We’ve gotten creative and know it will continue to take non-traditional approaches and innovative year-round activities to recruit and retain teachers.

Additional investments in teacher recruitment and retention in Marion County School District:

- Attracting and Hiring a Diverse Workforce
- Aspiring Leaders Academy
- STAY Signing Bonus
- Salary Supplements for Secondary Math and ELA Teachers

If you are passionate about teaching children and making a difference, like working in a place where everyone knows your name, have opportunities to grow professionally and have innovative ideas. Bring your PASSION to Marion County School District!

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

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# ACCESS, EDUCATION AND SUPPORT VITAL TO CLOSING TECH CAREERS GENDER GAP



(BPT) - While women make up approximately half of the U.S. workforce, they are underrepresented in the technology sector, making up 28 percent of the industry. These numbers are even lower for women of color seeking opportunities in the field, with three percent of computing-related jobs being filled by African American women, six percent by Asian women and two percent by Hispanic women.

Over the course of February and March, Black History Month and Women's History Month respectively, conversations often focus on empowering diverse voices to ensure they are represented in society. While these conversations raise awareness, they may not result in action and shifting the narrative surrounding diverse hiring practices. Diversity becomes a guide for program development to ensure diverse and female students feel supported in their pursuit of tech-related jobs, helping to address the gender gap in the industry.

To address the gender and diversity disparities, women must have access to resources and learning opportunities that give them the skill sets and confidence to pursue tech careers. Higher education institutions can play a significant role in bridging the gap. Creating greater awareness of job opportunities in the tech industry, potential career paths and sharing how to attain the necessary skills provides emerging talent with a clear trajectory for a future career in tech.

## Higher education institutions can design inclusive programming.

In higher education, diversity is often thought of as the physical makeup of the student body. But diversity also extends beyond demographic data to how students learn - taking into consideration the tools they need to succeed. These tools can come in the form of academic success teams or programming rooted in uplifting diverse students to help them achieve their academic and professional goals.

Higher education institutions are tasked with providing the most current and industry-relevant education to students to augment a work-ready pool of talent. To be successful in this mission for all students,

institutions can use adaptive programs to close the opportunity gap for female and diverse students.

## Providing more women with a seat at the table helps to advance the tech industry.

Despite increased efforts to diversify a traditionally homogenous workforce, nearly 70 percent of tech companies report a lack of diverse representation in their workforce. In 2020, Google reported that 5.5 percent of new hires during that year were Black. Creating a more diverse tech workforce can lead to greater opportunities for collaboration because new perspectives are brought to the forefront that were previously unrepresented - driving innovation, creativity and productivity.

Considering the current workforce and the growing need for tech talent, the share of diverse and female tech employees remains at alarmingly low levels careers.

Diversity of thought enhances problem-solving exercises because teams are mitigating the potential of finding themselves in an echo chamber of a singular thought derived from similar opinions. Studies suggest that companies that prioritize gender or racial and ethnic diversity are more likely to see financial returns that are above national industry averages.

## Higher education institutions have an opportunity to create supportive networks and communities.



Seeing someone from a similar background succeeding in a career path builds awareness. Higher education institutions that create opportunities for women to network and build connections with leaders they can identify with increase the chance of success in these highly

sought-after, influential industries.

Access to education alone is not enough. Students, particularly those from underrepresented communities, need support, opportunities and resources throughout their education journey.

Carving out unique, defined spaces in which diverse and female communities can feel a sense of belonging helps increase overall academic performance, persistence and academic success, which can translate into professional success post-graduation.

As diversity in tech remains a topic of critical importance, comprehensive and agile programming that focuses on female learners allows women, particularly women from diverse backgrounds, to break down barriers that have persisted in the tech industry for decades.



Women are pivotal to technological innovation, but they are increasingly found on the sidelines.



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# WILLIAMS HONORED BY SOUTHEAST TWO-YEAR COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

Articles submitted by HGTC



Mike Williams  
HGTC professor of English

**CONWAY** – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is proud to announce that one of its own, Mike Williams- HGTC professor of English, was honored with the 2023 Bill Doster Distinguished Service Award by the Two-Year College English Association-Southeast Region (TYCA-SE). Professor Williams was presented with the award at the TYCA-SE Conference in Chattanooga, TN, which ran February 22-25, 2023.

“On behalf of the faculty and staff, we are thrilled that one of our very own is the recipient of this prestigious award. Professor Williams has been an advocate and supporter of the TWCA-SE organization through the years, and we know the honor is well deserved,” said Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president.

Professor Williams’ service to TYCA-SE spans nearly 25 years. He has hosted two statewide conferences at HGTC that focused on a commitment to quality teaching of English at the two-year college level. Doug Branch, the awards chair for TYCA-SE, recalls Professor Williams’ many years of dedication to the organization.

“It would be difficult to overstate Mike’s service to TYCA-SE. That service began many years ago in 1999 after he attended the Institute in Technical Communication (ITC). Mike served as ITC Director from 2000-2004 and on TYCA-SE’s Regional Executive Committee (REC) in that capacity. He then served on the REC as the local arrangements chair for the 2006 Conference in Myrtle Beach. After staying active as a conference attendee from 2007-2012, he was elected in 2013 by the South Carolina contingent as the State Representative. He served on the REC again from 2014-2016. In 2017, he was the local arrangements co-chair for TYCA-SE’s annual conference in Charleston. Over the years, he has been a tireless advocate of teaching English in the South Carolina two-year college system, putting together what South Carolinians used to call the annual “No-Frills” Conference. Since 2018, that group has been known as TYCA-SC, and Mike has been the primary host of this conference when it has been scheduled at HGTC’s campus in Myrtle Beach. He has been described as ‘a humble leader within TYCA-SE, firmly committed to the mission of what we do – teaching English to students who need our support, our kindness, our compassion and understanding, and our desire to help students in our region become successful in whatever it is they choose to do in their lives,’” said Doug Branch, awards chair, TYCA-SE.

“We are so proud of Mike, who deserves this award not only for loyal service to the organization but also service to his profession! Through Mike’s leadership and hard work, TYCA-SE is having a stronger impact on HGTC and the state of South Carolina,” said Sean Glassberg, HGTC director of Faculty Development.

TYCA-SE is affiliated with the National Council Teachers of English (NCTE) and TYCA National. The organization allows English instructors in the community and technical college system to share and collaborate from Virginia to Florida and west to Mississippi.

The Bill Doster Distinguished Service Award was established in 2000 by the Doster family, the first chair of TYCA-SE (then SCETC—The Southeast Conference of English in the Two-Year College). Though Doster taught at several colleges and universities, most of his 40+ years of teaching took place in two community colleges, Miami Dade, and the College of DuPage in Illinois. Doster was the author of numerous textbooks and journal articles on teaching, and he was a lively and active

supporter of his colleagues and his profession. The Bill Doster Award honors his service by recognizing a TYCA-SE member of at least five years, who has also served the organization in an outstanding way. The Doster Award winner is honored at the annual conference in several ways, with a special session in which he or she gives a presentation to the members, waived registration fees, a \$500 stipend, with a lifetime membership to TYCA-SE, a commemorative plaque and with a reception following the presentation.

“Professor Williams provides this same energy and commitment at the college, and we are honored to have him on our team as well. We are all proud of his partnership, accomplishments, and passion for TYCA-SE,” said Dr. Jennifer Wilbanks, HGTC executive vice president for Academic and Workforce Development.

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

## HGTC DENTAL HYGIENE FACULTY COMPLETES TRAINING FOR CERTIFICATION



(Left to right) Callie Poland, HGTC associate professor for Dental Sciences, Brooke Cox, HGTC instructor for Dental Sciences, Cynthia Pierce, HGTC instructor for Dental Sciences, Marlene Madrid Melendez, HGTC professor for Dental Sciences, Jennifer Estabrook, HGTC professor for Dental Sciences, Nicole Mattingly, HGTC instructor for Dental Sciences, Michelle Meeker, HGTC program director and chair for Dental Sciences Not pictured: Dr. Theresa Walls, HGTC instructor for Dental Sciences

**CONWAY** – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) dental hygiene faculty completed certification in local anesthesia infiltration and laser training, enabling faculty to deliver and oversee the practice in the department’s Dental Hygiene Clinic. The training also enhances the department’s ability to guide students in the clinical setting. Both procedures are in the scope of practice for students, and now all faculty are certified to teach both.

“We are proud to announce that all faculty members have completed the local anesthesia training and certification, in addition to laser certification. Our dental team is committed to enhancing student learning outcomes and will continue to do so with lifelong learning through continuing education” said Michelle Meeker, HGTC program director and chair of Dental Sciences.

HGTC offers a variety of dental services to the community through its two public clinics serving 2,500 patients annually. Located in a state-of-the-art facility, these dental clinics allow HGTC to provide top-quality dental care at an affordable price. HGTC’s Dental Hygiene Clinic has specialized in providing thorough intraoral and extraoral assessments, cleanings and X-Rays for our community since 1998. These procedures are performed by our dental hygiene students, who are supervised by their professors. A staff dentist is present and available for consultation purposes to advise of any additional dental treatments that may be needed.

HGTC offers a vital, low-cost option for dental cleanings. Utilizing a waitlist, patients who are available to come on short notice may speed up their wait for an appointment. HGTC students are also welcomed to make appointments for dental services. Dental cleaning appointments are three to four hours long and patients often require more than one appointment to complete their cleaning. Commitment to appointments is vital to the continued success of our students. Patients are treated two days a week during the college semesters. Call (843) 839-1070 or email [dental\\_clinic@hgtc.edu](mailto:dental_clinic@hgtc.edu) for more information.

The Associate in Applied Science in Dental Hygiene degree prepares



Mike Williams, HGTC professor of English (left), receives Bill Doster Distinguished Service Award from Doug Branch, TYCA-SE awards chair (right), at the TYCA-SE Conference in Chattanooga, TN.



## HGTC DENTAL HYGIENE CONT'D

students to provide direct patient care in the detection and prevention of oral diseases under the supervision of a dentist, as required by law. The dental hygienist's major role is as an educator and includes designing dental hygiene treatment and education for patients on an individual basis. Graduates of this program are qualified to evaluate patient medical histories, take and record blood pressure, chart conditions of periodontal disease and suspected decay for diagnosis by the dentist, conduct oral-cancer screening examinations, educate the patient on the latest techniques of oral home care, and perform a thorough cleaning of the patient's teeth. A dental hygienist is also qualified to apply sealants and fluoride for the prevention

of decay, to expose and develop radiographs and to provide nutritional counseling for dental patients.

Students in the Dental Hygiene Program receive their education in a state-of-the-art Dental Clinic on the Grand Strand campus, under the direct supervision of licensed dentists and hygienists. Graduates are eligible to take national and state board examinations. After successful completion of these examinations, graduates will be licensed and recognized as a registered dental hygienist.

To find out more about HGTC programs or the HGTC Dental Sciences Program, visit the HGTC website.

## HUBBARD JOINS SC ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATOR'S LEADERSHIP BOARD



Becky Hubbard, HGTC chair and professor of Teacher Education

CONWAY—Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is proud to celebrate the appointment of Chair and Professor of Teacher Education, Becky Hubbard, to the Leadership Board for the SC Association of Teacher Educators (SCATE).

SCATE is a state professional organization affiliated with the Association of Teacher Education (ATE). Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for individual professional growth for all persons concerned with teacher education and promote high standards for the teaching profession through its policies and practices. SCATE holds a statewide

conference each year in the fall. It publishes the Teacher Education Journal of SC and provides regular professional development opportunities for its members.

Hubbard is serving as the two-year institution representative on the

leadership board. She is also a member of the committee for professional development.

Hubbard earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Coastal Carolina University. She began her career as a public-school teacher and taught high school English for twelve years before becoming a teacher specialist for the SC Department of Education. Currently, she is the HGTC Department chair of Teacher Education where she has worked for over 18 years.

During her tenure at HGTC, Hubbard has held the positions of professor of English, professor of Education, director of Dual Enrollment and assistant department chair of Education. For the past six years, Hubbard has served as department chair of the Teacher Education Department, which includes Early Care and Education.

For more information about the HGTC Teacher Education and Early Care & Education programs, contact Becky Hubbard at [rebecca.hubbard@hgtc.edu](mailto:rebecca.hubbard@hgtc.edu) or 843-349-7117.

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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# LCSD'S MEDIA/DIGITAL LITERACY TEAMS SHINE

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

LEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT



A LEARNING COMMUNITY  
WHERE STUDENTS COME FIRST

*"Tell me and I may forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."* Benjamin Franklin

**BISHOPVILLE**-Lee County School District's middle and high school Media/Digital Literacy teams recently had an opportunity to put what they are learning into action. The Media/Digital Literacy teams traveled to Columbia, SC Thursday, February 23, 2023, to participate in the 2023 Masterclass hosted by Richland School District One in partnership with the Auntie Karen Foundation. The 2023

Masterclass featured Grammy award-winning singer, songwriter and actress Regina Belle, two-time Grammy award-winning jazz keyboardist, Bob James, saxophonist, ordained minister and twelve-time Grammy nominee, Kirk Whalum, and R&B and jazz musician, producer and bass guitarist, Chris Walker. The students also attended a concert that evening at the Koger center that featured all of the artists.

Both middle and high school media/digital literacy teams participated in the 18th annual Black History parade and festival on Saturday, February 25, 2023. The event took place in Columbia, South Carolina as well. During the festival, the teams were afforded an opportunity to interview Congressman James E. Clyburn and State Representative Annie E. McDaniel. Congressman James E. Clyburn is the Assistant Democratic Leader in the United States House of Representatives. He proudly serves the sixth congressional district

of South Carolina which includes all of Allendale, Bamberg, Clarendon, Colleton, Jasper and Williamsburg counties and parts of Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Dorchester, Orangeburg, Richland and Sumter counties. Congressman Clyburn previously served in the post from 2011 to 2018 and served as Majority Whip from 2007 to 2010 and 2019 to 2022, making him the first African American to serve multiple terms as Majority Whip. State Representative Annie McDaniel is a native of Winnsboro, South Carolina and is a retired accounting, tax and public administration consultant. She represents district 41 which includes all of Fairfield County and parts of Chester and Richland counties. Representative Annie McDaniel has been serving in her current role since November 2018. Both Clyburn and McDaniel also served as Grand Marshals of the parade.

Lee County School District is excited to afford the opportunity for our students to earn hands-on experience through our media/digital literacy programs. Teaching media literacy provides students with skills that will help them foremost think critically about media. It also cultivates other 21st-century skills like creativity, collaboration and communication, as well as increasing digital literacy skills through interacting with media, information and technology.

The Media/Digital Literacy team members from Lee Central High School who participated in both events are as follows: Shaena Chisholm, Olivia Stinney, Jamiyah Williams, Taylor Lewis, Shaunia Briddell, and Shanyah Fortune. The Media/Digital Literacy team members from Lee Central Middle School who participated in both are as follows: Sa'Nai Shannon, Jordan Rufus, Nyzeriha Williams and Valerie Bird. Special thanks to the following staff members who chaperoned: Mrs. Yvonne Brown, Mr. Don Patterson, Mr. Oshwand Scott, Mr. Cornell Shaw, Mr. Dilon Chisholm, Mrs. Joycelyn Francis-Chisholm, Ms. Terrijuana Graham and Ms. Deneisha McKella.







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## WARTERS APPOINTED NEXT PROVOST

Articles submitted by FMU



Dr. T. Alissa Wartens

Dr. T. Alissa Wartens has been appointed as the next provost of Francis Marion University (FMU). Wartens will succeed outgoing Provost, Dr. Peter King who will retire in June after six years of exemplary service to the university.

Wartens received both the Bachelor of Arts and the Master of Arts in Political Science from Virginia Tech, and the doctorate in Political Science from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

Currently, Wartens serves as vice president of Enrollment Management at FMU where she oversees the Office of Admissions, Registrar's Office, Office of Financial Assistance and The Continuum. She is also a professor in the Department of Political Science and Geography and earned tenure in 2009.

Prior to becoming vice president of Enrollment Management, Wartens served as associate provost for Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management, associate provost for Academic Affairs and director of Graduate Programs and director of the Robert E. McNair Center for Research and Service.

"I'm pleased to announce the appointment of Alissa as the next provost of Francis Marion," said FMU President Fred Carter. "Alissa has a strong commitment to the educational processes grounded in the liberal arts, while understanding the array of specialized degrees that we must offer to address student demands and workforce needs. She understands the university and its culture, has affection and respect for our students, and is committed to helping our students fulfill their aspirations."

Wartens was part of the 2017-2018 class of the American Council on Education Fellows Program, the 2016-2017 Becoming a Provost Academy and participated in Harvard University's Graduate School of Education's Management Development Program in 2013.

## FMU SCHOOL OF BUSINESS HONORS FREEMAN WITH ALUMNI AWARD



Tracy Freeman

Francis Marion University's (FMU) School of Business honored North Augusta Businessman Tracy Freeman with the 2023 Morgan B. Coker Outstanding Alumni Award at its annual alumni reception held at the FMU Performing Arts Center.

Freeman, a 1992 graduate of FMU with a Bachelor of Science in Economics, serves as the president of Fidelity One Construction, a residential construction company in North Augusta, SC, and is the manager of Freeman Septic Tank, Inc.

Since 2010, Freeman has been a member of the FMU Board of Trustees. He is also active in his community where he currently serves as chairman of the Edgefield County Fire Board and sits on the County Line Fire Department Board. He has also served on the Aiken County Home Builders Association, Wells Fargo Community Board, Edgefield Senior Citizen Center Board, Edgefield County Planning & Zoning Board and the Francis Marion Alumni Advisory Board.

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



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Mike Teasley

Mike Teasley wears many hats in his role at Trinity Collegiate School in Darlington, SC. He serves as assistant athletic director, director of basketball, and boys' basketball coach. It is his role as director of diversity & cultural activities that puts him on the forefront of Trinity's diversity and inclusion efforts. As head coach, Teasley won a state championship, and as the schools DEI lead, has developed practical plans for effectively increasing the school's diverse student population.

Originally from Washington, DC, Teasley is one of four children of a single mother who understood the importance of a quality education for her children. She decided to send her children to St Johns at Prospect Hall. This decision proved to be life changing for Teasley who remarked that, "This was the point in my life that I realized it was ok to be smart and strive for excellence in and out of the classroom." Throughout his career this lesson of being excellent is one that has guided both of them personally, and one he works to pass down to his own players. Teasley says that he, "wasn't a motivated student, but athletics was a big part of my journey where athletics exposed my family to opportunities to be educated across the board." He believes that athletics can help his players learn to be excellent on and off the court and understand the opportunities it can provide.



Coaches vs Cancer: (starting with the pink coat) Kevin Ashford, Gerald Wright, Mike Teasley, Kai Hines, Carlos Washington

Teasley, now coaching



Black History Month Celebration: Mike Teasley, Bewan Balle-Bonza, Tracy Jackson, Brycen Scott, Donovan Lambert, Jennifer Rials, Tim Brand, Kinady Pierce, Nick Ford, Najawan Robinson, Emma Johnson, Tristen McKay, Nick Jones, Michael Roach, Lethonia Barnes, Grant Epps, Kamille Cunningham, Esther Zhou, Katarina Glassman, Powers Rogers, Jackson Lowe, Eleanor, Farrell, Tre' McLeod, Teal Howle, Jordan Jones, Lyndie Reining, Reagan Saunders, Noah Skeen, Reggion Bennett and Kate Currie

at Trinity, is joined at the school by his sister Nikki Teasley, a retired WNBA All Star, who is head coach of the girls' program. Both Teasleys share a passion for excellence and are no stranger to working for Ed Hoffman, who was previously the head of St Johns at Prospect Hall. Hoffman first hired Teasley in 1998, at Notre Dame Academy, in Virginia, to teach physical education. Teasley once again came to work for Hoffman in 2013 when Hoffman made the move to South Carolina as the head of school at Trinity Collegiate.

Most recently, Teasley returned to Trinity to work for Hoffman in 2019, as the head of the basketball program and the director of diversity. He remarked that, "It was exciting to see how much the school had grown and the commitment to attracting students globally." In his role as the director of diversity, he worked to craft a diversity, equity and inclusion plan that is tailored to the needs of the school. He stressed the importance of building an inclusive community, "it is about valuing all of our students and creating an atmosphere of inclusion and belonging. It is vital that these students learn how to interact and respect one another's whole identity." Teasley stressed that DEI work is ongoing, and that Trinity is continuing to work to diversify their staff and continue to host development sessions for staff and students.



## FLEMING JOINS FDTC AREA COMMISSION

Articles submitted by FDTC



William Fleming, Jr

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) welcomes William Fleming, Jr. to the college's Area Commission which serves as the college's governing board.

"I am honored to serve the students, faculty and citizens of the Pee Dee in this capacity," said William Fleming. "A strong technical college is key to an area's ability to recruit and retain businesses. Florence-Darlington Technical College's array of academic programs as well as its affordability is a true asset to this region."

Fleming will be replacing long-time FDTC Area Commissioner Alvin Dewitt, who served faithfully for 54 years.

"On behalf of the Area Commissioners, we are very excited to have Mr. William Fleming join the Florence-Darlington Technical College team as we strive to help the residents of the Pee Dee Region by providing an excellent opportunity to receive a quality education at a very reasonable price," FDTC

Area Commission Chairman Paul Seward said. "I have known Mr. Fleming for over 20 years and by him agreeing to serve is yet another example of his passion to help the residents of the Pee Dee Region through his time and service. We are also very thankful for the more than 54 years of service Mr. Alvin Dewitt gave to our college as an Area Commissioner whom Mr. Fleming will be replacing with this new appointment."

Fleming currently serves as president and chief executive officer of Marlboro Pee Dee Electric Cooperative (MPD), one of the largest industrial electric cooperatives in the nation. MPD was formed in 2020 through the merger of Marlboro Electric Cooperative and Pee Dee Electric Cooperative.

"I look forward to working alongside other business and education leaders at FDTC, one of the best technical colleges, not just in South Carolina but in the nation," Fleming said.

He also serves as president and chief executive officer of Marlboro Development Team (MDT), a South Carolina based real estate developer focused on single tenant build-to-suits, value-add acquisitions and strategic investments throughout the U.S. The organization has successfully delivered more than 13 million square feet across a broad spectrum of development projects including retail, industrial, commercial and office space.

## FDTC CULTURE SHIFT CREDITED FOR ENROLLMENT



Florence-Darlington Technical College President Dr. Jermaine Ford speaks during the Florence Rotary Club meeting.

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) sees an 11 percent increase in its Spring-to-Spring enrollment for the first time in a number of years due to several positive changes and the revitalization of the College's culture, President Dr. Jermaine Ford, said during the Florence Rotary Club meeting on Monday, March 20.

"Our culture centers around five strategic priorities and seven values, hardwiring excellence within FDTC," Ford said. "We are 100 percent committed to student success and workforce development, which are the foundational pillars that established FDTC in 1963."

Ford added since he became President in October 2021, the college has created a strategic plan and worked tirelessly to improve external partnerships with K-12 school districts, legislative business and community partners, all while renewing our commitment to our internal stakeholders the faculty, staff and students.

"With this new strategic plan and strategic direction in place, we are no longer running with multiple priorities in different directions," he said. "This helps us to share what we are doing with our partners and where we hope to be. We are seeing the results now as our improved communication has helped us showcase our programs and capabilities to our partners."

Through these improved partnerships, FDTC launched several new programs, including Registered Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Electrical, Online Paralegal, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Pharmacy Technician. Additionally, the college has expanded its welding program, launched an allied healthcare apprenticeship program with McLeod Health and improved collaboration with the business community, K-12 partners and 4-year universities.

"We are committed to staying relevant," he said. "FDTC is a comprehensive technical college, so we must ensure our programs match what the workforce market needs and stay congruent with our 4-year university partners for students seeking transfer degrees with junior status. The power of FDTC is that our students receive the right credential, zero debt and access to a family-sustaining wage."

Ford added that FDTC is currently in the early stages of creating a Construction Trades Academy at its main campus and at its Lake City Continuum Campus in partnership with the Darla Moore Foundation for plumbing and commercial electrician. He also noted that the college is fully engaged with the Envision AESC project alongside the Florence County Economic Development Partnership and SCTCS ReadySC.

"As our region continues to grow, FDTC stands ready to provide the training that our community needs to make sure employers have a highly trained workforce to serve their needs."

To learn more about FDTC's programs visit the colleges website at [FDTC.edu](https://www.fdtc.edu). Summer and Fall registration opens on April 3.

## BLANCHARD MACHINERY DONATES TO FDTC



Blanchard Machinery's Community & Employee Relations Director Katherine Blanchard Whittle presents Florence-Darlington Technical College President Dr. Jermaine Ford with a \$16,666 donation for the college's its Diesel Technology - Caterpillar Dealer Service Technician Program.

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) was the recipient of \$16,666 donation from Blanchard Machinery as part of its ongoing agreement for its Diesel Technology - Caterpillar Dealer Service Technician Program.

"For over 20 years of Blanchard's 40-year history in South Carolina, graduates of the Caterpillar Dealer Academy have worked in our dealership to support our organization, more importantly, our customers and ultimately our community," Blanchard Machinery's Community & Employee Relations Director Katherine Blanchard Whittle said. "This gift will ensure the program has the technology needed to support the rapidly changing advancements associated with our diverse business."

She added, "The future is bright for South Carolina, Florence-Darlington and Blanchard, and we look forward to strengthening this partnership for the greater good of South Carolina."

This donation is part of the ongoing support that the three Carolina Caterpillar dealers - Blanchard Machinery, Carolina CAT and Gregory Poole - give each year to support this program which was created in 2000. Each of the three dealers provides financial support for the Caterpillar Program at FDTC to operate otherwise cost-prohibitive courses. These funds also go towards tool scholarships specifically for Caterpillar students each year.

"We are so grateful for the continued partnership that Blanchard Machinery and the other Caterpillar dealers in the Carolinas provide us so that we can, in turn, provide this program to students throughout the state and beyond," FDTC President Dr. Jermaine Ford said. "At Florence-Darlington Technical College, we are always looking at ways to partner with companies so that we can provide our students with access to careers that offer a family sustaining wage."

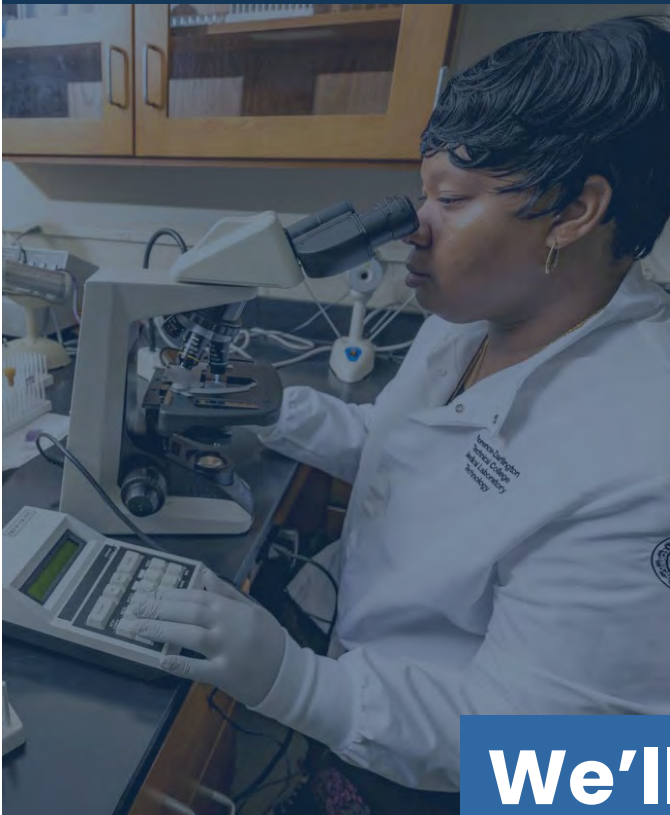
The Caterpillar ThinkBIG Program is part of a worldwide network of Caterpillar-approved programs, including a sponsored workplace, hosting eight weeks of internships every semester. Rotating back into the workforce every semester, students accumulate a year's worth of experience, complete their AAS degree and earn one year's worth of pay while in the 21-month program at Florence-Darlington Technical College.

There are a number of options globally and 10 other sister college programs serving the Caterpillar dealer in the United States. FDTC is proud to host the program for the entire North and South Carolina region.





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# CLAFLIN SCHOLARS CAPTURE MISS CIAA AND MISTER CIAA CROWNS

Submitted by Claffin University



Announcing Miss Claffin/Miss CIAA Arteria Gibson

**ORANGEBURG** - The 2023 CIAA Basketball Tournament provided Claffin University men's and women's basketball teams with opportunities to win their first respective tournament titles since joining the venerable conference in 2018. The CIAA Tournament is widely recognized as one of the East Coast's premier athletics, social and cultural events. Claffin used the CIAA Tournament's notoriety as a platform to expand the University's brand as a premier liberal arts college/university and a Top 10 Historically Black College/University (U.S. News and World Report) in the Greater Baltimore/Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The tournament was played February 21-25 at the CFG Bank Arena in downtown Baltimore.

Although the Panthers and Lady Panthers basketball teams had to put their championship ambitions on hold after suffering losses in their respective tournament openers, Claffin exerted its dominance in another competition away from the action on the court.

For the third time in four years, a Miss Claffin contestant captured the crown in the Miss CIAA Scholarship Competition. Arteria Gibson, a senior mass communications major with a concentration in public relations, will wear the coveted crown. Gibson also has a minor in business management.

"When I heard them call out 'and your new Miss CIAA is Miss Claffin University,' I was in complete shock," said Gibson, a Columbia, S.C. native and a graduate of Dreher High School. "I had no idea I was going to win. I was just so happy that our hard work paid off, and we brought these titles home and put Claffin even higher on the map."

Not to be outdone, Mendel Rivers, also a senior from Columbia, S.C., became the first Mister Claffin to claim the Mister CIAA crown. Rivers, a Spring Valley High School graduate, is majoring in management information science. He will join Gibson in representing the conference at community service events and making appearances affiliated with Claffin University, the local community, Food Lion and the CIAA during the year. Both students also received a \$2,500 Food Lion scholarship.

Upon graduating, Gibson plans to attend graduate school and earn her master's degree in business administration. Rivers is currently working in a co-op program with Dominion Energy and Transportation. He wants to work as an analyst when he graduates.

"It is surreal. It still hasn't completely set in that I have made history for Claffin University," Rivers said. "It is an honor, especially with this being only the second year of the Mister CIAA Scholarship Competition."

The Mister CIAA and Miss CIAA Scholarship Competition recognizes two outstanding students for their exemplary professionalism, academic success, leadership and public service. The winners are selected based on a criterion that includes: an essay, interview with Food Lion representatives, grade point average, participation in

extracurricular activities and voting results. The contestants were also required to submit a Food Lion Feeds Promo Video and a creative initiative proposal.

Gibson's proposal, "A Better You at CU," focused on students' physical and mental well-being. She launched "Mindful Mondays," a forum for students to discuss mental health topics and societal and worldly issues at the start of the fall semester. Gibson was among the Claffin students that participated in a roundtable discussion with Vice President Kamala Harris in September 2022.

"Boys to Men," a program that will utilize the principles of leadership, service and personal development to increase the participation of male students at Claffin events and activities, was Rivers' proposal. The goal is to improve campus morale and help male students develop skills to prepare them for success during and after college.

Claffin raised eyebrows when Shantavia Edmonds, '19, became the first Miss Claffin to win the Miss CIAA title in 2019 – the University's inaugural year at the CIAA Tournament. Claffin won two consecutive titles when Faith McKie succeeded Edmonds as Miss Claffin and earned the 2020 Miss CIAA crown. CIAA officials canceled the 2021 pageant due to the coronavirus. But 2022, marked the debut of the Mister CIAA Scholarship Competition and Mister Claffin Isaiah Robinson was the first runner-up.

"It's the Claffin Magic!" said Dr. Denver Malcolm Key when asked to explain Claffin's impressive showing at the Miss and Mister CIAA Scholarship Competition. Key is the assistant vice president for student development at Claffin. She also serves as the advisor of Claffin's Royal Court. "Their preparation begins with their journey to become Mister Claffin University and Miss Claffin University. Their commitment during each phase of the process for those two positions is critical and has significant implications. The entire process sets the stage for their reign as Mister Claffin University and Miss Claffin University, from submitting the application to their presentations in the pageant through student voting. It also prepares them for the CIAA competition."

In addition to the Mister CIAA and Miss CIAA Scholarship Competition, Gibson and Rivers took advantage of networking, career and personal development opportunities at other CIAA Tournament events.

"We are proud of how we represented Claffin and ourselves throughout the week," said Gibson, a member of the Alice Carson Tisdale Honors College. "We want to continuously highlight the importance of HBCUs and the Black excellence at our colleges and universities."



Mister Claffin/Mister CIAA Mendel Rivers and Miss Claffin/Miss CIAA Arteria Gibson



## SRMC FUNDS SCHOLARSHIP FOR CLAFLIN

Submitted by Clafin University



Dave Olson, SRMC president and program manager presents check to Clafin University President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack

**ORANGEBURG** - Savannah River Mission Completion (SRMC), the liquid waste contractor at Savannah River Site (SRS), presented a \$10,000 check to Clafin University to support student scholarships.

In addition, SRMC and Clafin University partnered on a senior students' capstone project where students are working on ways to improve the method for removing and replacing the radioactively contaminated device, called the strip effluent coalescer, within the Salt Waste Processing Facility solvent recovery system. The students' work should be completed in May.

Dave Olson, SRMC president and program manager, said the Capstone project and scholarship are expected to encourage students to continue their studies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. He added that his goal is to see their work translate into coming to SRS to work.

"We want these students to succeed," Olson said. "Recently, I addressed a group of Clafin students and suggested they begin planning their lives now. Helping students continue their education puts them on the road to good jobs, along with the opportunity to choose a meaningful career."

Clafin University President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack said he looks to companies, such as SRMC, to provide students with meaningful opportunities to see what careers are available to them.

"The Capstone project our senior students are undertaking demonstrates SRMC's desire to help them consider bigger issues beyond the walls of our institution," Warmack said. "Together with this scholarship, I believe we have a partnership that will be mutually beneficial for years to come."

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# THE CITY OF LAKE CITY: EVERYTHING STARTS WITH A CONVERSATION! By Glaciera Brown Mason



*This artist's rendering depicts the future of city-owned property on Cole Road from classrooms to community and recreation center. The Phase I of the project, which renovates the existing structure, is underway and are expected to be complete in early 2024.*

**LAKE CITY** -Take a downtown drive along Main Street, Lake City, and you'll find some architectural gems and a snapshot of its character. From the early 20th century storefronts with detailed brickwork, to the black-and-gold-tiled façade of the early 1960s post office, to the glued laminated timber and steel modern structure of the Continuum built just a few years ago, the buildings are the face of a city embracing its past, living in today and preparing for its future.

"Harvesting our past, cultivating our future," is the motto of the City of Lake City. Settled in 1736 and chartered in 1874, this city within Florence County, began with 300 residents and grew to a population of more than 1,000 in the early 1900s. It is historically known as an agricultural center, and at one time, was called the 'Bean Capital of the World,' when Lake City gained economic stability and success during the Great Depression when farmers came in droves to sell their produce.

Today, the City of Lake City invites all to live, work, play, and visit the community of around 6,000 residents. This year, the city welcomed a new Mayor, the Honorable Yameika Robinson as not only the first female, but the first African American female to serve in this role. As a native of Lake City, Robinson's major focus is on economic



*La'Quavion Robertson and Thomas Murrain of Lake City Public Works, do maintenance work on a sewer line on North Matthews Road.*

development, community safety and affordable housing. The Lake City administration is on the move with solid plans for the betterment of the city and its residents.

And it all starts with a conversation.

Mayor Robinson, City Administrator William A. Hall, deputy administrator Joseph "Jody" Cooper, and city department heads meet regularly for updates on day-to-day operations and to discuss the city's needs. Hall's background in government finance, experience, and longevity serving the City of Lake City since 2008, gives him the aptitude, skill and ability to implement policies set by the mayor and council and to supervise the

administrative, financial and human resources of city departments and personnel to ensure the needs of Lake City's citizens are met, in a fiscally responsible, safe and effective manner.

"We strive for an enjoyable, harmonious work environment that sets a positive tone," said Hall. "This empowers our staff to speak up with their ideas for improving our community and providing better services for our customers. What started as a conversation two, three, or even five years ago, is now starting to come to fruition, and new conversations begin every day."

One such example is what the city refers to as the "Cole Road Project," which entails the complete transformation of the city-owned building that formerly housed Florence Darlington Technical College classes (these classes, and others from Francis Marion University, can now be found at the Continuum). While discussion began on the project several years ago, renovation of the space is now underway and doors to the future Lake City Community and Recreation Center are scheduled to open in early 2024. Many other projects are on similar paths from conversation to realization.

The goals of the mayor, council and administrator are to create a safe community where people want to live, work, play and visit, with an emphasis on economic development, housing, safety, and infrastructure. The ongoing progress in the City of Lake City include:

- economic development projects to bring 100-plus job opportunities for residents.
- improving the safety and aesthetics of neighborhoods by removing dilapidated eyesores.
- building new, affordable, three-bedroom homes to help ease the city's housing limitations.
- Additional capital improvements projects to increase services for residents and provide an infrastructure to allow Lake City to grow. These include a brand-new water treatment lab to update cramped existing facilities, water tower upgrades and sewer line projects.

"Lake City's most important assets are the women and men who keep every part of the city running efficiently and effectively," said Hall. "These are the people who our residents see every day cleaning our streets, collecting garbage from residential and commercial areas, clearing out ditches and digging up roads to repair and replace water pipes. They are the core of our city and I honor them for the services they provide for the City

of Lake City."

The staff of over 100 employees maintain and execute many services for the City of Lake City and its residents including:

- essential systems such as storm water drain cleanout, water pump stations operation, pipe repair and replacement, water treatment processes, garbage collection, street cleaning and more.
- provide fun programs and activities for residents including scouting programs, recreational youth team sports and an E-sports program for kids as well as the Lake City Senior Center programs.
- public safety programs with police and fire departments, including educational school visits, SROs in each school, building relationships with students, fire department staff checking in with home-bound seniors and more. This year, Lake City hopes to launch a new citizens' police academy and other programs to communicate with residents more effectively.
- Lake City's public safety programs provide opportunities for youth involvement with organizations such as scouting, as well as making sure the city's seniors' needs are being met and keeping streets safe.
- City growth by administering its income streams effectively and planning for future needs that makes Lake City the city to live, work, play and visit.

To help residents join in the conversations about their community, the City established a Public Information Office on Main Street to communicate better through social media, in person and via the revamped city website.

"While the website remains a work in progress, information on many of the city's projects is being added regularly," said Hall. "It is a great communications tool where people can view city ordinances, discover resources from other organizations and contact their council members or mayor with specific questions. In addition, new tools, such as email and text notifications for customer-selected topics, are in the works – and they all started with a conversation."

Lake City's plans are set, and Hall and the administrative team are optimistic, capable and committed to building a better future for Lake City. To learn more about Lake City, visit [www.lakecitysc.gov](http://www.lakecitysc.gov).



*Left the City administrator William A. Hall and deputy administrator Joseph "Jody" Cooper, with the signed contracts for five new starter homes to be built in Lake City. The homes are currently under construction on city-owned properties in the community and will be sold to the public. Additional homes are planned for other city-owned residential properties.*



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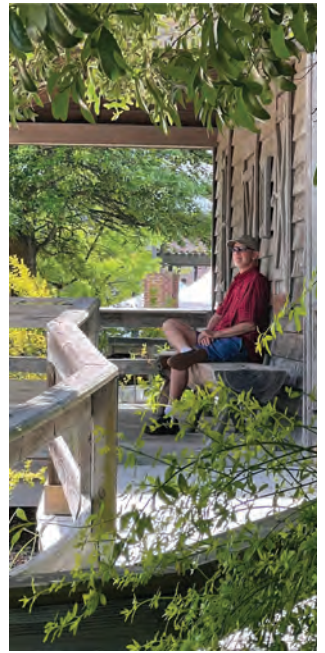


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# AUTISM AWARENESS: DIAGNOSIS, TREATMENT AND PROGNOSIS

Submitted by Christopher Ong, MD as told to Susan Carter, LPC-S



Christopher Ong, MD

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects the way a person interacts with others, communicates and processes information. Individuals with autism may have difficulties with social interaction and communication, such as understanding social cues, making eye contact or engaging in reciprocal conversations. They may also exhibit repetitive behaviors, interests or routines and may

experience sensory sensitivities or difficulties regulating emotions.

Dr. Christopher Ong, Pee Dee Mental Health child psychiatrist, emphasizes that autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning that each person with autism can have varying degrees of severity and unique combinations of symptoms. Some individuals with autism may have exceptional abilities in areas such as mathematics or music, while others may have significant intellectual or language delays.

Autism is not a disease or a result of poor parenting. Instead, Ong explains that “it is a neurological difference that can bring challenges but also strengths and abilities.” With the right support and understanding, individuals with autism can lead fulfilling lives and contribute to society in meaningful ways.

Parents and caregivers of children on the autism spectrum report several common concerns, including social and communication difficulties. People with ASD often have difficulty with social interaction, communication and forming relationships with others. This can make it challenging for them to make friends, understand social cues and interact with others in a meaningful way. Many individuals with ASD have sensory processing issues, meaning that they may be overly sensitive to certain sounds, textures or smells. This can be overwhelming and lead to anxiety, agitation or other challenging behaviors. Some individuals with ASD may engage in challenging behaviors, such as aggression, self-injury, or repetitive behaviors. These behaviors can be difficult to manage and may require specialized interventions. Individuals with ASD may face challenges in education and employment due to their difficulties with social communication and sensory processing. This can limit their opportunities and make it challenging to achieve their goals. There are healthcare disparities that exist for individuals with ASD, particularly among minority and low-income populations. This can limit access to specialized care and interventions.

Some behavior problems that are seen in this population include repetitive behaviors, sensory issues and aggression. Individuals with ASD may engage in repetitive behaviors, such as rocking, hand flapping, or lining up toys. These behaviors can be calming or soothing but can also interfere with social interaction and communication. Many individuals with ASD have sensory processing issues, meaning that they may be overly sensitive to certain sounds, textures, or smells. This can lead to agitation, anxiety or other challenging behaviors. Some individuals with ASD may exhibit aggressive behavior, such as hitting, biting or kicking. This may be due to difficulties with communication, frustration or sensory overload. Self-injurious behavior and noncompliance can occur as well. Some individuals with ASD may engage in self-injurious behavior, such as head

banging, biting themselves, or picking at their skin. This may be a way to self-regulate or cope with overwhelming sensory input or other stressors. Individuals with ASD may have difficulty with transitions or changes in routine, which can lead to noncompliant behavior. This may include refusing to follow instructions, avoiding tasks or engaging in disruptive behavior. Behavioral interventions, such as applied behavior analysis (ABA), can be effective in reducing challenging behaviors and improving social communication and adaptive skills. Additionally, medication may be prescribed to help manage specific symptoms or conditions that often occur in people with ASD, such as anxiety or ADHD.

Although often depicted in the media as a condition affecting young children, older children, teens and adults also benefit from therapy and social skills training. Behavioral therapy, such as applied behavior analysis (ABA), can help individuals with ASD learn new skills and behaviors, improve communication and social skills and reduce problematic behaviors. Medication may be prescribed to help manage specific symptoms or conditions that often occur in people with ASD, such as anxiety, depression, ADHD or sleep problems. Occupational therapy can help individuals with ASD develop practical skills for daily living, such as self-care, job skills and social skills. Speech therapy can help individuals with ASD improve their communication skills, such as understanding and using language, as well as nonverbal communication skills. Joining a support group can be a great way for individuals with ASD to connect with others who have similar experiences and challenges and to receive emotional support. Vocational training can help individuals with ASD develop job skills and find meaningful employment. Life skills training can help individuals with ASD learn practical skills for independent living, such as cooking, cleaning and managing finances.

Counseling interventions can be helpful for children, youth and adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to address a range of issues, such as social skills deficits, anxiety, depression and behavior problems. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy that helps individuals identify and change negative or unhelpful thought patterns and behaviors. CBT can be effective for treating anxiety, depression and behavior problems in individuals with ASD. Social skills training involves teaching individuals with ASD the skills they need to interact with others, such as initiating conversations, maintaining eye contact and understanding nonverbal cues. Family therapy can help families of individuals with ASD better understand the condition and learn strategies for managing the challenges that come with it. Family therapy may also be helpful in improving communication and relationships within the family. Play therapy involves using play activities to help individuals with ASD express their emotions and learn coping skills. Play therapy can be especially effective for young children with ASD. Group therapy can provide individuals with ASD the opportunity to





## AUTISM AWARENESS CONT'D



practice social skills and build relationships with others who have similar experiences. Group therapy may also be helpful for addressing anxiety and depression.

There is no single medication that is specifically approved to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD), but medication can be prescribed to help manage specific symptoms or conditions that often occur in people with ASD, such as anxiety, depression, ADHD or sleep problems. Some medications that may be prescribed for individuals with autism include anti-depressants, stimulants and antipsychotics. Antidepressants treat anxiety or depression, stimulants address ADHD symptoms, and antipsychotics can be helpful in treating severe behavioral problems such as aggression or irritability. Sleep aids are useful for treating insomnia or other sleep problems while anti-anxiety medication helps with anxiety or obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Mood stabilizers are another type of medication used to manage mood swings, irritability or aggression.

It's important to note that medication should only be prescribed by a qualified healthcare provider and should be part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes behavioral and educational interventions. Additionally, the use of medication for ASD is often determined on a case-by-case basis and should be closely monitored for effectiveness and side effects.

Treatment and prognosis for those with autism has improved in recent years through early diagnosis, individualized treatment and use of technology-assisted treatment. The American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that all children be screened for autism at 18 and 24 months of age. Early diagnosis allows for early intervention, which can improve outcomes for children with autism. Because there is no single "cure" for autism, treatment approaches need to be individualized for each person. Behavioral interventions, such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), have been shown to be effective for some children with autism. Other interventions may include speech therapy, occupational therapy and medication. Technology is being used to develop new treatment tools for autism, such as virtual reality and social robots. These tools can help individuals with autism practice social skills in a safe and controlled environment. Contemporary approaches to autism treatment focus on co-occurring conditions. Many individuals with autism also have symptoms of anxiety, depression or ADHD. Treating these conditions can help improve overall functioning and quality of life for individuals with autism. We are now able to explore the neurobiology of ASD. Advances in brain imaging and genetics are helping researchers to better understand the underlying neurobiology of autism. This understanding may lead to the development of new treatments and interventions.

Ong recommends that anyone concerned about the possibility of autism symptoms in themselves or a loved one seek education and guidance from professionals and trusted resources. "Educate yourself about ASD, learn as much as you can about the signs, symptoms and diagnostic criteria for ASD. This will help you understand what to look for and what steps to take if you suspect that you or someone you know may have ASD. Get a professional evaluation. If you suspect that you or someone you know may

have ASD, it's important to seek out a professional evaluation from a qualified healthcare provider or specialist. They will be able to assess symptoms and provide a diagnosis if necessary." Once a diagnosis is confirmed, seek out early intervention. "Early intervention is key in managing symptoms of ASD and improving outcomes. If an ASD diagnosis is confirmed, seek out interventions that are evidence-based and tailored to the individual's needs." Another helpful strategy is to join a support group as this "can be a great way to connect with others who have experienced similar challenges and to get advice and support from those who have been through it before." Don't forget to practice self-care as caring for someone with ASD can be stressful and overwhelming at times. It's important to prioritize self-care and seek out support for yourself as well as the person with ASD.

Diagnosing and treating individuals on the autism spectrum is a complex, challenging and sometimes frustrating process; however, the long-term outlook for these individuals is promising. Remember, autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning that individuals with ASD can vary greatly in terms of symptoms and severity. With the right support and interventions, many people with ASD are able to lead fulfilling lives. The prognosis for individuals with autism has improved in recent years, as early diagnosis and individualized treatment approaches have become more widely available. However, there is still much work to be done to improve outcomes for individuals with autism, and research in this area is ongoing.

Ong is a pediatric psychiatrist serving the Pee Dee region via telehealth through the South Carolina Department of Mental Health. He was chief resident during his adult psychiatry residency at the University of Florida. He earned the Ralph Maurer Award for Excellence in Child Psychiatry during his pediatric psychiatry fellowship. He presented four educational sessions at the American Psychiatric Association's annual meetings as well as one educational session at the American Association for Geriatric Society. He was an adjunct assistant professor at the University of Florida prior to joining the South Carolina Department of Mental Health.

Please contact Pee Dee Mental Health's Florence Clinic for more information about autism spectrum disorders with co-occurring mental health disorders or to schedule an appointment with a mental health professional (843-317-4073). Our office is located at 125 E. Cheves Street, Florence, SC, 29506.





**USING ADVOCACY TO SPEAK FOR OUR NONVERBAL** *By Dawn "D.A." Goodwin*



*Attorney Patrick J. McLaughlin and Autumn*

only four years old, and the child who attacked her was nine. On the same day, another child by the name of Nyzeil was also attacked. When the school district failed to act, Condon had to take matters into her own hands. This story reveals just how imperative advocacy is in exposing injustice to the underserved who cannot speak for themselves.

After hearing the story, All 4 Autism’s executive director Jessica Brown felt urged to refer Condon to a childhood friend, Patrick McLaughlin, who was a local attorney with Wukela Law Firm. She knew he was the perfect person to take the case and begin the fight for justice for Autumn. “Not only is he brilliant, but he has a heart for the underdog, and I knew Jessica would be in good hands. He fought for their family and went above and beyond to seek justice,” said Brown.

Attorney Patrick McLaughlin has been by Autumn and her family and said, “What Autumn, Nyzeil and their parents went through is a sad and tragic example of how the state and local school districts fail special needs kids and their parents. The South Carolina Department of Ed and Chesterfield County School District knew the special needs buses in Chesterfield County were being operated in a way that needlessly endangered the children on the bus, the driver and the general public two months before Autumn and Nyzeil were attacked. They not only ignored those risks, but they refused to share that knowledge with the parents, so the parents could have exercised their rights to protect their own children. There was absolutely no cost in sharing that knowledge and the failure to do so was inexcusable.”

He added, “The reality is that the Department of Education knew of two issues creating unnecessary risk on special needs buses that could have prevented those attacks: 1) the failure to require adult attendants on special needs buses; and 2) the failure to share important health and behavior information with bus drivers that could impact the health and safety of the children on the bus. The Department of Education admitted in sworn testimony provided during a deposition in December 2020 that they had known those issues existed for some time. When specifically asked why they had never promulgated regulations, as is their duty under the law, to address these known safety issues on special needs buses, the Department of Education had no answer. The fact that the Department of Education would then appear over two years after that deposition, and over four years after the attacks, to tell a South Carolina House subcommittee they should not pass a bill to address the adult attendant issue because the department can address that with regulations, when they know they have never so much as even offered draft versions for consideration despite knowing of the danger and risk, is shameful.”

“The default status of any bureaucracy is inertia. Special needs parents know this and have to fight it every single day

When Jessica Condon reached out to All 4 Autism in 2018, she detailed the horrific ordeal that happened to her daughter Autumn, who is nonverbal and has autism. Autumn was attacked nearly 100 times by another child while riding on a special needs school bus. At the time, Autumn was

for their children. If over \$2,400,000.00 in settlements to the two children attacked on the bus that day doesn’t move the needle, what will it take?”

Queen City News’ Chief Investigative Reporter Jody Barr has been shedding light on Autumn’s story in a series called “The Longest Ride” on the Queen City News’ YouTube channel. “Jody’s investigative series, while heartbreaking to watch, has helped bring awareness to why it is so crucial to have safety regulations in place for our vulnerable students. These things do happen, and we are so thankful to Jody for all his hard work and tireless efforts to share Autumn’s story,” said Brown.

Covering this story is what Barr calls “the role of the media—to tell the story of people who cannot seem to be heard.” He added that after just a few seconds of watching the video of the attack, which was difficult to look at, his very next question was, “What in the system allowed this to happen? It was uncovered by her attorney in the lawsuit that there was a need for particular legislation to keep this from happening again.”

The legislation Barr is referring to came about after Autumn’s story caught the attention of state representative Richie Yow who, as a result, introduced two bills to protect children. According to Yow, “The first bill dealt with having aids on special needs busses who have restrained students on them. That bill was heard in the Education subcommittee. The subcommittee voted to adjourn debate on the bill and the regulations committee chair asked the Education department to get them some updated regulations in 30 days. The second bill said that the school had to disclose important medical information to the special needs’ bus driver of a child with special circumstances...examples include choking, allergies, etc. That bill has not had a hearing,” said Yow.

**IN DIVERSITY  
THERE IS  
BEAUTY AND  
THERE IS  
STRENGTH**

· MAYA ANGELOU

**AUTISM  
AWARENESS  
MONTH**





## USING ADVOCACY CONT'D

Brown says, "Representative Yow's bill is crucial for the safety of students on accessible buses, and long overdue. Legislative representation and advocacy will bring change and improve the quality of life for the underserved. For that, our gratitude is beyond measure."

Condon's thoughts on advocacy for the autistic community is that we need more of it. "I also have a six-year-old son who is autistic, so I've only been in this world for eight years," she said. "There is such a lack of resources. Everywhere you turn as a parent is a dead end. One thing that I have found is, that as a parent, we are just so tired. Imagine parents working full-time on top of having schedules with doctor's appointments and therapies. I think there are so many parents who want the best for the children, but they let a lot slide. What we need to do as parents, is to stand up with that last little bit of energy we have to say that our children deserve better."

"Look at how quiet the autistic community is," she said. "You don't hear much from them, but you get more by standing up as a group. That will make more noise to get the government to bring the resources we need. When the attacks happened to my daughter, I was already fighting because I was told it was safer for her to be on this bus. I didn't want to rock the boat, but I had already started reaching out for two months, wanting to have an assistant on her bus and looking for a newer bus with air conditioning. I'm a nurse, so I know there are things that can happen. I thought about discipline but was thinking more like a nurse. I hadn't even finished the campaign, and this happened. It destroyed me as a mother. Everything in me as a parent wanted me to homeschool, but I know I won't be here forever, so I have to know my children know the outside world. I want both of my children to have the best opportunity and to be the best they can be. The number one thing has to be protection and safety for these children. Advocacy can do so much because then there are parents others have to answer to." Condon's message to parents is that, "you must learn the resources that are available in your area, and never think your one voice won't be enough to make a difference. Be the one brave enough to say, 'This is not right,' or 'This is what we need,' and then show up. But follow it through. It only takes a little rock to start an avalanche."

Because of Condon's advocacy for all children who need speech therapy, McLeod Health in Cheraw now offers it. It came from her talking to the CEO, showing him the need for it and her reaching out to the board of disabilities and showing what was needed and how far parents had to go to get it.

Jessica Brown, whose own son had limited language until the age of five, applauds Condon for being so incredibly brave. "We are so proud of her efforts to advocate for her daughter. I understand what it feels like to send a child to school and place your trust in the hands of others, especially when your child is unable to verbalize thoughts and feelings. Her fight was long and difficult, but she stood strong. This is truly an inspirational story of a mother's love, despite the odds," said Brown. For more information, please contact the Autism Resource Center of the Pee Dee, Jessica Brown, executive director.

PO Box 3961, Florence, SC 29502 [Tel843-472-5215-info@all4autism.org](tel:843-472-5215) [www.all4autism.org](http://www.all4autism.org)



# Autism

## AWARENESS VS ACCEPTANCE

Neurodiversity is not just a conversation topic! Help build a community that welcomes Autistics into your world, into your and your children's friendships, into your neighborhood gatherings, into your work-place, places of worship, schools and playgrounds!

- 1**  
Awareness means you know it exists  
Acceptance means you connect personally and learn more
- 2**  
Awareness means you can identify it  
Acceptance means you talk to people and gain understanding, compassion, and sensitivity
- 3**  
Awareness means you know something is happening  
Acceptance means you offer help and support without judgement
- 4**  
Awareness means you cope with it deal with it tolerate it  
Acceptance means you embrace it, grow from it, and build relationships with people who have it not only those who love someone with it!
- 5**  
**Awareness Is Not Enough**  
acceptance is the next step towards a truly inclusive and community driven society!





# LOCAL HELP FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM By Dawn "D.A." Goodwin



Autism service provider ABA Depot recently cut the ribbon and joined the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce. (Photo credit to Morning News)

Autism Acceptance Month and Autism Acceptance Day are both about promoting inclusion and celebrating differences, and today there are more ways than ever to support the autism community. According to the Organization for Autism Research, one way is to spread the word about organizations that help individuals with autism. One such organization located right here in our community is the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Depot of Florence and Sumter, where Spears Beckham is the owner.

The ABA Depot is a one owner-occupied, locally owned small business that provides applied behavior analysis services for children with autism. Beckham says that ABA is the only

research-evidenced intervention found to be effective in children who have autism. According to Autism Speaks, "The goal of any ABA program is to help each person work on skills that will help them become more independent and successful in the short term as well as in the future."

The work of the staff at the ABA Depot, located at 1513 Heritage Lane in Florence and in 738 W. Liberty Street in Sumter, aligns with this goal. They offer individualized, mainly clinic-based ABA services, "to help increase children with autism's functional and communication skills and to decrease problem behaviors," Beckham stated. Their work also focuses on early intervention in children diagnosed with autism. ABA Depot accepts private

insurance as well as Medicaid, which is important for families in need of the support.

"I have worked hard to create a loving, warm environment for the clients, families and staff of children with autism from the ground up as an independent entrepreneur by myself since 2014," said Beckham, a former special educator for children with disabilities in Charleston County. "We have just now expanded from Florence to Sumter because I know we can make a difference in many lives. It means so much to be included and recognized for the difference we are making."

Remember, for individuals with autism, there is help. By supporting organizations like the ABA Depot and being more inclusive of others every day of the year, we all can do our part. And as a community, we can show love and support for autism awareness by participating in autism-friendly activities, by sharing autism resources and by using the hashtag #CelebrateDifferences on their social media accounts.

For more information about ABA Depot and its services, please call Nicole in Sumter at 803-757-1744 or Taylor in Florence at 843-799-0076.







**MYRTLE BEACH-**We are all different. There are different cultures, different interests, and there are different abilities. Although most people have heard of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), many are unaware of what it looks like and just how wide the spectrum is. ASD is a neurodevelopmental condition of variable severity

with lifelong effects, chiefly characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication and by restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behavior ([merriam.com](https://www.merriam.com)). People with ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving or paying attention. All of us might share some of these characteristics, but for people with ASD, these symptoms can make life very challenging ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)).

Despite the many challenges autistic people face, it's important to shed light on their strength. Two women in Myrtle Beach set out to build a company that not only recognizes these strengths, but celebrates them. Julie Ployer and Melissa Farah, both board certified behavior analysts, started Milestones Clinic in 2018, with a small team of dedicated registered behavior technicians. "Myrtle Beach has a high demand for services for individuals with ASD, but a lack of availability. Most places have very long waitlists, and we wanted to try to alleviate some of that," says Ployer. Milestones provides 1:1 Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy along with family training, resources for individuals waiting for services and ABA training for school professionals across SC.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) – the science of learning and human behavior, applies the understanding of how behavior works to real situations. The goal is to increase behaviors that are helpful and decrease behaviors that are harmful or are barriers to learning (autism speaks source: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>). Many times, children with autism engage in disruptive behaviors because they are unable to communicate their wants and needs. "A large part of our work is figuring out what those behaviors are communicating, kind of like translating a language," says Farah. "Once we know what our learners are trying to say, we can teach them how to advocate for themselves in a way that's safe and effective." The therapy is highly individualized and is used to teach skills that will increase a person's level of independence and improve their quality of life. At Milestones Clinic, the staff prioritizes autonomy, and focuses on teaching skills that will be the most meaningful for the individual and their families.

Milestones Clinic serves young children on the spectrum ages two thru eight. "Kids with autism are kids first, so we do most of our teaching through play," Farah says. "We get on their level and listen to the amazing things they have to say—verbally or non-verbally, and then follow their lead. When we teach within the

activities that bring them joy, we're able to share experiences and make progress while having fun. It's amazing the things you can learn about a person when you take the time to really tune in. We're all really motivated to help our learners find their voice so they can share their amazing qualities with a larger audience."

Autism Awareness Month, now Autism Acceptance Month, is designated to share important information about this neurological condition. The name was changed in 2021, to create an environment of inclusivity and to foster acceptance and change. To the Milestones team, autism acceptance means that people become more open to learning from autistic people and their experiences. That we all learn to appreciate each other's differences, and offer understanding over judgement. "Autism awareness started a conversation about inclusivity, which has opened doors to locations and activities," Ployer says. "The next step towards acceptance is for people to open their minds, and to realize that the wants and needs of individuals with autism aren't wildly different from anyone else's. They want to be heard, and appreciated for who they are, just like everybody else."



Julie Ployer and Melissa Farah

Ployer is a board certified behavior analyst, co-owner and director of logistics at Milestones Clinic in Myrtle Beach, SC. Ployer started her career at New England Center for Children as a level one teacher before moving to SC. She earned an M.S. in Applied Behavior Analysis from The Sage Colleges while working full time as a registered behavior technician and assisting adults diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder with continuing education opportunities, social skills and job skills. Ployer is passionate about collaboration with schools and other professionals to ensure continuity of care for her clients. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her husband and one-year-old daughter.

Farah is a board certified behavior analyst, co-owner and director of operations at Milestones Clinic in Myrtle Beach, SC. Farah began her career as a paraprofessional in a kindergarten classroom, and then as a level two teacher and case manager at New England Center for Children before moving to SC. While working full time as a registered behavior technician, she earned an M.A. in Applied Behavior Analysis from Ball State University. Farah is passionate about disseminating the science of ABA and providing quality training and ongoing education for individuals working directly with learners. In her spare time, she enjoys spending quality time with her husband, her three-year-old son and her family. For more information about Milestones Clinic, visit [www.milestonesaba.net](http://www.milestonesaba.net).



  
**Our Mission**

To provide quality services with a focus on prioritizing autonomy, delivering kind and compassionate care, and disseminating the science of Applied Behavior Analysis.



**Our Values**



TRUST      ACCEPTANCE      COMPASSION  
CARING      SAFETY



**Our Vision**

Our vision is to be a model for quality ABA service delivery, to provide assistance to families waiting for services, and to be a trusted educational and advocacy resource for the community we serve.





# ADVANCES IN AUTISM EDUCATION FOR PEE DEE TEACHERS By Susan Carter



*Dr. Cynthia Nixon, associate dean, SOE director of Graduate Studies for the School of Education SC-Create Center director*

Francis Marion University's (FMU) School of Education is offering a new undergraduate collateral and minor in autism and neurodiversity studies, available in this fall. The program will focus on teaching techniques and strategies for working with individuals on the autism spectrum. It will outline how teachers, faculty members, students, and community members can support autistic individuals and their families in the classroom and beyond.

The program will address the significant need for more educators trained to recognize and address the special needs of children and adolescents on the autism spectrum. Dr. Cynthia Nixon, professor of education and associate dean for the School of Education at FMU, explained that the collateral came about as an initiative from FMU President, Dr. Fred Carter. The initiative will address a growing need for more effective strategies for working with students with autism and is designed for individuals who are going into a field where they will be working with students or other individuals who are on the autism spectrum. Education and psychology courses are included in the collateral. The new minor option will include courses in speech and language pathology as well as education and psychology. Nixon stated, "the advanced training will better prepare FMU's pre-service educators and other pre-service professionals to understand and effectively work with autistic students in the public school system and in related service fields and is open to all undergraduate students at FMU."

In addition to the collateral and minor, a new sensory lab for the university's School of Education is being constructed on campus thanks to a new partnership with Duke Energy. The new lab will enhance the current education programs by providing additional resources to teach children through special sensory techniques. The sensory lab will be equipped with items used in various teaching practices benefiting autistic students, including weighted vests, light projectors, audio sedation systems, gel mats and other sensory items. While the lab will be housed under the School of Education, it will benefit students across many disciplines, including the new collateral and minor in Autism and Neurodiversity Studies created in conjunction



*Dr. Karen Fries, associate professor of Education, faculty secretary*

with the psychology and speech and language pathology departments. The sensory lab will be part of a new classroom building on their main campus expected to be completed in 2024. Construction is expected to begin during the 2023, spring semester.

Dr. Karen Fries, associate professor of education at FMU, described some of the strategies students will be taught to increase their effectiveness in working with ASD students, such as



*A classroom focused on special needs*

remaining calm and positive. Instructors can model appropriate behavior by greeting and engaging students respectfully. She advises that teachers promote a welcoming environment and offer opportunities for all students to develop social interaction skills and extended learning. Use resources such as <https://www.autismspeaks.org/> to become aware of the characteristics of autism and general strategies for working with students on the spectrum. Most important, Fries emphasizes, early intervention so that special needs can be addressed in the preschool years. Speech, occupational sensory therapy are essential adjuncts to the social skills and academic training that students are immersed in throughout their public-school education.

According to the CDC, racial and ethnic differences persist in diagnosing autism spectrum disorders. In one study of 11 communities, fewer Hispanic children were identified with autism than Black or White children. In addition, a higher percent of Black children with autism were identified with intellectual disability compared to White or Hispanic children with autism. These differences could relate in part to access - to services that diagnose and support children with autism. Understanding the prevalence and characteristics of children with autism can help communities work towards identifying all children with autism early and enrolling them in services. In several of the 11 communities in the ADDM Network, fewer Hispanic children were identified with autism than Black or White children.

Visit [www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly) for information about CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early" program, which provides free resources in English, Spanish and other languages, to monitor children's development, starting at two months of age. CDC's Milestone Tracker Mobile app can help parents and caregivers track their child's development and share information with healthcare providers.

**Your Child's Early Development is a Journey**  
Check off the milestones your child has reached and share your child's progress with the doctor at every visit.

6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS (1 YEAR)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coos sounds</li> <li>Begins to sit without support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reaches for objects</li> <li>Responds to simple spoken requests</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likes to play with others, especially parents</li> <li>Responds to own name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stays simple games such as stacking "bead" for "ho" or waving "bye bye"</li> <li>Copies gestures</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rolls over</li> <li>Reaches for objects</li> <li>Babbles "m", "n", "uh", "ah"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responds to simple spoken requests</li> </ul>
<b>18 MONTHS (1 1/2 YEARS)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows simple instructions</li> <li>Kicks a ball</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays simple pretend such as feeding a doll</li> <li>Pulls up to stand</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Says sentences with 2 to 4 words</li> <li>Gets excited when with other children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Says "mama" and "dada"</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays for things in pictures when they're named</li> <li>Copies adults and friends, like waving when other children wave</li> <li>Climbs well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Says simple words</li> <li>Knows what ordinary things are for (for example, telephone, brush, spoon)</li> <li>Plays simple pretend such as feeding a doll</li> <li>Plays to show others something interesting</li> </ul>
<b>2 YEARS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays for things in pictures when they're named</li> <li>Copies adults and friends, like waving when other children wave</li> <li>Climbs well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays simple pretend such as feeding a doll</li> <li>Pulls up to stand</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays for things in pictures when they're named</li> <li>Copies adults and friends, like waving when other children wave</li> <li>Climbs well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays simple pretend such as feeding a doll</li> <li>Pulls up to stand</li> </ul>
<b>3 YEARS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays for things in pictures when they're named</li> <li>Copies adults and friends, like waving when other children wave</li> <li>Climbs well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays simple pretend such as feeding a doll</li> <li>Pulls up to stand</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays for things in pictures when they're named</li> <li>Copies adults and friends, like waving when other children wave</li> <li>Climbs well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays simple pretend such as feeding a doll</li> <li>Pulls up to stand</li> </ul>
<b>4 YEARS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays for things in pictures when they're named</li> <li>Copies adults and friends, like waving when other children wave</li> <li>Climbs well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays simple pretend such as feeding a doll</li> <li>Pulls up to stand</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays for things in pictures when they're named</li> <li>Copies adults and friends, like waving when other children wave</li> <li>Climbs well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays simple pretend such as feeding a doll</li> <li>Pulls up to stand</li> </ul>

These are just a few of many important milestones to look for. For more complete checklists by age visit [www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.



# WORK TO ELIMINATE SEXUAL ASSAULT IN YOUR COMMUNITIES

Submitted by Denine Lasch, JD, Florence County Sexual Assault prevention coordinator.



Denine Lasch, JD

In April of 2001, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) started the first formal nationwide Sexual Assault Awareness Month campaign. It started as a campaign that brought attention to the problem. In 2005, the campaign shifted from awareness to prevention. They didn't want to just bring awareness; they want to provide communities with the tools to stop the problem before it starts.

According to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) and the NSVRC, a sexual assault occurs approximately every 68 seconds in the U.S. one in six women, and one in ten men, have experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. Most victims knew their attacker. It was estimated that 43 percent of men have experienced sexual harassment or assault. Sexual assault affects everyone. These numbers are estimated based on the reported incidents. If we knew how many actually occurred, I have no doubt these numbers would be greater. People who have been sexually assaulted don't report for a plethora of reasons including but not limited to shame, embarrassment, feeling alone, not trusting the systems.

Every year, Pee Dee Coalition takes part in Sexual Assault Awareness Month by providing activities, events and social media campaigns to bring awareness to the problem and provide options to prevent it from occurring. We call upon our communities to approach the problem from supportive stance. Everyone has the ability to do something, even something small, to help end sexual assault.

This year, Pee Dee Coalition is using the theme, "Eliminate Sexual Assault: Know your part. Do your part." Sexual assault in your community can be prevented before it happens. It is an issue that takes the majority of a community to stop. We are asking you to take a moment to reflect on what you personally can do to help eliminate sexual assault in your communities. Sexual assault comes from a cultural norm that perpetuates victim-blaming and the continued unwillingness to change these age-old norms.

The first step is to know your part. As a member of this community, what role do you play in stopping sexual assault? Even if you haven't been victimized of sexual assault, you likely know someone who has been. This person may or may not have told you. People that are support systems for those who have survived sexual assault are still being affected by it. On the other side, most people have heard someone say something that expresses violence towards another person.

I can think of multiple occasions where someone compared an inconvenience to rape. Can you think of a time that happened? Think of how you responded or didn't respond. What were you feeling in that moment? Is there a reason you didn't react? Knowing how you can affect change can be intimidating for many people. There is this societal rule that says don't rock the boat, stay calm and complacent where you are. As history has shown us, standing up to harmful behaviors and being a part of the change is what continues to inspire this country to make changes. They may not be monumental changes, but even the small ones continuing over time encourage large change in the end.

The second step is doing your part. Often times this looks like bystander intervention. Positive change could look like embracing your role to show their support for survivors, standing up to victim blaming, shutting down rape jokes, correcting harmful misconceptions, promoting everyday consent and practicing healthy communications with children and youth.

Bystander intervention isn't always stepping in to actively stop a sexual assault. The three Ds of bystander intervention are: direct, delegate and distract. Direct intervention can look like calling out someone's joke or their sexually violent or abusive behavior. Delegating can look like calling law enforcement and telling someone else with more influence to intervene. Distraction is exactly what it sounds like, whether you interrupt the act by pulling attention to you, asking for help for yourself, or just in general pulling the attention away from the person being harmed.

Being an active bystander can also include checking in with the person being harmed. Maybe you ask them if they're ok. Maybe you ask them if they're comfortable with the person you see potentially causing harm. Maybe you just offer a friend the option to come to you if they ever need to disclose something because you're willing to listen, believe and support them.

Being a supporter of someone who has experienced sexual violence can oftentimes include questions and language that further victimize the person that was assaulted. Not everyone is trained in trauma-informed response, and that's okay. After all, we're human, we are going to make mistakes and unintentionally harm people.

Pee Dee Coalition provides in-service trainings, community education, prevention education and female-centered self-defense training. Our goal is to make sure the community is as educated in prevention and use this knowledge to act to end the violence. Our goal is not only to eradicate sexual assault in our community, but also have our citizens understand why they are vital to the goal.

Pee Dee Coalition encourages any person, organization or community to reach out if you would like education on the topic of sexual assault or ways that you can be a part of the solution. Every action matters, regardless of how big or small it is.





# IT WAS NOT MY FAULT Submitted by the Naomi Project



I was groomed, misused and bemused by the abuse.  
 He said it was all my fault.  
 You know, the sexual assaults.  
 Even with proof.  
 I was fooled by the accused, to believe that you'd refuse to believe (the) truth.  
 So, I barricaded myself with hatred and self-medicated my bruises.  
 I hated I was labeled a troubled youth.  
 No one came to my rescue, so I never grew.  
 I presumed my own doom.  
 Degraded and afraid, I separated from my self-worth and virtue.  
 Betrayed without safety I had no one to run to.  
 But God!!  
 He removed all the excuses I used to stay in myself made bog.  
 And turned my scars into tools I could use to mend my own heart.  
 Instead of living distraught and appalled, self-healing doesn't have to be so hard.  
 I can stand tall and say to my feelings, and thoughts that those lies I was taught are all false.  
 It really was not my fault!  
 -Dina



## Ending Sexual Assault Requires ALL OF US



“We all need to be a little more supportive of each other.”  
 – Tia Mowery



## EXPANDING EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT TO MEET PEE DEE FAMILIES' NEEDS

Alice Curry Gallego, outreach coordinator at the CARE House of the Pee Dee



SEXUAL BEHAVIOR  
PROBLEMS ARE COMMON,  
THEY ARE SERIOUS - AND  
FOR CAREGIVERS  
LOOKING FOR SUPPORT,  
**THERE IS HOPE!**

Have I done something wrong? What will others think about me and my child now? Is their childhood over? These are only a few of the thousands of questions many caregivers ask themselves when they are referred to the CARE House of the Pee Dee for services. Those questions become even more complex for caregivers of children who have acted out against another child. How will this impact their future? How can I protect both of my children after one has harmed the other? Who can I trust to ask for help?

As a nationally accredited Children's Advocacy Center, the CARE House is a safe place where families can go following allegations of abuse and neglect to receive quality investigative services, evidence-based counseling, advocacy and support.

Of the 750 children served by the CARE House in 2022, the majority of cases involved abuse or neglect perpetrated by an adult – most frequently a family member. However, national statistics show that approximately 20-25 percent of cases handled by Children's Advocacy Centers across the country involve a child sexually acting out against another child.<sup>1</sup>

These behaviors are common, and they are serious – and for caregivers looking for support, there is hope!

With effective, evidence-based treatment, children can go on to live lives free from such behaviors – impacting not only themselves and their families, but the safety and health of their communities! With these children in mind, the CARE House set out to meet the complex needs of children with sexual behavior problems by incorporating a new evidence-based treatment called PSB-CBT.

Problematic Sexual Behaviors – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (PSB-CBT), is an evidence-based treatment effective in addressing Problematic Sexual Behaviors (PSB) along with general behavior problems. Boasting a 98 percent success rate, research shows that only two percent of children who have successfully completed treatment go on to represent the behaviors later in life.

“Often children are exploratory and need to learn rules and skills to make an adjustment,” says Andrea McConkey, a master's level intern training in the model. Those adjustments come during weekly

group sessions led by highly trained therapists who teach sexual behavior rules, impulse control and other skills practiced at home with caregivers. Caregivers are a key to success, participating in their own weekly group sessions and learning to reinforce content delivered to their children.

Since the launch of the program in March 2022, close to 30 individuals have participated in treatment so far. While the current PSB program serves children ages seven – twelve and their caregivers, the CARE House hopes to grow the program to include both a preschool and adolescent model in the future. The organization is currently the only provider in the Pee Dee to offer the treatment and one of only four to do so within the state.

“I believe that children deserve to live in a safe world,” says Casey Wilkes, LPCA, a CARE House therapist trained in the model. “When that world is turned upside down, they deserve a place where they can receive support and healing. The need for treatment programs like this in our community is a lot greater than I originally knew.”

While not all children who act out sexually have been victims of abuse themselves, because many of the risk factors overlap, the treatment also serves a preventative purpose.

The CARE House mission is to promote help, hope and healing to child abuse victims and their families through quality services and prevention and the PSB program is a growing source of hope within the Pee Dee and an intentional component in the organization's abuse prevention approach.

### References:

National Children's Alliance. (2023, March 17) Addressing Youth and Children with Problematic Sexual Behaviors. [www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/problematicsexualbehaviors/](http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/problematicsexualbehaviors/)

The CARE House of the Pee Dee is a Children's Advocacy Center with a mission to promote help, hope and healing to child abuse victims and their families in a nurturing environment through investigative and support services. Serving Florence, Marion, Dillon and Clarendon counties, CARE House is located at 1920 Second Loop Road in Florence, South Carolina. For more information visit us at [www.thecarehouse.com](http://www.thecarehouse.com) or contact us at 843-629-0236.



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# SILENCED SURVIVORS - AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT

Submitted by Sharesa McCray, Ph.D., MSW, LCSW, LISW-CP, LCASA



Sharesa McCray

Often times when we hear of sexual assault survivors, we do not consider African American (AA) young men as victims. Much of this has been influenced by culture and gender roles/normatives that children have been socialized to conform to. AA young boys are likely at a higher risk for being sexually assaulted due to misperceptions and prejudices of their victimization. These survivors

often do not disclose that they have been assaulted due to the fear of the reactions, misjudgments and/or lack of support they may receive during post assault adjustment. As a result, they do not receive the appropriate follow up services, such as, mental health counseling, family support services, forensic interviewing, victim advocacy or consultation that could help them with healing and re-direction.

There are things that we should consider when it pertains to the intersectionality of AA male assault survivors. The first is that there is a double identity within this population, both gender and race influences their experience sexually. The narrative of being sexually victimized does not fit into the traditional role of a man and more specifically for a Black man. For survivors who were violated by other males, they are often afraid that they would be considered homosexual, although this may not actually be their sexual orientation. Homophobia within our society has created a space where male survivors in general are afraid to disclose what has happened to them in their childhood, or as adults. AA boys are taught to believe in masculinity and to be a “man’s man,” which translates into, “you are not allowed to hurt or express emotions outside of pride.” This narrative contributes to the under reporting of AA male survivors. To respond to the victimization of AA male sexual assault survivors, one must be aware of their own biases and misperceptions of AA men, their sexuality most importantly, prior injustices within the U.S.

There is historical significance within the current response and underreporting of AA male survivors, which dates back to the Jim Crow Law era. According to Patricia Hills Collins in *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (2002), Black males’ sexual roles were constructed as being aggressive and beastly, therefore unlikely to be harmed or victimized by sexual violence. Black men were not seen as passive or human enough to be considered a victim. Instead, they were constructed as the opposite to justify prejudice and murderous behaviors against them. This narrative gave a rationalization of Black men being lynched, in order to protect the innocence and virtue of White

women in the U.S. Given the fate of 14-year-old Emmett Till in 1955, who was abducted, tortured, killed and beaten beyond recognition by two older White men for, “whistling,” at a then 22-year-old White woman. Many Black men may find it hard to consider themselves as victims if a young boy at 14 years old could meet that sort of fate. Many are likely not to receive culturally appropriate help within formal systems, such as health care and mental health due to historical mistrust of formal systems. It is difficult to heal in a prejudice and racist society that fundamentally and unconsciously profiles you as being aggressive.

The loud, but silent cries of African American young men have been ignored due to conscious and unconscious biases within the communities and institutions who serve AA young men. There is much to be considered within the intersectionality. This includes considering their gender, race, religion, sexuality, socio-economic status and their cultural beliefs. Many young AA men are taught to not trust formal systems such as Child Advocacy Centers, Mental Health Therapists, Department of Social Services (DSS) or the Justice System, so many do not disclose this information to anyone their entire lives. These young men also face personal judgement and ridicule within their families and communities as Black men due to the notion that he should “man up” and not consider himself a victim of sexual abuse. Ignoring the abuse and cries of AA young men has caused forms of maladjustment post assault, difficulties such as, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (which is often undiagnosed due to stigma of mental health in the African American community), substance use, dropping out of formal education, and legal issues. In order to address this silent issue, key stakeholders and multidisciplinary professionals such as, Child Advocacy Centers, medical doctors, sexuality educators, faith-based leaders, mentors and DSS should collaborate and focus on creating an environment where these young men can voice their experiences and needs to adjust adaptively personally and within community living.

Currently, there is a dearth of research released to this topic due to the non-disclosure and non-participation of AA males in empirical research. It is imperative that more studies focus on AA child, adolescent and adult males’ experience exclusively to create implications and models of treatment for this specific population. This is not an individualistic approach, but rather a systematic/ecological approach that would allow for solution focus on the mezzo and macro levels. AA young males need the organic support from their natural support system, and this requires healthcare and helping professionals to understand the multicultural significance of sexual violence within the African American community for men, women, LGBTQIA and non-binary individuals. This could be accomplished via training, research and strategic research planning (i.e., participatory action research) that is innovative and culturally informed to assist and work alongside this population.





# MUSC HELPS HOSPITALIZED PATIENTS GET ADDICTION TREATMENT

Submitted by Medical University of South Carolina



Peer Recovery Coach Patrick Harmon, left, and Dr. Allison Smith, across from him, meet with colleagues.

**CHARLESTON** -Allison Smith, M.D., hates to see addiction not only take over patients' lives but also cause life-threatening health problems.

Case in point: Lauren, a young woman struggling with heroin use, who arrived at University Hospital in Charleston with a blood infection. She got it when unhealthy bacteria entered her body through her use of needles. The infection led to a life-threatening condition called endocarditis.

Lauren not only needed surgery and a pacemaker at just 29 years old, she also needed help quitting the drug that almost killed her. She found that help through Smith's team, a group that includes a peer recovery coach and a care coordinator who are passionate about helping people struggling with drug and alcohol issues get treatment while still in the hospital.

Smith said getting patients on evidence-based medications that treat opioid use disorder is essential. They help cut back on cravings and withdrawal symptoms and can allow them to return to their normal lives. They also decrease the risk of overdoses and death.

The program builds on the success of a similar one in the Emergency Department at MUSC Health that focused on fast-access to treatment for opioid addiction. Peer recovery coach Patrick Harmon has worked for both programs.

"Most of the time when I introduce myself and I say that I am a person in long-term recovery, most patients usually let their guard down a little bit at that point, and they say, 'OK,

well I'm open to hear what you have to share with me,'" Harmon said.

As a person in recovery, he knows how challenging what he's asking them to do — try medication to help them quit using drugs or alcohol — really is. "It took me multiple attempts," Harmon said.

"I had a friend, one of my childhood friends, in adulthood had been an actively using addict, and I had not seen him for a while. The next time I saw him, he was different. And I said, 'Hey, I haven't seen you for a while, man. Where you been?' So, he was like, 'I went to rehab,'" Harmon said.

"It wasn't long after that that I picked up the phone book and was looking for something related to rehab. So, I think really, running into that friend who had made some changes in his life was the seed being planted for me."

He tries to plant that seed for patients in the hospital. Some are more than ready to give medications approved for treating addiction a try. Others aren't. In those cases, he gives out his business card and a supportive message. "If you change your mind at any point, and you decide that you actually want to talk to someone about any substance use related challenges you might have, you can feel free to give me a call at any time."

Smith calls her group the Addiction PMC team. P stands for peer, M for medications and C for complex care coordination. It has a statewide reach. "We've seen people from over 31 counties from South Carolina. We're not just serving the Charleston area."

Read the full story here (<https://web.musc.edu/about/news-center/2023/03/14/musc-health-team-helps-hospitalized-patients-get-addiction-treatment>)

**We Need to Talk...**

April is  
**Alcohol Awareness Month**

[#AlcoholAwarenessMonth](#)

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APRIL IS  
**ALCOHOL**  
AWARENESS MONTH



# DON'T LET UNDERAGE DRINKING RUIN YOUR PROM

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



Erica Buffkin

Excitement is in the air with the arrival of prom season in Florence. So many students are looking forward to dressing up and making memories at these special events with friends. While we share in their excitement, we also want to make students and parents aware of the dangers of underage drinking which is, unfortunately, sometimes associated with prom and especially after-parties.

During COVID, the use of alcohol in teens decreased. However, according to "The Journal of Adolescent Health," there was a rise in the number of parents who allowed their children to drink during the shutdown which is a most troubling trend. In South Carolina, nearly 50 percent of high school students will consume alcohol at some point during their high school years and many teens participate in binge drinking which has become a growing problem across the country. Binge drinking is defined as consuming four to five drinks during one event causing the BAC (blood alcohol content) level to rise to dangerous levels. Those that participate in this activity are more likely to be involved in risky behaviors including acts of violence, reduced sexual inhibitions and they're also more likely to drive a vehicle and be involved in a crash.

In order to minimize the potential dangers and consequences involved with underage drinking during the prom season, Circle Park Behavioral Health Services and the Florence County Coalition for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention, along with local law enforcement agencies have joined forces to support the "Don't Let Underage Drinking Ruin Your Prom," campaign. This campaign emphasizes the illegality of persons under the age of 21 purchasing, possessing or consuming alcoholic beverages as well as the legal responsibility of parents.



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

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

- Restaurant Walk-Throughs – AET members will be visible making walk throughs at local restaurants popular with prom goers and interacting with them to ensure that they understand the importance of having an alcohol-free prom night.
- Compliance Checks – AET members will be checking local establishments to ensure that alcohol is not making it into the hands of underage consumers.

Underage youth also need to be aware of the constructive possession statute in which anyone under the age of 21 can receive a citation or be arrested for possessing alcohol products, having them in their car or being at a party or event where underage drinking is taking place, EVEN if they are not drinking themselves. Youth should be particularly vigilant as to if alcohol is in a car they may be riding in or at a location that they may be at because they can be held responsible for the alcohol that is there even if it isn't open.

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



## PROM STATS

90% of teens believe their peers are more likely to drink and drive on prom night.

90%

Alcohol is involved in almost 1/3 of teenage car accident fatalities.

1/3 teen car deaths: CAUSED BY ALCOHOL

54% of students had 4+ drinks on prom night.

54%

100%

About 5,000 people under 21 die each year from underage drinking.

5,000





# DON'T LET UNDERAGE DRINKING RUIN YOUR PROM.



[www.circlepark.com](http://www.circlepark.com)

This ad was prepared by Circle Park under a federal award from the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SAPT BG) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), CFDA Number 93.959 Grant Award- B08TI084670



APRIL IS **ALCOHOL** AWARENESS MONTH

## ALANA'S STORY



“On May 17th 2020, I was hit head on by a drunk driver while traveling with my mother and three year old son. One of the members of my car did not make it; I lost my unborn son Travis, who was 30 weeks gestation.

I constantly think about what actions I could have done differently in my accident to have saved my son’s life and to have protected my passengers. There was nothing I could have done at that moment, but there is something I can do now, and I have made it my mission to protect other drivers on the road and to make sure this does not happen to anyone else.

I have chosen to volunteer with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to give my son’s passing a purpose. MADD has been incredibly supportive to me and I hope to be a part of that same support for others and to help create change in South Carolina.”





# HARTSVILLE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS RECOGNIZE THEIR OWN

Submitted by Michelle Byers Brown, director of Tourism and Communications, Public Information Office City of Hartsville

**HARTSVILLE-** In February during Black History Month, the Hartsville Police and Fire Departments recognized and honored the contributions of extraordinary women and men, active in their communities, in the field of law enforcement and firefighting. Black History Month is a time to celebrate African Americans in law enforcement, both historically and currently, who fought to make a difference in their communities. The Hartsville Police Department is honored to recognize the following officers.

Black History Month celebrates the contributions and legacy of African Americans across U.S. history, society and our local law enforcement. And now in the April's edition of Diversity Works, we recognize them for their service to our community.



Sergeant Gloria Mack, Court Administration, Victim Services & Community Outreach

The Hartsville Police Department recognized Sergeant Gloria Mack, Court Administration, Victim Services & Community Outreach, for her devotion and commitment to making Hartsville a great place to live.

Mack began her career in law enforcement at the Hartsville Police Department in 2000 and has served in many capacities over the last twenty-three years. She began her career as all officers do, by serving as a patrol officer in the Patrol Division. Mack has served at the ranks of corporal and sergeant in the Patrol Division and oversaw a shift of officers for several years. After her service in the Patrol Division, Mack was promoted to detective sergeant and oversaw the supervision of detectives while also maintaining her own investigative case load.

With the successful completion of her assignment in the Detective Division, Mack was transferred to the School Resource Officer Division and then to the Community Outreach and Victim's Services Division where she currently serves as the court administration officer, victim's advocate and community outreach sergeant.

Mack continues to serve her community well by helping countless victims and touching many lives in a positive way. HPD is honored to have her on our team.



Lieutenant Tenyonde Richardson, Command staff officer: Court Administration, Victim Services & Community Outreach

The Hartsville Police Department (HPD) honors the contributions and commitment of Lieutenant Tenyonde Richardson, command staff officer, Court Administration, Victim Services & Community Outreach.

Richardson began his career in law enforcement at the Hartsville Police Department in 2003 and has served in many capacities in the last twenty years. He began his career by serving in the Patrol Division and quickly climbed the ranks. He has served as a corporal and sergeant in the Patrol Division and supervised the day-to-day operations of a shift for several years. He was promoted to first sergeant and then lieutenant over the entire Patrol Division where he was the command staff officer in charge of the day-to-day operations of the division and all special service

activities of the department.

After several years of service in the Patrol Division, Richardson transferred to lead the Community Outreach Division where he currently serves. He now oversees the operations of the Court Administration, Victim's Advocate Services, Community Outreach and Special Events. Richardson has a servant's heart and has touched and positively changed many lives while serving in law enforcement.

We are proud and honored to serve alongside him, and we thank him for his many contributions over the years in law enforcement and his service in the United States Marine Corps.



Officer Ulysses Buck Dobson, Sr.

To the fallen, who have and continue to make a difference in our community. The Hartsville Police Department would like to honor the memory of Patrolman Ulysses "Buck" Dobson, Sr., who served and lost his life in the line of duty protecting our citizens.

In April of 1953, Dobson responded to a domestic violence call. When Dobson arrived at the scene, the suspect ran into the backyard and hid. Dobson ran into the backyard in pursuit and was shot by the suspect with a shotgun as he came between two houses. Dobson was transported to Byerly Hospital where he succumbed to his wounds the following day, April 20, 1953. He left behind a wife and four children. The suspect turned himself in to police two days after the shooting.

Dobson served with the Department of Public Safety for two years. He was the first African American officer to serve with the agency. His service and sacrifice will always be remembered.

As a family, the Hartsville Fire Department highlighted some of our outstanding members during Black History Month; a time where we observe distinguished African Americans throughout our country for their honorable contributions to our great nation. In the April edition of Diversity Works, we recognize them for their service to our community. We would pay homage to the following:



Kerlyn Mondesir

Fire Fighter Kerlyn Mondesir, or as we all know him "D."

Mondesir started his career in the fire service as part of our Junior Program in May 2018. He hit the ground running and within a short amount of time was responsible for helping lead his fellow juniors. During his time in the Junior Program, Mondesir was able to become a fully certified fire fighter and learn a plethora of additional information hanging around the station. After graduating high school, Mondesir made the decision to join the department as a volunteer fireman. With his certifications already underway, he was able to come right aboard and get to work.

Mondesir is an outstanding young man with many accomplishments outside of the fire service. We have enjoyed watching him grow over the last several years and cannot wait to see where he goes in the future. The Hartsville Fire family is grateful for Mr. Kerlyn "D" Mondesir.



## HARTSVILLE POLICE CONT'D



Tony Thomas

Tony Thomas began his fire service career in August 2018 when he accepted the role of volunteer fire fighter. Most of our members knew Thomas long before he decided to join the department, and it's not uncommon to hear him being referred to as, "Coach," around the firehouse because he taught or coached many of us at some point in our life and left an everlasting impression.

As a dedicated member of the Hartsville Fire Department and an employee of Darlington County School District, he has been a key asset in the department every time we have needed an apparatus to respond to emergency situations. As an excellent example of a leader, "Coach," took it upon his own initiative to get his driving certification, before any other certification because at the time, the department was in need. He is currently enrolled and in the process of becoming an interior firefighter through the South Carolina Fire Academy while he works a full-time job and responds to emergency calls when needed.

"Coach" Thomas is a remarkable example of being a leader and answering the call of duty.

Hartsville Fire Department continues spotlighting remarkable African Americans for their hard work and dedication to our



Mahliqe Andrews

community. We honor one of our newest members, Mahliqe Andrews. Andrews is a student athlete at Coker University and volunteer firefighter with the Hartsville Fire Department.

Andrews was attending a fire extinguisher presentation at Coker last year and approached the fire marshal afterwards, stating that he was interested in a career in arson investigation. They had a conversation and ultimately decided that he would need fire experience to supplement his career choice. A meeting was set up with the fire marshal and fire chief, where Andrews showed interest and discussed the future. We learned that the trade was already in his blood when he spoke highly of his grandfather, who retired from the fire service as a captain. A few weeks later in September of 2022, Andrews joined the department. To say the rest is history, would be an understatement. Andrews has done very well as a new fireman and spends most of his free time hanging around with the guys on shift learning new skills. He is currently in class to get his certification to be an interior fire fighter.

Andrews has a bright future ahead of him in whatever he decides to do. The Hartsville fire family is very thankful for his dedicated service while juggling his very busy schedule.

## THE HEART OF SERVICE: RECOGNIZING THE INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS

Submitted by United Way of Florence County



Volunteers from Recruiting Solutions, which participated in Day of Caring at United Way.

Volunteering can be a critical component of a nonprofit's success, providing additional capacity, expertise and community support that can help the organization achieve its goals. It is often seen as an opportunity to give back to the community and make a positive impact on the lives of others. For over 67 years, United Way of Florence County has been graced with hundreds of volunteers that provide their goodwill and generosity to make a positive impact on the community.

United Way's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and Shop for a Good Cause initiative, along with their annual Day of Caring, generates hundreds of dedicated individuals that volunteer their time. Without volunteers, United Way's reach would not be as profound. So far this year, volunteers have given over 300 hours to United Way, generating an increased capacity and community support.

Rev. Mary Finklea, a community volunteer for over 18 years, said she volunteers because her faith invites her to love her neighbor and give what she can. "Volunteering at the United Way has brought me new friends and a deeper appreciation for the agency's mission. In our day to day lives, it's easy to stay in our silos. Volunteering through the VITA program at United Way has allowed me to get to know my neighbors better."

United Way's VITA program is a volunteer-based tax program dedicated to serving elderly, disabled, non-English speaking or

low-income individuals. So far, 72 individuals have received free tax assistance with the help of volunteers freely giving their time.

Christie Hebler, a community volunteer for over 28 years, said "I love volunteering with an organization that strives to impact as many lives as possible and makes a direct impact in our local community." Christie's efforts with United Way through the Shop for a Good Cause initiative provides United Way with essential support, allowing them to expand their outreach and achieve more than they would be able to on their own.

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

Volunteering for a non-profit can be a rewarding experience for individuals who want to make a difference in their community or support a cause they care about. When asked what they would say to encourage other people to start volunteering, United Way volunteers said, "Just do it. Start somewhere, and it will be so



Christie Hebler

rewarding that you can't help but do more." Others noted, "The fulfillment that you get back from helping others is more rewarding than you can imagine."

United Way of Florence County greatly appreciates those that positively impact the needs of our community by [volunteering.If](https://www.unitedway.org/volunteering-if) you are interested in volunteering, get started today by reaching out to United Way at [uwfloinfo@unwflorence.org](mailto:uwfloinfo@unwflorence.org) or 843-662-2407.



## WAGES RECEIVES FMU'S AAFSC DIVERSITY AWARD Articles submitted by FMU



*Dr. Charlene Wages and Dr. Todd Couch, president AAFSC*

Dr. Charlene Wages, vice president for Administration and Planning at Francis Marion University (FMU), received the FMU African-American Faculty and Staff Coalition's (AAFSC) Diversity Award at the organization's 22nd annual scholarship reception held at the FMU Performing Arts Center.

Wages joined the faculty of FMU in 1986 as an instructor of psychology. During her tenure, she has served as chair of the faculty for four terms and has held numerous leadership positions. She has been active in many community organizations and was the first FMU professor to hold the Hugh Leatherman chair for public service. Wages earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia, and her Master of Arts and doctor of philosophy degrees from Georgia State University.

The AAFSC Diversity Award is given annually by the coalition to highlight the work of individuals dedicated to celebrating diversity and inclusiveness at FMU and beyond.

Attorney Linward C. Edwards, II served as keynote speaker for the evening and received the Coalition's inaugural "Together We Can" award in recognition of his civic involvement. Edwards is a 2004 graduate of Francis Marion University where he received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree before earning his Juris Doctorate in 2010, from the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law in Washington, D.C. He is the principal and founder of The Law Offices of Linward C. Edwards II, LLC in Florence.

FMU President Fred Carter announced the creation of the Yvette Pierce Graduate Fellowship which will provide one undergraduate coalition scholarship student with a fellowship to continue their

education in a graduate program at FMU. The fellowship is named in honor of Yvette Pierce, a longtime reference librarian who recently completed research on the Hewn Timber Cabins and the lives of those who lived in them entitled, "A Plantation Economy and African Americans at Mars Bluff: A Brief Historical Perspective."

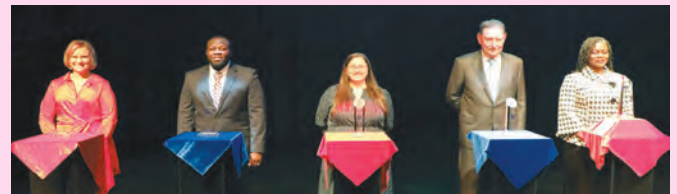
Carter also announced that Linda Sullen, former and longtime chair of the AAFSC, will receive the university's highest honor, the Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree, at the May commencement. Other recipients of this degree will be Robert E. Lee ('87), chair of the Board of Trustees and Dr. Peter King, FMU provost.

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

Dr. Todd Couch, assistant professor of sociology, is the current president of the AAFSC.

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

## FMU DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS



*L to R Vicki Elliott ('93), Deandre Cain ('13), Amy McAllister-Skinner ('07), Watson E. Snowden III ('77) and Mayor Teresa Myers Ervin ('90)*

Francis Marion University (FMU) honored five of its distinguished alumni at its annual Alumni Awards Ceremony on Thursday, March 2 at the FMU Performing Arts Center.

Mayor Teresa Myers Ervin ('90) of Florence was recognized as the university's 2023 Outstanding Alumni. Ervin earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from FMU. She has spent over forty years in the medical field and is currently employed by McLeod Regional Medical Center in the neonatal intensive care unit. In 2010, Ervin was elected to serve on the Florence City Council, where she served until she was elected Mayor of Florence in 2020.

Watson E. Snowden III ('77) of Florence received the Professional Industry Award in Public Service and Law. Watson graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. Throughout his career, he worked for the South Carolina Board of Health, the White House and the U.S. Department of State.

Amy McAllister-Skinner ('07) of Lake City was awarded the Professional Industry Award in Education and Arts. She received a degree in English Education. She has been an educator for sixteen years and was named the South Carolina Teacher of the Year in 2013. She currently serves as an assistant principal at Hannah-Pamplico Elementary/Middle School.

Deandre Cain ('13) of Florence received the Benjamin Wall Ingram III Young Alumnus Award. Cain graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in Management Information Systems. He has worked in the IT field for ten years and is currently a Network Security Engineer at McLeod Regional Medical Center.

Vicki Elliott ('93) of Manning was recognized as the Volunteer of the Year. Elliott graduated with a degree in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. Elliott worked in the medical field for over twenty years and currently works for Traditional Comfort LLC and Traditions Catering in Manning. Elliott is active in the community and volunteers with Feed My Starving Children, Ducks Unlimited and the annual FMU Foundation Golf Tournament. She also serves on the FMU Alumni Advisory Board, where she is a member of the Programming Committee.

## FMU PRESENTS ANNUAL MARION MEDALLION AWARDS



*LtoR Jim Brown, Pat Gibson-Hye Moore and Tim Norwood*

On February 27, 2023, businessmen Jim Brown and Tim Norwood and former Florence City Council member and community activist Pat Gibson-Hye Moore received Marion Medallion awards during a ceremony held at the Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center.

Brown and Norwood are business partners in EmployReward Solutions and Synergi, and have been instrumental in the revitalization of downtown Florence. The Francis Marion University alumni have made significant contributions to both the community and the university. Collectively, they have served on many boards and commissions in the area including the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce, the Florence Downtown Development Corporation, and Florence County Progress.

Moore has served on the Florence City Council, Florence 1 School Board and the Housing Authority of Florence Board of Commissioners. She organized the East Florence Community Organization over twenty-five years ago and is the co-founder of the South Carolina Pecan and Music Festival and chairman of the Florence Christmas Parade. She is working with House of Hope Executive Director Bryan Braddock to raise \$1 million to build a community resource building for the homeless in Florence.

The Marion Medallion Award recognizes Pee Dee citizens who have made sustained and significant contributions to improve the region and lives of its residents. Francis Marion University and the Morning News have presented the award annually since February 2012.



# TEACHING THE QUALITIES FOR BECOMING A GREAT MAN By Anna Bowman



Too often, when recurring problems happen within a community, people comment on them, and then simply go on with their lives. Thankfully, Shawn Ellerbe, founder of G-Lab Legacies, Inc., isn't one of those people. Faced with what he described as, "lack of youth programs for young males in his community," during candid conversations with his sons, he contemplated ways to combat the problems. While researching the cause and effect of some of these problems, he realized that a singular problem, (e.g., poverty, hunger, homelessness, single parent homes, etc.), oftentimes consisted of a cumulative effect, in which one event could set off a chain of other events in a young man's life.

Some of the complaints that Ellerbe was faced with were, that in our community there weren't enough "good men" in the world, which led him to theorize, "The best way to correct this problem was to go to the youths in the community and try and teach the qualities of a good man, in order for them to become great men themselves," he explained.

After identifying several key problems, Ellerbe shared his vision with LeKelvis Leaf. "Through conversations with LeKelvis Leaf, co-founder, I started the planning and implementing of topics and events," Ellerbe said, adding "We started reaching out to potential board members and we had some great people wanting to see this idea become a success," he recalled. "These were men from the Florence area, who had always given back to our youths, genuinely, with nothing more than wanting to see young men from our city become successful. We started meeting weekly, everyone brought a different quality to the table and saw that we were making a great team.

Established in July 2020, G-Lab Legacies, Inc., a non-profit organization, is identified by the acronym G-LAB, (Gentlemen Learning and Building Legacies). Its mission is to prepare young males with less-than-ideal backgrounds to become leaders in their homes and communities by providing them with the necessary tools to achieve their goals. The four principles of the organization are: guidance; leadership; accountability and balance.

To provide a sturdy foundation for local young men to have positive role models, the organization has enlisted a professional staff of volunteers from various backgrounds to work with the members of the organization to ensure a full and rich learning experience: Ledarrius (Shawn) Ellerbe, co-founder and president; LeKelvis Leaf, co-founder and vice president; Michael Valrie II, executive secretary; Marcus McElveen, public relations executive; Andrew Boatwright, parental liaison executive; Nathaniel Thomas

III, membership executive and Yvon McNeil-Goodman, digital marketing lead.

Today, nearly three years since its inauguration, G-Lab Legacies, Incorporated, currently has a membership of sixty-eight youths. Students are eligible for membership if they attend middle or high school in the Florence area. There is no official selection process, but applications are available via the organization's new website ([www.glablegacies.org](http://www.glablegacies.org)). The organization meets weekly for their touchpoint meetings, Mondays from 5:30 7 p.m., at the Bummies Event Space, 1203 Sopkin Avenue, Florence, SC. They also utilize virtual meetings via Zoom to stay in contact. G-Lab Legacies partners with other organizations for events outside of their regular touchpoint meetings. The organization has enlisted the talents of numerous guest speakers, including professional athletes, medical professionals, attorneys, business leaders and even the Mayor of Florence has had an opportunity to speak with the group.

The staff has created a curriculum to prepare the young men with real life experiences. "We have introduced different activities that we felt they would definitely use on their journey to become great men." The classes to educate our young men are:

- Budgeting/Finance
- Time Management
- Character Building
- Entrepreneurship
- Law Enforcement Interaction
- Conflict Resolution
- Mental Health/Exercise
- Recreation Activities (grilling, bowling, fishing, etc.)
- Minor Auto Repair

The goal is for the young men to use these skills to help them when it's time to lead their household. Several of these life skills will allow them to have a targeted head start on what is important for their futures. We have also taught the young men to give back to their community as well. We have completed several community service projects and initiatives throughout the city including:

- "Be the Change" Walk
- Back 2 School Kickball game and School supply Drive
- Toy Drive and Donation to McLeod's Children's Hospital
- Community Clean Up Project
- Adopt-A-Highway
- Food Giveaways
- Harvest Hope
- Trunk or Treat Festival
- "Leaving a Legacy" Photoshoot

Raised without a father in the home, Ellerbe is pleased with the growth and development of G-LAB Legacies, Inc., on the lives of the young men in the program. He looks forward to greater accomplishments in the immediate future.

Donations from individuals and local businesses are the primary source of funding. Donations are always welcomed. For additional information about the program, visit the official website at [www.glablegacies.org](http://www.glablegacies.org). To donate, please contact Shawn Ellerbe via email: [glablegacies@gmail.com](mailto:glablegacies@gmail.com), or via mail at PO Box 6032, Florence, SC 29502.





## UNPAID PASSION *By Jennifer Robinson*



*Mrs. Brenda Murphy*

People volunteer for various reasons and for various outcomes, but for Mrs. Brenda Murphy, her motive is simple, selfless service to a state she loves and wants to see thrive. Murphy is the current president of the SC State Conference National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She is the first female elected as president in the organization's eighty plus years of existence and is a life member. She began her advocacy journey more

than 40 years ago as a member of the NAACP Branch in Charleston, SC. She currently is a member of the Columbia Branch NAACP. Prior to becoming president of the State Conference, she served as the State Conference Health Committee Chairperson and Youth and College Division Advisor. The NAACP is the home of grassroots activism for civil rights and social justice. They advocate, agitate and litigate for the civil rights owed to Black America. In cities, schools, companies and courtrooms, it is the legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Thurgood Marshall and other activists and abolitionists.

Murphy's personal mission is to, "advocate for justice and equality for all people," within the context of the game changers identified by the NAACP national leadership. The game changers provide the framework for advocacy for state conferences, branches, college chapters and youth councils. They include health and well-being, education innovation, race and justice, advocacy and litigation, inclusive economy and next generation leadership. Murphy shared her journey with the NAACP began after she received the assistance of the Charleston NAACP branch in the 1990s. She stated she experienced challenges that were discriminatory in nature during her stay in the Charleston area and sought assistance from the local branch to ensure fair unbiased treatment. After this experience, she joined the NAACP and committed herself to serve others encountering situations

that were discriminatory in nature. She stressed the important of reaching back and helping others, it was her way of giving back to the organization and to the community. She moved back to the Columbia area to be in closer proximity to family and joined the Columbia Branch NAACP to continue her service to others.

Murphy became a member of the NAACP SC State Conference Executive Committee. As a member of the executive committee, her background in nursing was fitting to her leadership as the health committee chair. The importance of this committee is significant because of the many health challenges we face as Black people and people of color. Because of her experiences in nursing, Murphy was, and continues to be able to identify healthcare challenges and assist communities in finding solutions to healthcare barriers. The other passion is collaborating with and educating young people. She served as state youth advisor on the executive committee, serving in this position for a number of years. "I am passionate about helping our youth," said the wife, mother and grandmother. "Even in my role as state president, I believe we must engage the youth and young adults at all levels." She describes the need to mentor our youth and young adults and stresses the importance of doing so because, "they are our future leaders."

Murphy is proud to be the first female president in the state's history, but she said her work is more about inclusivity. She stresses the importance of all people being empowered and encouraged to be engaged in their respective communities to ensure we maintain the rights our ancestors fought and gave their lives for. Murphy stated, "There are various points of view and all of them are important to the mission of the NAACP." She believes being engaged leaders will help accomplish what the founders of the organization set out to do 114 years ago. Volunteering provides many rewards but for Murphy one of the main rewards is a rich legacy.

For more information about the NAACP SC State Conference, visit [www.sчнаacp.org](http://www.sчнаacp.org). To donate, please send check or money orders to NAACP SC State Conference via mail to PO Box 1148, Columbia, SC 29202. You can also join your local branch.

## LINDA MALLICK HONORED AS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AT MCLEOD

*Submitted by McLeod Health*



*(L/R) Linda Boone, director of Volunteer Services for McLeod Regional Medical Center and Linda Mallick*

McLeod Regional Medical Center (MRMC) named Linda Mallick as the 2022 Volunteer of the Year.

Mallick, a Florence resident, is the 35th recipient of the McLeod Volunteer of the Year award. She began volunteering for McLeod in 2013. Mallick volunteers for the McLeod Center for Cancer Treatment and Research and on the inpatient oncology unit of McLeod Regional Medical Center. She is also a member

of the McLeod Volunteer Auxiliary Board, the McLeod Auxiliary Scholarship Committee and the Helping Oncology Patients Everyday (HOPE) Fund Advisory Committee.

In presenting the award to Mallick, Linda Boone, director of Volunteer Services for McLeod, shared, "In 2015, when I came to McLeod to work with this great group of volunteers, I was excited to see Linda's name on the list. I knew her reputation

as a hard worker and a fighter for those in need. She also has a strong sense of community and wants to be a part of the good things happening in and around Florence."

"Additionally, Linda has a unique sense of humor and is willing to speak up when she sees something could be better. She is not only willing to recognize challenges but is also willing to think outside of the box for a possible solution. As a breast cancer survivor for 11 years, Linda's passion for McLeod is for the oncology patients whether she is volunteering in the infusion center or on the oncology floor. She has also served the hospital with more than 2,000 volunteer hours and has been an active volunteer for nine years. Please join me in congratulating Linda Mallick as our 2022 Volunteer of the Year for McLeod Regional Medical Center," added Boone.

In addition to the Volunteer of the Year announcement, Robert Christopher was recognized with the Most Clinical Hours\* in 2022 with 427 and Robin Welty received the Most Crafter Hours with more than 8,000 hours.

More than 200 volunteers who contribute outstanding service to McLeod Regional Medical Center were honored for their service during 2022. These dedicated individuals contributed more than 42,750 volunteer hours to the hospital over the past year.



# A STORY OF HELP & HOPE: VOLUNTEERING AT THE CARE HOUSE

Submitted by Alice Curry Gallego, outreach coordinator with the CARE House of the Pee Dee



Dorothy Lee

Dorothy Lee first connected with the CARE House of the Pee Dee three years ago, following the loss of her husband. Lee joined an exercise class at a local senior center, where she was exposed to volunteers who helped to answer phones, greet guests and have a positive impact within their community. With that example in mind, Lee set out to find a local organization where she could share her time, experience and wealth of skills to benefit her community. What she found through her experience as a volunteer with the CARE House was so much more!

The CARE House of the Pee Dee is a non-profit Children's Advocacy Center with a mission to promote help, hope and healing to child abuse victims and their families through quality services and prevention. Serving children and families throughout Florence, Marion, Clarendon and Dillon counties, the CARE House is a safe place where families can go following allegations of abuse to receive investigative services, evidence-based counseling, advocacy and support as they heal from the trauma of abuse.

For Lee, the CARE House is a place where everyone knows her name, a place where she is greeted with a smile and where her lifetime of experience is valued, celebrated and appreciated. After retiring at the age of 80 from a career in business, including roles as a secretary and finance manager, Lee has the opportunity to utilize her decades of experience to support the CARE House team and clients. "I don't think I'm better than anyone else because I have a degree, but I want to use what I know and what I've learned to do things well and do things right," shared Ms. Lee who graduated from Florence-Darlington

Technical College in 1994 after 14 years of working while in school. Ms. Lee's unmatched work ethic and strong attention to detail makes her the perfect person to assist with mailings, identify typos and finding inconsistencies.

From the outside looking in, Lee may appear simply to be someone who volunteers once or twice each week, assisting with organizational mailings and making appointment reminder calls for families coming in for forensic interviews, medical evaluations or counseling appointments. However, for this small non-profit, the efforts of Lee and other volunteers like her are invaluable.

"CARE House volunteers are superheroes" shared Volunteer Coordinator, Allana Hilley. "They help us to shine bright through our mission by supporting our staff and clients in a variety of ways." As a nonprofit, the CARE House relies on grants and other funding to serve approximately 250 children each year and volunteers, graduate and undergraduate interns have a significant impact in helping that funding to go much further within the lives of the clients served.

Volunteers play a hands-on role in many of the services offered at the CARE House. Whether they are greeting clients upon arrival, following up with families to check in and offer additional support, filing charts, drafting reports or assisting with community events, volunteers have their

fingerprints all over the organization.

"The CARE House gives me a reason to volunteer and to support others in my community," said Lee, who is proud to work collaboratively with so many members of the CARE House team. "I get along with the whole team," she shared, "everyone from the counselors and the administrative staff to the forensic interviewers and especially, McGuffy!"

A five-year-old yellow lab, McGuffy is the CARE House facility dog, who provides a calming presence to children and families during forensic interviews, counseling sessions and even during court. Lee can often be found playing with McGuffy in between projects and enjoys sharing her love with him.

When asked what she wants others considering volunteering with the CARE House to know, Lee shared "I highly recommend it! It enlightens one's world to what we can truly be: supporting one another and working together for each other."

"At the end of my life, I want to do good for all of God's people," says Lee. "The CARE House is truly a wonderful place for all people."

To learn more about the CARE House and ways to get involved, visit [www.thecarehouse.com/volunteer](http://www.thecarehouse.com/volunteer) for more information or for a volunteer application or contact Volunteer Coordinator, Allana Hilley at [ahilley@thecarehouse.com](mailto:ahilley@thecarehouse.com) with questions.





## CELEBRATING HOPEHEALTH'S SYLVIA JACKSON DURING NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH

*Submitted by HopeHealth Publications Coordinator, Sheridan K. Murray*



*Sylvia Jackson*

In August of 2022, HopeHealth volunteer Sylvia Jackson reached an important milestone. She earned gold status, meaning she had given over 100 hours of service working in the New Patient Welcome Center at the Medical Plaza! Since then, Jackson has gone on to volunteer over 500 hours and is celebrating one year of volunteering with HopeHealth.

We sat down with Jackson to ask her a few questions about being a HopeHealth volunteer.

Are you a native of Florence?

No, I am originally from Georgetown, SC. I moved to Florence after my husband, and I retired. We wanted to be close to Georgetown but not in Georgetown.

What did you do before you retired?

I worked for Social Security for 19 years, and before that, I worked for the IRS for 12 years. In all, I worked for the federal government for 31 years.

What made you want to volunteer with HopeHealth?

I wanted to do something to learn about the community, while still giving back to it. I looked at a few different agencies, and then I checked out HopeHealth and the new volunteer program. I thought it would be a good fit since it's along the lines of what I did for work.

What's a typical day like for you here?

I assist the front desk when they are short-staffed by finding out if the patients that come in are new patients or if they've been here before. I then direct them to the correct suites. If they need

further help, I can refer them over to another receptionist to check them in. Mostly, I escort them to the suites, and occasionally I will go back and help in the lab area, checking patients in at the kiosks. Do you like volunteering with HopeHealth?

I really enjoy it! Right now, I'm only volunteering four hours a day for three days a week, so it really goes fast. There is no boredom here, and everyone is really nice. I like it here a lot; it makes me happy!

What's your favorite part of volunteering?

I think my favorite part is working with the people - the customers and the employees.

If you had to describe yourself with three words, which would you choose?

I'd choose the following: patient, caring, good listener.

What are your hobbies apart from volunteering?

I read and listen to audiobooks a lot. My husband and I also travel quite a bit.

We thank you, Jackson, for her commitment and light she gives to our community and our patients!

Join HopeHealth Volunteers and assist our guests in navigating their health care experience while also growing your skills, forming new friendships and improving your mental and overall health. By volunteering at HopeHealth, you help us provide services to those who often encounter social and financial roadblocks to receiving health care. Volunteer opportunities include greeting and guiding guests, serving special patient populations, providing social support to patients, outreach and more.

To learn about how to become a volunteer with HopeHealth, or to encourage others to give their time, visit [hope-health.org/volunteer](https://hope-health.org/volunteer) or contact Cindy Averitt, manager of volunteer programs, at (843) 432-2942 or [volunteer@hope-health.org](mailto:volunteer@hope-health.org).

## THE PASSION FOR HELPING OTHERS IN NEED

*By Anna Bowman*



*Janice Bogan*

There is no better way to stay motivated than to find something you're passionate about, for Janice Bogan, being a volunteer with Lighthouse Ministries of Florence, has been her passion for the past two years.

Lighthouse Ministries, established in 1996, is a faith-based non-profit that provides various assistance to Florence County families in financial crisis. The organization works to prevent homelessness by providing

for basic needs during times of crisis. According to the organization's website, 2100 households are served annually. The organization would not be able to serve others without the hard work of dedicated volunteers.

Bogan, a retiree, was happy to become one of those dedicated volunteers. "After hearing about Lighthouse Ministries, I attended one of their open houses and was very impressed; not only with the services provided, but how those services are delivered. The staff and volunteers respectively interact and communicate with each other as they passionately work to assist clients with life's basic needs. They truly believe in giving every person value and fair treatment. I like the fact that Lighthouse Ministries puts faith into action," she stated.

Lighthouse Ministries has an ongoing need for volunteers, and Bogan was honored to offer her front office services. "My primary responsibilities are screening calls and walk-ins for

services and informing clients of guidelines related to those services." As a retiree for over a decade, Bogan finds her volunteerism with the organization a true win-win situation. "Volunteering has helped reinforce my belief that I am a part of a larger community. Therefore, I focus on the needs of others rather than my personal issues and concerns. It gives me a sense of pride and accomplishment when I can help others find solutions to life's challenges."

"I think it is very important and very rewarding to give of one's time, energy, skills, etc. to help others achieve their goals. Volunteering helps one maintain a positive outlook, meet new people, learn new skills and keep active physically and mentally. It is especially gratifying to know that a person's life may be changed for the better because of you," she emphasized.

Bogan, a widow, is the mother of two sons, Jeremy (Lindsay) and Trevor. She is also grandmother to six delightful grandchildren. After retiring from the State University of New York in Albany, NY, she relocated to her home state and has resided in Florence for five years. She is a member of New Ebenezer Baptist Church and an arts enthusiast, (both visual and performing). Additionally, she enjoys reading, traveling, exercising, exploring new adventures, Bible study and being a member of the Wisdom Players Senior Theatre Company.

Lighthouse Ministries' website encourages volunteers to apply for various positions within the organization and works with a volunteer's schedules, as well as provide training for all volunteers to ensure confidence in providing services to applicants. Individuals interested in volunteering can visit the website for further details: [lighthouse@lighthouseflorence.org](mailto:lighthouse@lighthouseflorence.org)



# CONNECTIONS BETWEEN HOUSING INSECURITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Submitted by Michiko Williamson, Pee Dee Mental Health Supportive Housing Program supervisor. As told to Susan Carter, LPC-S



Michiko Williamson

Michiko Williamson, supervisor of Pee Dee Mental Health Center (PDMHC)'s Supportive Housing Program, has assisted several PDMHC patients with finding and securing temporary and permanent housing. The Supportive Housing program teaches participants independent living skills. This includes help with finding employment, being approved for disability benefits, applying for food stamps and enrolling in college or school. In addition, residents are taught how to establish healthy boundaries and build stronger support systems. Williamson reports that she has seen individuals go from being homeless with no income to being approved for government benefits or securing employment and being able to lease apartments or buy a home. Other milestones that would not have been possible without the safety net of supportive housing include, individuals receiving high school diplomas, GEDS and college degrees. Some participants have regained custody of their children after obtaining stable housing. Supportive housing affords individuals struggling with chronic mental health and financial issues a sense of peace and comfort, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

Where a person lives impacts their mental health. As Williamson points out, "if a person does not have a permanent place to stay, it causes a sense of fear, uncertainty, frustration and hopelessness." Having a safe, affordable place to stay is a blessing that many are not able to experience. People who are housing insecure often experience low self-esteem, self-doubt and isolate themselves from their families, friends, community and support systems. They may neglect needed mental health treatment due to the necessity of being hyper-focused on where they are going to sleep at night. They are less motivated to comply with their medications, attend scheduled appointments, obtain community resources or to take care of themselves. Unhoused individuals may even lose respect for themselves and engage in degrading or criminal activities to help

them survive during their period of homelessness. This behavior can also make it more difficult to maintain or establish independent living skills once a permanent home is located.

It is important for individuals experiencing homelessness to reach out for support from their mental health professional, family or community resources to obtain the support needed to make changes within their lives. Counselors will be able to assist in identifying the obstacles that are preventing individuals from living in a healthy environment. Mental health professionals can help motivate individuals to make the necessary changes to find housing, employment, childcare or establish income.

Advocates and community organizations can continue to work towards breaking the stigma of mental health conditions and related life problems including homelessness and unemployment. Pee Dee Mental Health Center has a wide range of services and support for our patients. Our MHPs are the main advocates and support systems for the patients we currently serve. Some of the programs that are currently offered through Community and Supportive Housing, Individual Placement Support (IPS), Intensive Community Treatment (ICT), Prevention and Recovery in Early Psychosis (PREP), Toward Local Care, Mobile Crisis, Adult and Children Services and Peer Support Services. The peer specialists have first-hand experience and knowledge when it comes to experiencing a mental health disorder, and they can support, encourage and motivate their peers to participate and stay engaged in their treatment, comply with medications, and work towards become an advocate for mental health. Most communities do not have enough affordable housing, so it has led to many of our mental health patients and their families' experiencing periods of homelessness due to increasing rent, not being able to feed

their families due to the high cost of food or being unable to provide for themselves and their families due to them being a fixed income. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, if a person's basic needs are not met it affects a person's safety, self-esteem, behavior and motivation, so it's important that advocates and community organizers continue to advocate for mental health by obtaining grants, establishing affordable housing, providing food vouchers and assisting with finding competitive employment.

Neighborhoods and towns that promote mental health can be identified by the number and variety of mental health awareness activities available. Community resources, support groups, positive and supporting advocates, and community forums to help to bring awareness are examples of these activities. Access to affordable healthcare, medications and housing are key indicators that communities are essential in promoting good mental health for all. Another positive sign is when local, state and federal agencies receive training on how to understand and support mental health. Most important, community members provide empathy and support to persons experiencing a mental health issue or crisis. Pee Dee Mental Health continues to be a strong advocate and support system.

This year we will be celebrating 30 years of bringing awareness to mental health by having our annual Mental Health Walk, hosting a community forum where we are reintroducing the services we offer, sharing patient's testimonies and giving back to our community by hosting a thrifting event. These events will take place the week of May 15-18, 2023, and conclude with a celebration of our 30th Mental Health Awareness Walk on May 18, 2023. Please join us as we celebrate and pledge to continue working to improve the mental health of individuals and communities in the Pee Dee.



Mental Health Awareness Month



# MENTAL HEALTH CARE MATTERS: IT TAKES A VILLAGE Submitted by Kierra L. Eaddy



*Kierra L. Eaddy*

May is Mental Health Awareness month but it should be an everyday topic. Today, a goal sought by so many would be to get to a place of living a happy and healthy lifestyle within their community. A community is supposed to be there to provide a safe environment for all individuals, and mental health care could be the key to achieving overall improved and safer environments. "It takes a village to raise a child," is an old African proverb people have said for many years. Since it may indeed take a village to help raise a thriving individual, let us start to really discuss the importance of mental health care within many if not all communities. From school age to well into senior citizenship mental health care matters. To really be a helpful part of any community, a person should strive to be the best version of themselves possible. These days there is enough pressure to outwardly acknowledge the need for help and do something about it. Yet, needing and seeking out the necessary mental health care isn't something to be mocked or judged for by anyone. The fact that any age group or demographic can be affected by some sort of mental health problem during their lifetime, is the very reason you should start to take the essential steps to seek desired help.

We know that from birth, you're experiencing all aspects of life, the good, the bad and the ugly too. Education is pushed early and often, yet mental health care education and learning to cope with all that can happen in life is put on the back burner. Mental health care starts with our youth. Unfortunately, from an early age kids can experience situations that could affect both emotions and/or behaviors. Children and teens are at their most vulnerable when young. Kids can go through just as much as adults, if not more, like serious illnesses, poverty or other severe traumas that may require some sort of guidance through the various aspects of daily life and/or major life events. Whatever it is that plagues children and teens to the point of needing help, resources should begin to be readily available. The National Alliance on Mental

Illness (NAMI) is just one example of a movement dedicated to instilling the value of mental health care in the U.S. and providing nationwide resources. The damages that can be done from not treating mental health care issues can manifest in a plethora of ways and eventually become detrimental to not only the individual but the surrounding family, friends, and local community. Damages can range from a child or teen having their physical health deteriorate to difficulty learning and having problems with socialization, any of which could lead to a host of other negative repercussions over time. Early intervention is the answer.

Throughout a life span there are so many reasons that people from all age groups may need some sort of mental health care services. According to the Children's Health Council (CHC), anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults, age 18 and older, or 18.1 percent of the population every year. Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only 36.9 percent of those suffering receive treatment. This is just one example of how early intervention could help individuals lead happier, healthier and higher functioning lives. Young people are transitioning into adulthood and learning to cope with all aspects of life. During adulthood unless you're able to stay home and/or be taken care of, you now also have the added stress of either surviving financially or thriving financially. Adults

who are experiencing these changes whether physical, financial, emotional, or mental may need someone to talk to along the way, whether it be once or on a regular basis. Also, those individuals fortunate enough to see middle and old age have had many years to gain many experiences that may affect their lives in one way or another. Marriage(s), money, divorce(s) and death along with different stressors attached to each mentioned are just a few topics greatly affecting this age group. It is important that we all have different organizations like the CHC or NAMI that are advocating for communities by providing all sorts of contacts to encourage improving mental health care management.

An important starting point of developing better mental health care would be having more mental health care advocates that are able to assist those in crises, find the services desired. Mental Health care advocates come in all forms starting with family, friends, teachers as well as those working in the health care field. Instead of placing judgements on individuals or groups who may need some sort of help, it is crucial that we have people that understand that assistance and support is needed along the way. Support may look like may differ from person to person, but better and earlier mental health care management could assist in improving communities not only across the nation but worldwide. Not to mention populations investing in providing better mental health care could positively affect

**YOU ARE  
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ALONE**

**Depression among black youth is 30% higher than average for their age group.**



## MENTAL HEALTH CARE MATTERS CONT'D

their communities by lowering crime rates, lowering drug addiction rates, reducing suicide rates and developing stronger relationships. According to Mental Health America (MHA) the states with less access to mental health care have more adults in the criminal justice system. MHA states that six out of 10 of the states with the least access to mental health care also have the highest rate of incarceration. Suicide is now one of the leading causes of death with one every 11 minutes, yet suicide is preventable with the right help, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Seeking help for anything can be intimidating, add in the stigmas attached to the mental healthcare system and it's no wonder it has taken so long for the masses

to embrace and accept the thought of mental healthcare being as essential as physical healthcare. Especially when there is so much information linking mental healthcare issues to a decline in overall health, such as cardiac problems stemming from stress or eating disorders stemming from self-esteem troubles. Since mental health care doesn't always have to occur during a major life event, you may find you just need a neutral person to talk to. Talking to family and friends is a great first step. If it helps, to bettering your mental health care., but accepting that assistance doesn't always have to come from those closest to you A lot of people fear speaking with someone unknown, yet sometimes it's the unfamiliar person who may be able to do more good

than bad. Think of how many lives can be saved, changed or healed if the right resources and outlets are accessible to those in need. Whether for yourself or to aid others, please take some time now to research online and in your local areas for your available mental health care services and pass on the information to whomever is in need. It truly takes a village...

"Access to Mental Health Care and Incarceration," 2023. Mental Health America. 12 March 2023. <[mhanational.org/issues/access-mental-health-care-and-incarceration](https://mhanational.org/issues/access-mental-health-care-and-incarceration)>

"Facts about Suicide," CDC. 2022. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. 10 March 2023 <[cdc.org/suicide/facts/index.html](https://cdc.org/suicide/facts/index.html)>

## A GENUINE DESIRE TO EDUCATE ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS By Les Echols



Doris Williamson Smith – LPC-CS

**CONWAY** - Mental health is a profession that takes passion, perseverance and a genuine desire to help people. At a young age, Doris Williamson Smith knew she wanted to help others. She first thought about being a nurse, but in her own words, the "blood and guts" aspect of healthcare was not in her calling. Smith decided to take a different route and try Counseling as her profession. Smith went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts in

Psychology from the University of South Carolina: Coastal Carolina College, and a master's degree in counseling at Webster University. She is also a South Carolina licensed professional counselor and counselor supervisor.

Smith began her counseling career as an advocate volunteer with the Grand Strand Rape Crisis Center while attending graduate school. After graduate school, her first professional job was at the Coastal Carolina Psychiatric Hospital in Conway, SC as an assessment worker/crisis counselor. In November 1996, Smith began her 26-year career with the Waccamaw Center for Mental Health. She started as a child and adolescent counselor in the Georgetown Clinic. She worked primarily with children and families involved with the Department of Juvenile Justice and teenage boys at the Georgetown Marine Institute (DJJ Group Home). Smith was promoted to the position of the children and adolescent supervisor before becoming the Georgetown Clinic director in 2005. After serving as the clinic director for 11 years, Smith took the opportunity to start-up the South Strand Clinic located in Myrtle Beach which became Waccamaw's fourth full-service clinic. In November 2019, Smith joined the executive staff with the Waccamaw Center for Mental Health as the chief of staff. In her current position, she oversees management of the four clinics for Waccamaw in Horry, Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties. She is also a member of Waccamaw's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Smith is trained as a Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) counselor/supervisor and Trauma Focused CBT therapist through Project Best. She also has served as a probate court examiner in Georgetown, SC for 11 years.

Smith shared some of the challenges the industry currently faces, "The biggest obstacle that mentally ill people face is stigma. Unfortunately, in 2023, those diagnosed with a mental illness are still being treated differently than others. The lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers as well as others in the community can affect someone from asking for help and receiving treatment," explained Smith. "As a mental health professional, it is my job at work, as well as in the community, to educate the patients, their support systems, and the public about mental illness. It is important to know that patients can recover and live very fulfilling lives. I have seen it with my own two eyes over the past 28 years. It has been an honor and a blessing to work in the mental health profession," Smith continued.

Smith was born and raised in Georgetown, SC. She loves spending time with her family. Married to her best friend, Donnie Smith, they share three children, RD, Caroline and Alex and two very precious grandchildren, Hartley and Beau. In her spare time, she loves boating and fishing in the waters of Winyah Bay and the Black River. On Saturdays in the fall, you can guarantee that she is watching Clemson University football. She also enjoys spending time with her mother, Cookie Williamson which she describes as her favorite weekly lunch date.

Smith also embraces the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion. "I believe we should be kind to everyone, you never know what a person is going through or their journey. Every individual in this world is different, and no matter our differences, we all deserve to be loved, respected, safe, heard, cared for, empowered and appreciated. We can all learn lessons from one another if we sit back, listen, learn and experience. My grandmother said, "It takes all kinds of kinds to make this world go around." I believe she was right, we are all in this together," Smith concluded.



Mental Health Awareness Month



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If you've watched the news lately, you've probably heard about the Silicon Valley Bank collapse. It is the second-largest failure of a financial institution in U.S. history since the collapse of Washington Mutual during the 2008 financial crisis. On March 12, regulators also shut down Signature Bank. This has created some concern across the country and led to member phone calls. We want to reassure our members that these banks operate quite differently than credit unions and engage in more risky ventures.

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Palmetto First FCU was chartered 70 years ago this year. We are committed to serving our community and being here to serve for many generations to come. But please contact us if you are still concerned and want to talk. See credit union for details. Federally insured by NCUA.



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# 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.

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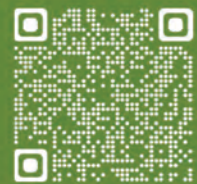


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ANDERSON BROTHERS BANK

## ANDERSON BROTHERS BANK RECOGNIZES NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Submitted by Samantha Strickland, Marketing Coordinator



Weston Bailey

**DILLON**– Anderson Brothers Bank is pleased to welcome the following new team members. Commercial Loan Officer Weston Bailey has joined the team at the bank’s Dillon office, located at 1006 Highway 301. In his role, Bailey will form relationships with local individuals, realtors, developers and business owners to promote and encourage the services that Anderson Brothers Bank offers.

Bailey joined Anderson Brothers Bank in 2021, after working in the insurance industry. He is local to the area, and a graduate of Dillon High School and the University of South Carolina. Bailey also serves his community as a City of Dillon fire department member.

“We’re very excited to have Weston joining our Dillon Office team,” said Johnny Floyd, vice president and Marion – Dillon County executive. “Weston is a lifelong resident of Dillon and understands the financial needs of local citizens and business owners. His energy and enthusiasm for customer service will be an asset to our Dillon office as well as the community.”



Benjamin Jones

Anderson Brothers Bank continues to expand its lending team with the recent promotion of Benjamin Jones. Jones is based in the Florence office located at 501 Second Loop Road.

As a commercial loan officer, Benjamin will develop and expand new commercial loan and deposit relationships in Florence by doing outside calls and establishing referral sources. He will continue working with current commercial

customers to help with their financial needs.

Benjamin joined Anderson Brothers Bank in 2020 as a teller. He has only continued to grow within the bank, becoming a Customer Service Representative and then Branch Operations Coordinator, the position he held for the last year and a half.

“Since Benjamin joined Anderson Brothers Bank in 2020, he has excelled in every role he has had,” said Jamie Carsten, Vice President-Commercial Lending. “We are very excited about his next step in his banking career and cannot wait to see what he can accomplish as a Commercial Loan Officer.”



Terry Lee

**MARION**– Anderson Brothers Bank is pleased to announce the recent promotion of Terry Lee to branch operations coordinator of the bank’s Marion office, located at 2500 East Hwy 76. Lee also serves as branch operations coordinator of the Marion main office, located at 728 North Main Street, a position she has held since 2018.

In her role, Lee will provide administrative, supervisory and motivational support within the branch office to ensure effective and efficient customer service and teller operations. She will manage the work activities of branch tellers by overseeing, planning and scheduling duties; confer with retail sales and service leaders to resolve operational issues and assist loan officers as needed.

“The Marion market is very excited for Terry’s advancement to branch operations coordinator,” said Jimmy Trussell, Marion city executive with Anderson Brothers Bank. “Her attention to detail and customer service has built her a loyal following. Lee has been an asset



## ANDERSON BROTHERS BANK CONT'D

to Anderson Brothers Bank for over twenty-five years, and we look forward to her continued success.”



Anna Owens

Anderson Brothers Bank is pleased to announce the promotion of Anna Owens to customer service representative in the bank's Marion office, located at 2500 East Highway 76.

Owens joined Anderson Brothers Bank in December 2020, as a teller and has been a great asset to our customers. Owens will assist customers with various financial products and services, including opening new checking, savings, Christmas club, IRA and CD accounts.

“Anna being promoted to CSR is a great addition to the Marion Market,” said Trussell, Marion city executive with Anderson Brothers Bank. “Her attention to detail and constant focus on customer service will allow the Marion market to continue its efforts towards account growth. Owens’ work ethic is unmatched, and the bank looks forward to her continued success and growth.”



Allison Boulware

**MULLINS** - Anderson Brothers Bank announces the addition of Allison Boulware as human resources director. Boulware will be based in the bank's corporate office at 101 North Main Street, Mullins, SC.

Boulware brings with her over twenty years of human resource experience. In her role at Anderson Brothers Bank, she will administer and oversee the administration of compensation, benefits, disciplinary matters, employment disputes and investigations.

Along with developing and implementing bank HR policies and processes, she will work with leaders to identify staffing and recruiting needs while ensuring the bank complies with federal and state employment laws and regulations.

“We are pleased to welcome Allison to Anderson Brothers Bank as human resource director,” said David Anderson, CEO and president of Anderson Brothers Bank. “With a growing workforce of almost 400 employees, her experience and expertise will be essential in providing the best for our teammates.”

### About Anderson Brothers Bank



## 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).





# HOW TO ENJOY A SPRING REFRESH - WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK



(BPT) - With spring comes the desire for a fresh start - whether it's for yourself, your wardrobe or your home. It's the perfect time to sport a new look, clear out clutter and swap out tired, old decor for fresh, seasonal colors and textures. Unfortunately, revamping for spring can easily become an overwhelming task or bring a hefty price tag.

But don't despair - here are some tips to help you prepare for the new season without the added stress:

## Set a budget

A spring refresh should be just that - a refresh! But with your excitement about a new start can come a seemingly endless to-do list that prompts you to spend more time and money than you'd like. At the onset, decide how much time you want to devote to cleaning, and set timers or listen to a favorite podcast to help you stick to your time limit. Make sure you also consider how much you want to spend on anything new, so you don't go overboard.

## Out with the old

Whether you're looking to update your closet or your home, make

room first by removing old clothing or decor. Consider donating what you're ready to part with, or selling the items with a second-hand retailer like Poshmark or The RealReal to pocket some extra cash.

## Remember small changes can make a big difference.

You don't need to overhaul your entire wardrobe or home to feel refreshed. Choose a handful of new items - like vibrant, flared pants or statement earrings - and pair them with your timeless pieces, mixing and matching to create new outfits. When it comes to your home, consider a couple of simple changes or additions to give your favorite spaces a whole new look - like replacing artwork with a large mirror to bring in more natural light or adding new throw pillows.

## Shop with a flexible, transparent payment option

Another way to enjoy a spring refresh without losing control of your budget is by paying overtime with Affirm. Whether you're shopping for a fresh floral dress or a new, bold patterned sofa, Affirm gives eligible shoppers the ability to pay biweekly or monthly. Just enter a few pieces of information to check if you're eligible, and then approved shoppers can spread purchases out in a way that works best for their budget. Don't worry - you'll never pay a penny more than you agree to at checkout because Affirm never charges late or hidden fees.

## Ready to start your spring refresh?

Select Affirm at checkout or download the Affirm app and request a virtual card to use online or in-store pretty much anywhere.

Payment options through Affirm are subject to eligibility and are provided by these lending partners: [affirm.com/lenders](https://affirm.com/lenders). CA residents: Loans by Affirm Loan Services, LLC are made or arranged pursuant to California Finance Lender license 60DBO-111681.



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Payments for both loan types do not include taxes and insurance premiums. The actual payment amount will be greater. These payments are based on recent interest rates and can vary based on individual credit.

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## FIVE ACHIEVABLE GOALS FOR 2023

(BPT) - Some goals aren't attainable or sustainable for your life. Instead of making lofty promises that are unachievable, start with modest changes that you can accomplish and build upon in years to come. Not sure where to start? Check out these five achievable goals.

### 1. Learn or resume a hobby

If you don't have a hobby or have let it go by the wayside, dedicate some time to doing something you enjoy. Hobbies aren't just activities we do for fun. They can have huge mental and physical health benefits. According to VeryWell Mind, enjoyable activities can help you reduce stress, lower blood pressure and combat depression. You don't have to engage in your hobbies every day to reap the benefits. One study showed that engaging in a physical leisure activity for 20 minutes a week helped people feel less fatigued.

Whether you get back into knitting or playing guitar or pick up a new hobby like painting or ballroom dancing, you're carving out time for yourself that can take your mind off the stresses of everyday life.

### 2. Move your body

This year, make it a goal to get your body moving. That doesn't mean you have to exercise every day for hours at a time. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week. That may sound like a lot, but it breaks down to 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Take it slow if you're new to working out or it's been a while since you've exercised. You can even break up 30 minutes of daily activity into smaller chunks. For example, you can do 10 minutes of brisk walking or aerobic exercises three times a day or 15 minutes twice a day. By breaking up your movement goal into smaller chunks, you can naturally find breaks throughout your day to get moving.

### 3. Invest in your health

If you want to live a long healthy life, you need to invest in your health. Nicole Avena, Ph.D., associate professor of neuroscience, Mount Sinai School of Medicine and author of, 'Why Diets Fail,' says, "In addition to a healthy and balanced diet and getting an adequate amount of exercise, it's important to cover all your bases like adding daily vitamins to your health regimen. Each person's dietary needs will vary slightly. While most people can get enough from diet alone, others may need to take a supplement, and nowadays, there are many vitamin options for men and women of all ages."

To ensure that you receive essential nutrients, consider taking a daily multivitamin like vitafusion MultiVites which is an excellent source of 12 vitamins and minerals. Offering a selection of multivitamin gummies to support the consumer's unique needs, vitafusion is

America's #1 adult gummy vitamin brand and the only gummy vitamin brand with a fusion of natural fruit flavors. To learn more, visit [vitafusion.com](http://vitafusion.com).

### 4. Mindfulness

You've probably heard about mindfulness, but do you know what it is and its benefits? Simply put, mindfulness is being aware and fully present in your body, mind and environment. According to the National Institutes of Health, practicing mindfulness can have several positive impacts on your health and well-being, including reducing anxiety and depression, lowering blood pressure and improving sleep.

A popular way to practice mindfulness is meditation, but it's not the only way. You can practice breathing or grounding exercises, go on a walk or take stock of how your body is feeling in the present moment. Mindfulness practices can be short or long, but to start, you can carve out five minutes a day in the morning or at night to get in touch with your awareness.

### 5. Improve your finances

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), 72 percent of adults report feeling stressed about money at least some of the time. While there isn't a one-size-fits-all plan for improving your financial well-being, there are simple ways to assess your finances and target areas for improvement.

For one month, track all your income and expenses. You can do this by using an expense sheet, or you can download an app to make things easier. Once you know where your money is coming from and where it's going, you can identify areas where you could be spending less and saving more and set financial goals.

Small changes can add up quickly and turn into life-long habits. Using these five tips, you can invest in yourself now and for years to come.

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For over 130 years, at Synovus we've stayed true to the concept that banking is a service to our communities in the Southeast and to the people who live here.

Our humble beginnings date back to a Georgia textile mill in 1888, and a simple act of kindness. At the Eagle & Phenix Mill in Columbus, Georgia, a mill worker's dress became entangled in the factory machinery. To the surprise of her co-workers, her hard-earned savings -- that she had sewn into her dress hem for safe-keeping -- spilled across the floor. G. Gunby Jordan, the mill's secretary and treasurer, witnessed the incident and offered to keep her money in the mill safe and pay her monthly interest on the deposits. He soon offered the same service to all the mill workers. Their deposits marked the beginning of the company that would become Synovus.

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

expansions, we're still proud to be part of our local communities and to do the right thing.

We hope you'll stop by your local branch and tell us what we can do for you. At Synovus you find that we have:

Personal banking solutions to help whether you're just starting out, supporting a young family or getting ready to retire. We offer everything you need to help you reach your financial goals, find stability and enjoy the future you envision for yourself and your loved ones.

A passion for business—our business and corporate banking solutions are based on our knowledge of the local community and our financial strength that allows us to deliver sophisticated customized solutions for businesses large and small.

A financial services company based in Columbus, Georgia, Synovus has approximately \$56 billion in assets. We provide commercial and retail banking, and a full suite of specialized products and services, including private banking, treasury management, wealth management, mortgage services, premium finance, asset-based lending, structured lending and international banking through over 250 branches in Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Florida and Tennessee. With more than 5,000 team members, Synovus is a Great Place to Work-Certified Company and is on the web at [synovus.com](http://synovus.com), and on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

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## LIVING HER CHILDHOOD DREAM WHILE TREATING CHILDREN

Submitted by Hanna Caddell, marketing and communications coordinator CPRMC



Dr. Raven Delgado

**HARTSVILLE-** Dr. Raven Delgado's motivation to care for others stems back to her youth. Today, she is realizing her childhood dream while treating children as a pediatrician at Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center (CPRMC).

"When I was a child, my grandfather had cancer and he passed away on my seventh birthday," she recalled. "It motivated me to enter the medical field – I was a kid and honestly thought I could cure cancer and didn't know better. It sparked my interest in science and I just really went from there."

Delgado, now in her fifth year of practicing pediatrics, started at CPRMC in September. She leads the new pediatric services program at the hospital that provides services such as newborn and infant care; wellness exams; pediatric mental health; immunization and vaccines; school, sports and camp physicals; same-day appointments; ADD & ADHD evaluations; and behavioral and developmental screenings.

"I view it as an honor to be entrusted with the care of the children of the Hartsville area," she said.

Bill Little, CEO of CPRMC, noted back in September that bringing Delgado on board would greatly benefit the hospital and community.

"We believe the addition of Delgado will help meet a growing healthcare need in our community, and the improved access to pediatric services will have an immediate impact on the health of the families that call Hartsville home," he said.

Delgado completed her pediatrics residency through the Baylor College of Medicine at Children's Hospital of San Antonio and earned her Doctor of Medicine degree from the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. She said choosing pediatrics as her specialty was an easy decision.

"As the oldest of seven kids, choosing pediatrics seemed natural to me. While others were overwhelmed by the tough cases all I saw was how resilient, strong, and courageous children can be. Being a pediatrician gives me the unique ability to educate patients on the importance of wellness and making health-conscious decisions prior to the onset of diseases that plaque the adult population." "I'm the oldest of seven kids, and as I went through [the med school's] clinical clerkships, working with kids just seemed a lot more rewarding to me than working with adults because I realized I could intervene a lot earlier – before they develop these medical problems – and I felt like I could have better outcomes than working with people that already had medical issues."

Her experience thus far has reinforced some of the uniqueness of being a pediatrician.

"You have to be cognizant of the fact that you are treating the parent and the child," said Delgado. "Sometimes that may not always align, so you've got to get the parent on board and get them to trust you before you can even treat the child. So, you have to earn the trust of two patients, even though only one of them is your actual patient."

She says she approaches each appointment as if she is developing a long-standing relationship, akin to being an extension of the patient's family.

"When I go to the room, I always speak to the kid first, even if the child is two months old or a newborn, because they are my patient," she said. And even if they are a newborn and don't understand, I tell them what I am doing before I do it and as I do it because I want them to know my voice and know that the doctor's office is a safe place and it's not just for shots or where you go when you are sick. It's somewhere you go when you are well, too, and a place you can go to talk about what you are worried about as far as your body goes or your mental health or things you might not be comfortable with bringing up to your parents.

"We are a resource and part of your family. You get a pediatrician when you are a baby, and a lot of people grow up with that same pediatrician until they leave for college."

As a member of her team at CPRMC, Allie Chavis, RN, gets to see how Delgado

interacts with others on a daily basis. She says Delgado brings a passion to her role that rubs off on others.

"She is awesome to work with," said Chavis. "She is very energetic and enthusiastic about what she does, and she brings that forward. She's young and relatively new, and the excitement she brings to the job is refreshing for us. She is easy to recommend to others seeking a pediatrician."

While Delgado has only been at Carolina Pines for a few months, she says the Hartsville community has similarly made a welcoming impression to her.

"It's a small town with a big heart," she said. "It's really warming. Everyone seems to really know each other and genuinely care about each other, but there is still that 'peace' – where people allow you to be who you are and give you your space as well."

Aside from her work, Delgado says her daughter is her primary focus, and she does some crafting on the side. "And I binge-watch shows like everyone else."

And, like everyone else, she says she's looking forward to continuing to engage and connect with the community.

"It's important to note that I am just another member of the community," she said. "Doctors are no different from anyone else. A lot of times we seem like people can't connect with us, and that's not the image that I want to portray at all. I'm here for the patients and I want them to be able to connect with me and know that I will always be here for them and their kids."

The Pediatrics services line will be located in the Carolina Pines Medical Group office building at 701 Medical Park Drive, Suite 207. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Fridays. Appointments can be scheduled by calling 843.383.2764 or by visiting [cprmc.com/schedule](http://cprmc.com/schedule).



Dr. Delgado getting to know her patient.



## WHAT IS LUPUS? Submitted by Jon H. Docherty, MD, HopeHealth



Jon H. Docherty, MD

According to the Lupus Foundation of America, Lupus Awareness Month occurs in May of each year and serves as a chance to bring awareness about the disease and its impacts. In the U.S., at least 1.5 million people have lupus, impacting roughly one in 2,000 people, with about 16,000 new cases reported annually. While anyone can develop lupus, women ages 15-44 are at highest risk. In fact, nine out of ten people with lupus are women.

Certain racial and ethnic groups are also at higher risk of developing lupus, including people who are African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American or Pacific Islander. People who have a family member with lupus or another autoimmune disease are also at risk for developing lupus.

Lupus is a chronic disease that can cause inflammation and pain in any part of the body. An autoimmune disorder, lupus occurs when the body's immune system, which usually fights infections to keep us healthy, attacks healthy body tissue instead.

Symptoms of lupus can differ greatly from patient to patient and can impact any system in the body. This widespread symptom variation can make lupus difficult to diagnose. Signs and symptoms of lupus may change over time and overlap with those of many other disorders. Additionally, no one test can diagnose lupus. A combination of blood and urine tests, assessment of symptoms and a physical examination often leads to the diagnosis.

Patients with lupus can have chronic, daily symptoms or may have good and bad days. When people talk about lupus, they're usually referring to systemic lupus. Symptoms of this type of lupus can include:

- Constitutional symptoms are non-specific and can impact the body as a whole, such as fever, weight loss, fatigue and muscle and joint aches.
- Arthritis manifests especially in small and medium joints of arms and legs, with swelling, heat in the joints, tenderness and stiffness present. Patients experiencing this symptom may spend an hour or more working to get their joints moving well.
- Rashes can present in lupus patients as a butterfly rash on nose and cheeks, a discoid rash which scars skin and can cause hair loss and photosensitive rashes.
- Serositis entails inflammation of the lining of the lungs, heart or abdomen and can cause abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting.
- Kidney complications can vary from mild protein levels in urine to severe forms with blood and protein in urine, potentially leading to kidney failure.
- Hematologic symptoms may manifest as low white blood cells, low platelets and hemolytic anemia, when blood cells are destroyed faster than they can be made. Ninety-seven percent of patients with

lupus will also have positive levels of antinuclear antibodies (ANA), indicating a large number of antibodies that attack normal tissue.

Other symptoms of lupus may include headaches, sensitivity to light, sores in the mouth or nose and chest pain while breathing deeply.

No one knows exactly what causes lupus, but experts think it may develop in response to certain hormones (including estrogen) or environmental triggers that can bring on symptoms of lupus or make existing symptoms worse. Environmental triggers include ultraviolet light from the sun or fluorescent lights, certain antibiotic drugs, having another infection, exhaustion, bodily stress like an injury and emotional stress.

The good news is, the vast majority of lupus patients survive and have access to methods that help manage their illness. For the first time in 20 years, there are now three new medications for lupus, two of which are biologic medications that have been hugely impactful in the management of the disease. There are also options available to help manage symptoms like inflammation, swelling, pain and fever.

People with lupus should visit a rheumatologist, like me, who specializes in diagnosing and treating diseases in the joints or muscles. Our job is to help patients with lupus get the care they need, so they can live full, happy lives and effectively manage their symptoms.

Docherty is a rheumatologist serving patients at HopeHealth on Palmetto Street in Florence, at HopeHealth in Manning and on Mill Street. Docherty is board certified in internal medicine and rheumatology. He focuses on patients with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, lupus and other conditions affecting the musculoskeletal system. Docherty is board certified in internal medicine and rheumatology and has served the Florence, Manning and Sumter areas for several years.



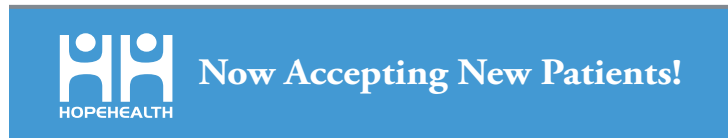
Sbyam Tantry, MD

### 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.

#### For More Information

(843) 432-3716 | [hope-health.org/services](https://hope-health.org/services)





## PRACTICAL PURPOSE SOLUTIONS JOINS FLORENCE CHAMBER



*Practical Purpose Solutions Grand Opening*

Kendrea Robinson is a nurse practitioner and business owner of Practical Purpose Solutions. She started the business Practical Purpose Solutions to help individuals reset through coaching and consulting services. These services were initially designed to help individuals stay focused on their physical, mental and spiritual wellness journey. Through these services individuals have been able to lose weight and feel better about themselves, mentally and emotionally.

Practical Purpose Solutions offers many services, some of them include vitamin infusions to help individuals RESET TO REFOCUS, helping with enhancement of energy and immunity. Our vitamin infusions consist of different vitamins and minerals such as B12, vitamin C, vitamin B and more. These infusions are designed to help individuals with fatigue, colds, chronic sinuses, joint discomfort and more. These services are same day services even if individuals are not part of any program and or package that is offered.

Practical Purpose Solutions offers physicals (DOT, sports, presurgical and preemployment) along with telehealth services. They will provide contract services with companies, especially small business owners. They offer weekday and weekend services for those who may need a physical done.

The business located at 2011 Second Loop Road Suite A, Florence, SC 29501. Business Hours are Monday-Friday 9 a.m. –7 p.m. Phone Number: 843-799-2210 [www.practicalpurposesolutions.com](http://www.practicalpurposesolutions.com)

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## RISKS AND TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

*Submitted by Thesselon W. Monderson M.D. F.AAOS, MUSC Health – Orthopaedics*



*Thesselon W. Monderson  
M.D. F.AAOS*

Patients often arrive at my office presuming they might have carpal tunnel syndrome. Many think any kind of hand pain is carpal tunnel syndrome.

### What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by compression neuropathy (pinched nerve) in the median nerve of the hand. It most often shows up as numbness, tingling or pain in the hand and forearm. The condition occurs when one of the major nerves of the hand, the median nerve, is compressed as it travels from the forearm to the hand. Carpal tunnel is the path of the nerve and the tendons that allow your fingers to flex. If carpal tunnel syndrome is allowed to progress untreated, it can lead to permanent nerve damage. But if diagnosed soon enough it can be treated properly. The best way to determine if you have carpal tunnel is to get a physical examination, an x-ray or diagnostic tests such as a nerve conduction study. The nerve conduction study evaluates how the nerve is functioning. Once diagnosed properly, a course of treatment is prescribed based on the severity of symptoms.

### Common causes of carpal tunnel syndrome:

- Repetitive trauma or overuse
- Systemic disorders such as diabetes and hypothyroidism.
- Fractures and other injuries to the wrist.

### Associated risk factors:

- Female
- 40 years old, or older
- Pregnancy
- Obesity
- Smoking and high blood pressure

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, you might have carpal tunnel syndrome. Patients often describe an intense feeling of pins and needles or a burning sensation in their hand or forearm. You may also feel numbness in the thumb and first four fingers of the hand. Some patients report thumb weakness and accidentally dropping objects from their hands. You may have pain at night and difficulty sleeping. Sometimes shaking your hand can improve the feeling of numbness and tingling.

### Carpal tunnel treatment options:

Early symptoms can often be relieved with simple treatment such as wearing a wrist splint while sleeping. This will reduce pressure on the nerve. There are also range of motion exercises to decrease hand and wrist tendon inflammation. It may also be recommended to stop repetitive motion activities such as forceful grasping, pinching or maybe even typing on a keyboard. Also, it’s important to avoid extreme wrist flexion or extension. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication may also alleviate the pain. However, it is typically not a long-term solution. A corticosteroid injection may also decrease the inflammation within the carpal tunnel.

When non-surgical treatment options are not successful, it may be necessary to have surgery. A carpal tunnel release procedure is the definitive treatment for this. The surgery can be endoscopic where small incisions are made, and an endoscope is used to perform the surgery. The surgery can also be performed using a slightly larger incision of approximately two inches long without an endoscope. Recovery from surgery typically takes four to six weeks before returning to normal activities.

If you would like more information, please call MUSC Health – Orthopaedics, in Marion, at (843) 431-2280, to schedule an evaluation, or go to [MUSCHealth.org](http://MUSCHealth.org).



## GETTING TO THE SOURCE Submitted by One Source Integrative Medicine



Tasha Broach, NP-C

Most of us in our lifetime have taken Tylenol for headaches, Ibuprofen for pain and a list of other over the counter or prescribed medications to treat whatever symptoms we may be experiencing. Doing so provides temporary relief by simply, “popping a pill,” but doesn’t get to the source of what triggered our body to have such a response. Pain is there for a purpose-- to signal that something is wrong.

As a nurse practitioner, I’ve shared similar experiences in my own health journey. Around 25, I struggled with debilitating pain in nearly every joint, agonizing digestive issue, severe fatigue which oftentimes led to depression and hopelessness because none of my symptoms led to a specific disease. After multiple x-rays, MRIs, expansive blood work and an elective surgery with a 50 percent success rate, I was left with no answers or a true remedy. After several years of consuming prescriptions to address the joint pain and inflammation, nerve pain, bloating and constipation due to IBS, muscle relaxers and antidepressants, I was finally given the diagnosis of fibromyalgia at the age of 30. I was working a less stressful and less demanding job and still found myself struggling to get through the day and complete the simplest tasks. Society often thinks that opioids are the only addictive medications, but I was literally, “popping a pill,” after work just to make it a few more hours. I noticed that I would always feel better when traveling (especially out of the country), so this convinced me to mirror my lifestyle focus to minimizing my stress, improving my rest, modifying my exercises and changing my inflammatory diet to more fresh and clean foods.

I was introduced to acupuncture at the end of my clinical when my

preceptor began suffering from debilitating trigeminal neuralgia and was getting treated for pain relief. Dr. Jennifer Evans-Scott began treating me using a comprehensive, holistic approach with services such as acupuncture and chiropractic to help identify and treat the source of my problems. I grew increasingly interested in this patient-centered approach to healthcare and continued to build a professional relationship with Scott.

The start of the pandemic was a pivotal point for me. As the medical system fought to find a cure for this virus, I shifted my patient-care focus to minimizing risks and improving outcomes with considerations like maximizing immune system functioning, controlling underlying health issues like obesity and hypertension, decreasing stress, increasing rest and proper diet. I no longer wanted symptom-based care. I yearned to offer my patients a transformational experience advocating for the least invasive methods to produce favorable results.

At One Source Integrative Medicine, we aim to help you heal better faster and stay well longer. Our services include but are not limited to functional lab testing, regenerative medicine including PRP and ozone therapy, IV nutrition therapy, vitamin infusions, responsible pain management, proper bracing with tailored rehabilitation, chiropractic care, acupuncture, massage therapy and more. We utilize a comprehensive approach to shed light on your health status & needs to identify underlying barriers to maximize your health. I am now prescription free, and I feel the best that I have in over a decade. I believe in our team’s mission at One Source Integrative Medicine to bring health back to the forefront by revolutionizing healthcare, empowering patients and transforming communities... one life at a time. Come experience the difference! Schedule your consultation with One Source Integrative Medicine by calling 843-773-1444 today!

### Welcoming our Nurse Practitioner to the team: Tasha Broach, NP-C

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- DOT & Sports Physicals

Dr. Jennifer Evans Scott



#### Follow us on social media at One Source Integrative Med

for updates and first access to the exciting news to come!  
We have always prided ourselves in bringing the most innovative, advanced and best options to our patients.

Tasha Broach, NP-C



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# At MUSC we are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion.

In the spirit of our new enterprise strategy, OneMUSC, we are reimagining with renewed energy and clarity of purpose, our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. We are committed to leveraging differences and building inclusion to create an academic health care community, which allows people to understand and be understood. As we look toward the future, we must not tire from this hard work, and we must lead the way as a model for inclusion and engagement.

## We must be our best selves.

MUSC is implementing a series of strategic initiatives to eliminate health care disparities, build MUSC leadership, students, and workforce to reflect our communities, and elevate a culture of “OneMUSC”.



[www.musc.edu/dei](http://www.musc.edu/dei)



# THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Submitted by Nick Everetts, DPT, MUSC Health Outpatient Rehabilitation Services



Nick Everetts, DPT

Some experts estimate more than 1 million Americans have Parkinson's Disease. Parkinson's Disease is a progressive disease that affects our central nervous system. Parkinson's Disease affects the body's ability to control movements, which may lead to shaking in the hands or legs, or difficulty starting or stopping movements. Parkinson's Disease will lead to other impairments, including significant stiffness and balance impairments.

Physical therapy can assist with improving the quality of life for those who have Parkinson's Disease. Physical therapy interventions offer an effective strategy for managing motor symptoms in patients with Parkinson's Disease.

Parkinson's disease can cause movements to become smaller and slower than normal. It can affect balance, coordination and posture. Utilizing physical therapy can help improve a person's balance, control their motor coordination, improve posture and help to normalize their movements.

Specifically, MUSC Health Outpatient Rehabilitation Services in Florence, SC, offers a Parkinson's Disease specialized program called

the LSVT BIG program. This program has been proven to reduce someone's fall risk, improve their gait speed and improve a person's posture. The program can effectively re-calibrate the brain to improve someone's processing of information and movements.

Physical Therapy for Parkinson's Disease has proven to improve the quality of life for those with the disease and for those family members who are taking care of someone with Parkinson's Disease. Physical therapy can not only improve motor symptoms but can also reduce cognitive decline for those living with Parkinson's Disease.<sup>5</sup>

Parkinson's Disease is a complex and complicated progressive disorder affecting movement. Appropriate exercises and medications can reduce the effects Parkinson's Disease can have on our bodies. As a Parkinson's certified physical therapist, I have been able to treat many people with Parkinson's Disease. I decided to study and understand this program because I saw how great the results could be. Physical therapy is an extremely useful tool for anyone you may know in the community and will significantly help improve the quality of life of others.

If you, or a loved one, would like to find out more about physical therapy to address Parkinson's Disease, please visit your local neurologist, or call the MUSC Health Florence Medical Center Outpatient Rehabilitation Services clinic at 843-661-4360 for more information.

# BLACK RIVER MEDICAL CENTER OBTAINS GREEN GLOBES CERTIFICATION

Submitted by MUSC Health Florence



MUSC Health Black River Medical Center

The Green Building Initiative has awarded MUSC Health Black River Medical Center with a Green Globes Building Certification for its sustainable, healthy and resilient construction. Green Globes is a comprehensive, science-based building rating system that supports a wide range of new construction and existing building project types.

"From the very beginning of the design process for this new hospital we have made decisions allowing us to provide the best health care to our patients," MUSC Health Black River Medical Center Executive Director Allen Abernethy said. "The design is thoughtful, meaningful and provides a wonderful environment for not only our patients and visitors but also our care team members. We are proud to serve the community with this facility."

The two Green Globes certification demonstrates a significant achievement in resource efficiency, reducing environmental impacts and improving occupant wellness. Some examples of notable achievements from the assessment report are good natural light in the lobby and common areas, a high-efficiency HVAC system, low-flow plumbing fixtures and low energy-consuming LED lighting throughout the hospital.

"This level of sustainability is a fine accomplishment and one that the project team can be proud of the approach used for the design and construction of this facility," said L.L. "Buddy" Humphries, a principal at Efficient Green LLC. "Sustainability is a dynamic process and continues for the lifetime of a building."

Environmental objectives pursued through Green Globes lead to lower energy and water

usage, reduced emissions, optimized health and wellness benefits and minimized waste. GBI verifies criteria being pursued toward Green Globes certification, ensuring that building owners, facility managers and property developers meet clearly defined, consensus-based criteria. The rigorous, comprehensive process relies on both prescriptive measures and performance metrics to validate that your project achieved credit for a variety of sustainability, health and wellness and resilience practices.

The 64,000 sq. ft. rural hospital will allow residents of the community to have access to a full range of modern diagnostic and interventional capabilities. Some of the services offered include 3-D mammography, MRI, nuclear medicine, CT scanning, on-site pharmacy and a complete imaging department. The new facility features 25 inpatient beds, four observation beds, two operating rooms and 16 emergency treatment rooms. When the new hospital opens, it will serve Williamsburg and lower Florence counties and assume the roles of Williamsburg Regional Hospital and Lake City Community Hospital.





# Your Home For Women's Health Services

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**+ More!**



## INSIDE HOPEHEALTH'S GUEST EXPERIENCE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Submitted by Stephanie J. Isgett, MHA, Guest Experience manager.



Stephanie J. Isgett, MHA

April 25-29, is recognized as Patient Experience Week, an annual event celebrating health care staff who positively impact the patient experience. At HopeHealth, all staff plays a role in ensuring our patients receive compassionate, patient-centered care that exemplifies love for people and passion for their well-being. HopeHealth prioritizes these relationships so much, in fact, our Guest Experience Services Department exists solely to ensure our patients, whom we refer to as guests have an enjoyable experience

during their visit to any HopeHealth location.

HopeHealth utilizes the word, "guest," versus patient, vendor or customer, establishing that everyone who enters our doors is to be treated the way we would treat a guest in our home. As manager of the Guest Experience Department, I can attest that we pride ourselves on forming meaningful connections with our guests and want them to trust in and feel comfortable with HopeHealth.

A guest experience service is composed of a team of nine employees located at the Medical Plaza in Florence. While these services are currently only offered at the Medical Plaza, our department intends to expand into other locations. Our department focuses on taking care of guest issues, training staff to provide excellent guest experiences, incentivizing standards, greeting guests, helping them navigate our facility and ensuring a positive first appointment for new primary care guests.

In order to provide our guests with great hospitality, we make sure to consistently praise our guest ambassadors and the work they do to build a meaningful rapport with our new guests.

Ambassadors contact guests to confirm their appointment the day before, let them know what to expect at the visit and provide information on items to bring with them for their appointment.

At the start of their first appointment, ambassadors are able to help with paperwork and identify anything new guests may be eligible for, such as educational courses, community events and HopeHealth's benefit programs which may assist with copays and medication assistance. The ambassadors can even help build connections to valuable resources outside of HopeHealth that can help address any barriers to care.

After the first appointment, ambassadors make meaningful contact again and reinforce this connection by reaching out to inquire about the quality of the visit and answer any additional questions.

The consistent communication facilitated by ambassadors throughout the new guest's appointment process helps guests recognize they are valued by HopeHealth and deserve quality health care. New guests often get emotional while with an ambassador, sharing the relief they feel knowing HopeHealth staff care for them regardless of their situation. Reactions like this keep us striving for greater ways to enhance the quality of care and customer service our guests receive.

In these ways and more, the Guest Experience Services Department works hard to prioritize going the extra mile for our guests. I am grateful to work with a staff who truly embodies HopeHealth's vision: serving others, giving hope, changing lives.

Isgett serves as guest experience manager at HopeHealth. She has over 25 years of customer service experience in marketing, sales, advertising and health care. For more information about HopeHealth's Guest Experience Services Department, call (843) 667-9414.



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# 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT 2023



Presents

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 26, 2023**

## TRACES GOLF CLUB

4322 Southborough Road • Florence, SC 29501  
843.662.7775

**SHOTGUN START AT 9:00 AM**

Captain's Choice Foursome, 18 Holes  
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### SCHEDULE

8:15 AM	Late Registration & Check-In
9:00 AM	Shotgun Start & Tournament
1:00 PM	Luncheon, Prizes & Golf Awards

### PLAYER REGISTRATION INCLUDES

Green fees, golf cart, clubhouse use, complimentary beverage & snack cart, 1 mulligan, 1 green tea buster

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Pre-registered teams receive  
2 free raffle tickets per player

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# MCLEOD HEALTH CERTIFIED TO ISO 9001 QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM BY DNV

Articles submitted by McLeod Health



McLeod Health has been awarded full certification to the ISO 9001 Quality Management System by DNV.

ISO 9001 is the most widely accepted quality management system in use around the world and is quickly gaining acceptance among U.S. healthcare providers as a foundation for their quality and patient safety programs.

“McLeod Health is dedicated to providing the safest and most effective healthcare services possible,” said Madge Hamer, associate vice president of accreditation and certification for McLeod. “ISO 9001 certification not only reflects that mission but helps to empower it. The effort required to achieve this certification fundamentally transforms the way we do business – it gets everyone on the same page and helps us achieve our objectives.”

“McLeod Health has worked hard to achieve this certification, and they have done so with unwavering commitment from their top leadership to make their organization the best it can be,” said Kelly Proctor, president of DNV Healthcare USA Inc. “ISO 9001 certification isn’t just an award or trophy for something you’ve done, it’s public evidence that you are at the top of your game with an obvious plan in place to make excellence an every day objective.”

ISO 9001 brings science to the art of caregiving; it helps to standardize processes around things that are proven to work, by the people doing the work, thus empowering frontline workers while creating an environment of predictability for the entire organization. The ultimate impact of ISO 9001 within hospitals is the reduction or elimination of variation, so that critical work processes are done consistently, and the “best ideas” aren’t held by one person or one department but are ingrained in the organization itself.

Businesses that implement ISO 9001 do so for both the internal and external benefits. Internally it helps staff create clear and consistent processes of patient care and ensure that progress is constantly being made toward specific quality objectives. Externally, it tells the public, as well as insurers and regulatory agencies, that the hospital is not only talking about quality, but is pursuing it with discipline and transparency.

## About McLeod Health

Founded in 1906, McLeod Health is a locally owned and managed, not for profit organization supported by the strength of more than 900 members on its medical staff and more than 2,900 licensed nurses (Registered Nurses; Advanced Practice Nurses – including Certified Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Practitioners and Certified Nurse Midwives; as well as Licensed Practical Nurses). McLeod Health is also composed of approximately 15,000 team members and more than 90 physician practices throughout its 18-county service area. With seven hospitals, McLeod Health operates three Health and Fitness Centers, a Sports Medicine and Outpatient Rehabilitation Center, Hospice and Home Health Services. The system currently has 988 licensed beds, including Hospice and Behavioral Health. The hospitals within McLeod Health include McLeod Regional Medical Center, McLeod Health Dillon, McLeod Health Loris, McLeod Health Seacoast, McLeod Health Cheraw, McLeod Health Clarendon and McLeod Behavioral Health. On the coast, the McLeod Health Carolina Forest complex has an Emergency Department and the first two of seven medical park office buildings as an extension of McLeod Loris Seacoast Hospital. Projected to open in spring 2023, Building three on the McLeod Health Carolina Forest Campus will include the following services and medical specialties: orthopedics, rehabilitation, obstetrics and gynecology, pulmonary and critical care, rheumatology, general surgery and digestive health.

## About DNV

DNV is a global independent certification, assurance and risk management provider, operating in more than 100 countries. Through its broad experience and deep expertise, DNV advances safety and sustainable performance, sets

industry benchmarks, drives innovative solutions.

Whether certifying a company’s management system or products, accrediting hospitals, providing training, assessing supply chains or digital assets, DNV enables customers and stakeholders to make critical decisions with confidence, continually improve and realize long-term strategic goals sustainably.

DNV draws on its wide technical and industry expertise to help companies worldwide build consumer and stakeholder trust. Driven by its purpose, to safeguard life, property and the environment, DNV helps tackle the challenges and global transformations facing its customers and the world today and is a trusted voice for many of the world’s most successful and forward-thinking companies.

For more information about DNV, please visit [www.dnvcert.com/healthcare](http://www.dnvcert.com/healthcare).

## MCLEOD RECEIVES TRAFFIC SAFETY GRANT FROM THE HONDA USA FOUNDATION



McLeod Regional Medical Center received a grant of \$29,388 from Honda USA Foundation to create a culture of

safety on South Carolina roads and help prevent injuries and death to children.

McLeod is using the Traffic Safety Award from the Honda USA Foundation to reduce injury and death to children from car crashes by facilitating training of certified car seat safety technicians and distributing car and booster seats to members of the community who would have difficulty affording them.

To date, the Pee Dee region’s children are much safer than this time last year. Thanks to this funding, McLeod now offers 14 trained car seat safety technicians. In addition, the organization has purchased 8 infant carriers, 116 car seats and 30 booster seats to distribute to those in need.

“We see such gratitude from parents for this project,” says Lora Breda, McLeod Resource Center manager, who is administering the grant. “Parents who receive car seats feel so empowered by this collaboration between McLeod and the Honda USA Foundation. They know they have the means to keep their children safe.”

The Honda USA Foundation provides funding to programs that align with its pillars of environment, mobility and traffic safety.

“A key focus of the Honda USA Foundation Traffic Safety Award is ensuring youth feel safe on and off the roads,” said Bobbie Trittschuh, executive director, The Honda USA Foundation. “We commend McLeod Regional Medical Center for its efforts to make car seat safety for young passengers a priority throughout our communities.”

## About McLeod Health Foundation

The McLeod Foundation was established in 1986 as an independent not for profit tax exempt charitable organization whose mission is to generate philanthropic and community support to perpetuate medical excellence at McLeod Health. Thanks to the generosity of donors, the Foundation has raised more than \$100 million and has provided support for numerous programs at McLeod Health. These programs include support for the McLeod Children’s Hospital, The Guest House at McLeod, McLeod Hospice, the McLeod Center for Cancer Treatment and Research, McLeod Heart and Vascular Institute and McLeod Diabetes Services, just to name a few. Simply put the Foundation funds better health for thousands of families throughout Northeastern South Carolina and Southeastern North Carolina. Separately chartered, the McLeod Health Foundation is governed by a voluntary Board of Trustees. Gifts to the McLeod Foundation are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law and 100 percent of every gift received goes directly to the area it is designated.



# SAVE A LIFE. ACT FAST.

Stroke is the fifth cause of death in South Carolina and a leading cause of disability. A stroke occurs when blood is prevented from reaching the brain. This lack of blood flow causes the brain cells to die.

It's important to be able to recognize the symptoms of a stroke and act fast for the best chance of survival and recovery. Talk to your primary care physician on actions you can take to live a healthy, stroke-free life.



## GET THE FACTS ON STROKE

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**4**  **seconds**

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**of strokes**  
ARE PREVENTABLE



**40% of stroke deaths occur in males**

**60% in females**



Most people who have **a first stroke** have high blood pressure



Visit [McLeodStrokeQuiz.org](https://McLeodStrokeQuiz.org) to test your stroke knowledge by taking the short quiz.



**McLeod Health**

[McLeodHealth.org](https://McLeodHealth.org)



## HOPEHEALTH WELCOMES NEW PROVIDERS

Submitted by HopeHealth



Aiyanna Johnson, FNP

### Aiyanna Johnson, FNP

Aiyanna Johnson is a family nurse practitioner providing care at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Master of Science in Nursing/Nurse Practitioner from Francis Marion University in Florence, SC. She is a member of the Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Society, American Nurses Association, Sigma Gamma Rho

Sorority and Francis Marion Alumni Association. Her clinical interests are preventive health, holistic medicine and patient-centered and culturally competent care.



Amanda Cieluch, AGNP

### Amanda Cieluch, AGNP

Amanda Cieluch is a nurse practitioner providing care at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Francis Marion University in Florence, SC, and a Master of Science in Nursing/Nurse Practitioner from South University in Columbia, SC, and is a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners.

HopeHealth is a non-profit leader in providing affordable, expert health care and infectious diseases services for all ages in Aiken, Florence, Clarendon, Orangeburg and Williamsburg Counties. Our federally qualified health centers are the primary care providers of choice for nearly 60,000 patients. To become a patient, call 843-667-9414 or visit [hope-health.org](http://hope-health.org).

## HOPEHEALTH HOSTED STREATER BUILDING DEDICATION

Submitted by Sheridan K. Murray, BS, BA, publications coordinator, HopeHealth.



Descendants of the Streeters and others at the dedication. From left to right, back to front: Barbara Brooks, HopeHealth board of directors; Antoniette Joiner, the Streeters' great granddaughter; Sandra Hemby, the Streeters' great-granddaughter; Ken Hemby; Teresa Myers Ervin, mayor of Florence; Marie Osbourne, the Streeters' great-great-granddaughter; Mabel Evans, the Streeters' granddaughter.

On February 27, HopeHealth hosted a dedication ceremony for the Streater Building project at the Hyatt Place Florence/Downtown. The event featured refreshments from local Black-owned businesses and provided an overview of the Streater Building's future focused on serving seniors, veterans and Black men in the community.

The Streater Building is an important African American architectural landmark of the downtown business district in Florence, dating back to at least 1904, when General Armstrong Streater owned and operated a small mercantile business and grocery store out of the building. In 2018, HopeHealth purchased the building, located at the corner of Dargan and Darlington Street and across from Sav-a-Lot, to utilize it as a place to provide value-based community services outside of the traditional scope of health care.

Upon completion of its revitalization, this HopeHealth project will help strengthen community engagement and work to decrease barriers to care by enhancing the availability and accessibility of health programs.

At the event, HopeHealth CEO Carl Humphries presented plans for the Streater Building project, while Douglas Hawkins, president of Ideal Funeral Parlor, spoke about the critical need for preventive screenings and health care access. Representative Terry Alexander highlighted the importance of access to health care in the community and the role the Streater Building will play in meeting this need.

The dedication ceremony provided an opportunity for Marie Osbourne, Antoniette Joiner, Sandra Hemby and Mabel Evans, granddaughters and great-granddaughters of General Armstrong Streater and Queen Victoria Plunkett Streater, to celebrate the legacy of their family and the important work the project will accomplish.

On the importance of the event and the Streater family's involvement, Charlee Rhodes, development and events coordinator, shared, "Having the Streater descendants present to give their blessing and represent the power of a family of entrepreneurs was incredibly heart-warming. I know HopeHealth will do all we can to use this legacy to honor the people who need us most in our community."



HopeHealth CEO Carl Humphries presents in front of a rendering showcasing the future of the Streater Building.

### CLEMSON COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE



## HEALTH EXTENSION FOR DIABETES

A community-based diabetes education and support group

Do you need help better managing your diabetes? Health Extension for Diabetes is for people who have been diagnosed with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes.

The program provides participants with:

- diabetes education;
- self management resources;
- support to better manage diabetes.

Group members meet for 1 hour every other week for 8 sessions to share successes, challenges, and learn about diabetes.

During the program, group members also receive ongoing support and health education through weekly health coaching calls.

Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.

### INFO

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**Iris McDuffie**  
for more details;

**imcduffie@clemson.edu**  
or call **843-519-2405**

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<https://www.clemson.edu/extension/health/programs/chronic/health-extension-for-diabetes.html>



# CARESOUTH CAROLINA OFFERS WORLD-CLASS IV THERAPY PROGRAM Submitted by CareSouth Carolina



From left to right: *Clarece Johnson, Care Fusion program manager, Victoria Player, RMA; Melissa Way, LPN, Sarah Davis, RN; Da'Ariel Blow, CMA; Jennifer Lynch, FNP; Angel Altamirano, MOA; Taylor Sam, MOA; Candace Lewis, lab tech; Crystal Brunson, MOA; Slone White, lab tech; Haley Thomas, blended assistant. Not pictured: Sara Causey, RN; Zoe Adams, referral specialist and Vernita Johnson, RA tech*

**HARTSVILLE**—CareSouth Carolina offers a convenient and world-class IV Therapy program, titled CareFusion, at its Hartsville office.

CareSouth Carolina's CareFusion program, located in Suite B at the CSC Hartsville office (1268 S. Fourth Street), offers IV infusions for several conditions with the goal of giving patients a higher level of care without having to be in the hospital.

CareSouth Carolina Provider Jennifer Lynch, FNP-C, oversees the treatment given to patients through the program. Employed by CareSouth Carolina since July of 2015, she is a well-known provider who has demonstrated her passion to go above and beyond to help her patients. She has also been voted the Best Family Nurse Practitioner in the Pee Dee by the Florence Morning News.

"When I was hired, it was with the goal of keeping patients out of the hospital," Lynch said. "With our IV Therapy program, there are many

treatments that we can administer to patients who need a higher level of care. Ultimately, this creates an avenue for patients to receive an IV infusion without going to the hospital."

IV infusion can be used to treat an array of conditions, including multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, osteoporosis, hypoglycemia, anemia and many more. CareSouth Carolina's IV infusion team administers remdesivir to help fight the symptoms of COVID-19. Patients can also pay by cash for vitamins and mineral infusions that help to boost their immune system, help with weight loss and much more.

Following a successful run at administering Monoclonal Antibody Therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic, the IV Therapy program became its own department, now with the name Care Fusion.

IV infusions aren't just for CareSouth Carolina patients. Anyone can have their specialist

send Lynch's team their information, and the team will get all prior authorizations needed to enroll the patient in the program with a very quick turnaround.

"We feel like this more than a doctor's office, this is a patient's healthcare home," Lynch said. "We want our patients to be comfortable while receiving this treatment and become a part of our CareFusion family. We are able to get them appointments very quickly, which in turn, helps them get their medication quickly."

For more information on the CareFusion program or to get details on how you can receive treatment, please call them at 843-758-0044. The CareFusion Team is happy to answer any questions you might have and can get appointments scheduled quickly so that your treatment can begin in a timely fashion.

CareSouth Carolina is a private, non-profit community health center delivering patient-centered health and life services in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. CareSouth Carolina operates centers in Bennettsville, Bishopville, Cheraw, Chesterfield, Dillon, Hartsville, Lake View, Latta, McColl and Society Hill.

Services provided by CareSouth Carolina include family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, women services, OB/GYN, HIV/AIDS primary care, dental, chiropractic services, pharmacy, geriatrics, social services, clinical counseling, laboratory, 4D ultrasound, X-Ray, migrant services and veterans' choice provider.

## Convenient Locations:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Bennettsville Center<br>999 Cheraw Street<br>Bennettsville, SC 29512<br>843.479.2341                  | Hartsville Center<br>1268 S. Fourth Street<br>Hartsville, SC 29550<br>843.332.3422<br>843.339.5520 Chiropractic     |
| 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                                     |
| Bennettsville Women's Center<br>1076 Marlboro Way, Suite 1<br>Bennettsville, SC 29512<br>843.454.2294 | Latta Center<br>122 Latimer Street<br>Latta, SC 29565<br>843.627.6252   |
| 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>787 S. Main Street<br>Society Hill, SC 29593<br>843.378.4501                                 |
| Cheraw Center<br>715 S. Doctors Drive Suite E<br>Cheraw, SC 29520<br>843.537.0961                     | Public Employee Health Services - Marlboro County<br>100 Matheson Street<br>Bennettsville, SC 29512<br>843.456.7752 |
| Chesterfield Center<br>204 Perry Wiley Way<br>Chesterfield, SC 29709<br>843.623.5080                  |   |
| Dillon Center<br>1016 Old Latta Highway<br>Dillon, SC 29536<br>843.774.4337                           |   |

## Pharmacy Locations:

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>HARTSVILLE</b><br>1280 S. Fourth Street<br>843.339.5550 | <b>BISHOPVILLE</b><br>545 Sumter Hwy<br>803.588.7960          | <b>BENNETTSVILLE</b><br>999 Cheraw Street<br>843.456.7777 |
| <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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SERVING A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE WITH UNIQUE FLAVORS AND SPICES *By Anna Bowman*

Autumn Ciera Scott

**CHARLOTTE, NC**—Personal Chef Autumn Ciera Scott, affectionately known as “Chef AC,” to her clients and social media followers, is a self-taught traveling culinary chef and caterer. Scott is the owner of The Soul of American Cuisines, LLC, established in 2021, featuring the best in American cuisine with a twist of southern flavor, as taught to her by her great-grandmother, Wilhelmina Scott, grandmothers,

Loretta Scott Duncan and aunt, Octavia Scott. Her success is a testament to their culinary expertise, which Scott had the pleasure of experiencing, starting during her adolescent years.

Scott, a 2021 graduate of Clemson University with a B.A in Biological Sciences, decided to pursue her culinary passion, combined with her background in science to explore various infusions of unique flavors and spices for her recipes to give her clients a unique experience. “I decided to combine my life-long culinary experiences from the southern teachings of my grandmothers with my science background,” said Scott. A delicious combination has become a signature for Scott and her staff, which has resulted in rave reviews from each of her clients.

From a little girl in her grandmothers’ kitchen in Lancaster, SC, to a highly acclaimed chef preparing a four-course meal, internationally, in a kitchen in Tulum, Mexico, Scott has seen her dreams flourish from pop-up events to entice clients, to a self-proclaimed “Chefpreneur” enticing clients with her mesmerizing signature dishes, from coast to coast. “We specialize in bringing the soul to every table,” she said. No matter the size of the event, The Soul of American Cuisines, ensures the same quality experience. “I create American southern foods with a twist,” Scott stated. From meal preparations, girls’ brunch, private dinner for two, to extravagant weddings. I am a jack of all trades. Anything you need, I can do it,” she proudly acknowledged, adding “I am very versatile and personable.”

As a young business owner, Scott possesses an aura of confidence that easily translates to her clients, who trust her completely with every detail of their special event; from start to finish, and everything in between. “There are no limitations on my events and preparations. I’m willing to travel not only to all 50 states, but now, I have included being an international traveling chef on my resume as well, since my Mexico event,” she beamed. I provide reasonable pricing with a flavorful rate. I work to please my clients as much as possible and work within their budget to provide the best service for their events,” she explained.

Based in Charlotte, NC, she has built a strong foundation in her new hometown, “I have a strong presence due to social media. Her company has caught the eye of several corporate sponsors who have partnered and/or collaborated with her company: McCormick



*Chef AC prepares meal for Shateeja Harris (guest on the right), Tiffaney Nero (guest on the left)*

Seasonings, Door Dash and Airbnb. She also created her own women’s culinary fashion line, Culinary Curves® and provided exceptional culinary services to some of America’s more respected professional athletes/celebrities: Torrey Craig (Phoenix Suns), Tee Higgins (Cincinnati Bengals), Cornell Powell (Kansas City Chiefs), Isaiah Simmons (Arizona

Cardinals) and Celebrity Chef: Jaion Barnes. Not bad for a new enterprise!

The reason for her rapid success is easy for Scott to explain, it comes down to several important factors, providing a luxury private dining experience in the comfort of your own space. We offer meal preparation plans and meals as well as catering services. But the main element is satisfying everyone’s palate, she insisted. Scott has become known for some of her special dishes such as her, AC’s Hennessy Cream Shrimp & Grits, which includes smoked cheese grits, shrimp, sausage, crab, and topped with her very own special Hennessy cream sauce. Another client favorite is her baked seven cheese mac; seafood egg rolls; and various salmon and chicken recipes.

She acknowledges that because of her dedicated and devoted staff, The Soul of American Cuisines, LLC, has grown into an outstanding business in such a short period of time, due to the attention to detail that her staff provides at each event. Scott is joined by her mother, Tracey Scott, sous chef and Jordan McDuffie, who recently joined the team, as head sous chef. Her sister, Ayshia Scott, owner of 2Smooth Visual Media, LLC, also based in Charlotte, NC, is her personal videographer and photographer.

Scott stated that her business sets itself apart because of the quality that her team brings to the table. “As a self-taught chef, I utilize gifts from my ancestors, alongside a combination of luxury fine dining and casual dining to best cater to the clients’ events and needs. Along with a combination of Southern American cooking but not subjected to only preparing soul food. I use a combination of various ethnic foods and cultures, as well as placing no limitations on my events and preparations.”

Autumn Ciera Scott can be reached via her social media contacts:

Email: [thesoulufac@gmail.com](mailto:thesoulufac@gmail.com);

Website: [www.tasteofthesoul.com](http://www.tasteofthesoul.com);

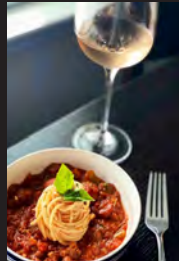
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/thesoulufac/>;

Youtube: <https://youtube.com/channelUCprr3n94vAuAWQkjhe71VRA>;

Other: [http://tiktok.com/@chefac\\_](http://tiktok.com/@chefac_)



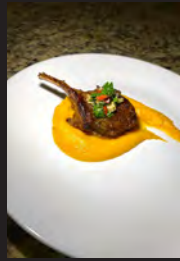
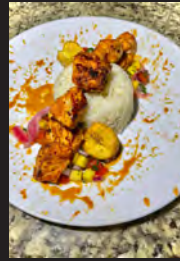
ACs Seafood Pot Pie



Bolognese Spaghetti



Brunch Charcuterie

Chimichurri Lamb Chop  
& Butternut Squash PuréeCreamy Tuscan  
Salmon PenneTropical Glazed  
Salmon & RiceVegan Stuffed  
Mushroom



## IS HAPPINESS REAL? Submitted by Coach Temple Robinson



Temple Robinson

Happiness is not for the faint of the heart. A few weeks ago, a friend called me and was having a very tough time. Nothing seemed to go the way that she wanted it to go, and her days felt quite dark. She consistently stated that she wanted to be happy and to find happiness. After giving her space to share her feelings, I asked her if she thought about practicing gratitude because gratitude can bring more happiness in life.

According to Webster, gratitude is the state of being grateful and having thankfulness. Research has shown that practicing gratitude daily, over time, can change how your brain processes experiences and information. In addition, multiple studies have shown that practicing gratitude improves one's state of being. You experience more positive emotions, satisfaction, improved health, stronger relationships and can better handle adversity. When I am in a state of gratitude, I feel more authentic, alive and appreciative of what is happening in my life. This is inclusive of the wonderful things that are happening and the things that occur that are very disappointing. As a result, gratitude brings more contentment to my life's journey.

To attain this state of being, there are several simple different ways in which you can regularly experience gratitude. It can include writing thank you notes, praying, meditating, counting your blessings and mentally thanking someone. One of the most highly recommended methods is a gratitude journal. At the end of each day, write down at least three things that happened that day that you are thankful for. It

requires an examination of the totality of every experience. This includes the good, the bad and the indifferent. Then, you can authentically count your blessings. It is not uncommon to find blessings that were either unnoticed or ignored. This process is food for your soul. If practiced over time, your inner spirit will crave it to remain abundant.

When I was younger, I thought happiness was a state of being. Being happy meant that life experiences were easy and was going, "my way." As a result, it was hard to hold onto because it was also quite fleeting and could be easily disrupted. As maturity set in, it was understood that happiness is an emotion that reflects an experience, not a state of being. However, when a shift was made to focus on having gratitude, more joy was experienced in life.

The beautiful part about life is that you have choices. If you have gratitude, then you are unlocking your potential to experience all that life has to offer. How can you find authentic contentment and experience more happiness in your life? How can you be fully present in your life and attract more blessings in your direction? How can you become the ideal, successful person that you want to be and consistently be that person? Simply choose to practice gratitude.

If you are interested in further exploring how you can have a fulfilling life of gratitude and in accomplishing your biggest life or professional goals with ease, please contact me for a complimentary success consultation at [coachtemple@templerobinson.com](mailto:coachtemple@templerobinson.com). To learn more about how life and leadership coaching can support you in truly enhancing yourself to the next level, visit [templerobinson.com](http://templerobinson.com). Remember, your ideal self and life are waiting for you, so give yourself the opportunity to truly actualize it through coaching.

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## COLLINS' PDRTA CAREER JOURNEY

By De'Angela Haynes



Tavorous Collins

Transportation means the action of transporting someone or something. This identifies Tavorous Collins and throughout his career journey, he's experienced great transformation and promotion. His career at Pee Dee RTA began in early 2009 as a dispatcher in our Marion office, and to be honest that was not his plan A. He initially wanted to be a schoolteacher and make a difference with young people in some type of way, but as far as teaching is concerned, things didn't turn out that way. After working in

other industries, dealing with layoffs, the opportunity to become a dispatcher became available, Collins applied and was hired. He was familiar with PDRTA from an early age because his precious Mother was a part-time operator during the summer, and he had an idea of what the company was about.

In the southeast, the way people get around is different from the northeast because people travel to work, school and to run errands using public transportation. When Collins began dispatching, he quickly learned that a lot of people relied on public transportation everyday, and it really does take a diverse team of people to get it done day in and day out. Every day, he went to work, engaged with his coworkers, and continued to get an understanding of the roles and what PDRTA did. He gained wisdom, knowledge and encouragement from those who had years invested in the company and they were very intentional when it came to giving him guidance. So, he followed leadership, and contributed where he could, which led to him becoming recognized as Employee of the Year in 2011. That recognition was motivation for him, because out of all the deserving people that were a part of the team, the contributions he made were recognized, and he felt valued as an employee. His desire from then on was to succeed within PDRTA.

In March of 2013, PDRTA went through a very tough period, where they were struggling financially due to budget cuts, and the company was forced to lay off so many valued employees, some of which were the ones that encouraged him along the way. This led to the closure of the Cheraw and Marion offices, which he was a part of. Collins really saw himself staying there and being able to advance, but the door closed on him. It's said when one door closes, God opens another and after about three months, God did just that. With new leadership in place, there was a job opportunity for a General Maintenance Worker at PDRTA, and he had been actively searching but hadn't had any success, so he applied, got an interview and was hired for that role. The job was different from a dispatcher, it was more physical, but he was no stranger to hard work. His job's responsibilities were keeping the grounds clean, the buildings clean, washing vehicles and any other duties he was assigned.

Collins was really getting an understanding of how every job was vital to PDRTA's success! Cleaning buses and cleaning grounds were important for the image that is presented to the public. People need a clean environment to work in, and every role on a team is important no matter the type of contribution. He had been in the office setting during the dispatch years, but now he was really working hard. His faith stood strong throughout the years. Psalms 128:2 says, "You shall



# COLLINS' PDRTA CAREER JOURNEY CONT'D



eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.” With that promise in mind, he knew the hard work

would pay off, but he just didn't know when. He stuck with it and eventually PDRTA began to expand little by little and opportunities began to open. A dispatch role became available, and he was able to take advantage of it and was given the role.

By this time, they were providing ADA complimentary services to qualified applicants, and Collins would drive when needed and learn the people and understand how much they depended on the service. To their passengers this service is a lifeline, some of the people he's transported had families, but they lived out of state. They could drive but their vision was impaired, or they just didn't have a ride and that's where PDRTA became the solution for so many communities.

In 2016, they were expanding more, and opportunities began opening up again due to employees retiring and the need for more support staff. A position became available in the purchasing department, so Collins had the opportunity to learn the idea behind it and how it worked. He worked under the purchasing manager at the time, and for the next month he was submerged in PDRTA, FTA and SC procurement code. This role was definitely outside of his comfort zone, but he wanted better for him and his family, so he applied himself and got an understanding of the role. He was then offered the role as purchasing & transportation specialist, where he began to see what happens behind the scenes. From vehicle purchases, contracts, policy,

meeting deadlines, inventory, paying attention to detail and networking. He was able to develop in so many ways through that role. For the next five years, he was able to take advantage of other opportunities such as purchasing manager, asst. operations manager safety & training, safety & training manager CSO and transportation manager of Urban Services. Collins' passion for transportation has caused him to see great growth in his career, but leadership skills were also greatly developed in him.

In his new role as director of Compliance, Safety and Customer Relations, Collins has the opportunity of making an even greater impact on what they do. From improving existing processes to introducing new ones, building relations through community engagement and making sure they are following federal and state guidelines. Looking back, Collins sees how blessed he is to work for an organization where there is support, room to grow, and ways to flourish in so many areas. The opportunities that have been made available at PDRTA have put so many on track to reach their full potential, and have created opportunities for PDRTA to extend their services to so many communities. Collins transit journey is far from over, but so far it has been a great ride!



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## WATCH YOUR BACK: LIFTING TECHNIQUES AND TIPS



(BPT) - If you're a caregiver you already know how emotionally and physically challenging it can be. When you need to lift, turn or transfer a loved one to or from a wheelchair or bed, it can put added strain on your bones and joints.

Fortunately, certain lifting techniques and proper planning can help prevent injury when caring for others.

### Lifting Techniques

When you need to lift or move a person, take your time and be aware of your posture and movement as you follow these guidelines:

- \* Keep your head and neck in alignment with your spine; your head, neck and back should be as straight as possible.
- \* Bend using your hips and knees rather than from your back.
- \* Avoid twisting your body.
- \* Always keep the person who is being moved close to your body.
- \* Keep your feet shoulder-width apart to maintain balance.
- \* Use the muscles in your legs to lift and/or pull.

If the person is too heavy or in an awkward position, get help rather than continuing on your own.

### Sitting up in bed

To move someone lying in bed to a wheelchair. First, put the chair close to the bed and make sure to lock the wheels. If the person is not strong enough to push up to a sitting position with their hands, place

one of your arms under their legs and your other arm under their back. Move the person's legs over the edge of the bed while pivoting their body, so the person ends up sitting on the edge of the bed. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart, your knees bent and your back in a natural straight position.

### Standing

If someone needs assistance standing from a sitting position on their bed. First, position the person's feet on the floor, slightly apart. Face the person and place their hands on the bed or on your shoulders. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart, with your knees bent. Place your arms around the person's back and clasp your hands together. Hold the person close to you, lean back and shift your weight. Nurses, physical therapists and hospital workers often use lifting belts fastened around the person's waist to help with these types of movements. The caregiver then grasps the belt when lifting the patient. You can order one of these "gait belts" online, or find them at a home medical supply store.

### Sitting down

To help someone sit down into a wheelchair. First, ensure that the wheels are locked. Pivot toward the wheelchair, bend your knees and lower the person into the chair. Make sure the person has both their hands on the arms of the chair before you lower them down into it.

For additional help learning these techniques, discuss or practice them with your family member's physical or occupational therapist, if they have one.

### Prevent accidents by evaluating your environment.

It is also a good idea to make sure the home is clear of tripping hazards and arranged to improve accessibility. Consider securing area rugs to help prevent slips and use nightlights to illuminate all rooms for better visibility and clear pathways.

# Attention RNs & LPNs ... Exciting Career Opportunities!

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## WHAT WOULD YOUR EULOGY SAY?



(BPT) - We plan ahead for the things in life we look forward to - the birth of a baby, weddings, vacations and holidays. It doesn't come as naturally to plan for our funeral. It's

easier to avoid the conversation altogether. But, by discussing your personal wishes for your final arrangements, you can protect your loved ones from having to make difficult decisions in a time of immense grief, and potentially ease their financial obligations.

None of us wants to be a burden on those we love. Yet conversations around funeral planning can be tough. Some families find it more natural to discuss the details of their final wishes after the death of a friend or colleague. Others look for specific milestones, like birthdays or retirement. And some families don't want to have the discussion at all, preferring to write their wishes down. (Just don't forget to tell your loved ones where to find the document!)

Starting the conversation can be challenging, whether you're talking about your funeral or asking a loved one how they want to be memorialized. Perhaps watch a movie with a funeral scene or even just schedule a casual conversation after dinner. Here are a few suggestions for kicking off the discussion:

- \* Do you want to be buried or cremated?
- \* Have I ever told you my favorite scripture?
- \* If you could write your own eulogy, what would you say?

\* Would you prefer a traditional funeral or more contemporary celebration of life?

If you're still unsure how to broach the subject, The Insider's Guide to Funeral & Cremation Planning is a great resource. Following along with the free guide will help you and your loved ones understand the steps of advance funeral planning. You can download a free booklet that will help you design the one-of-a-kind service you'd like to have.

Remember that almost any funeral or cremation can be planned in advance, including the venue, catering, mementos and cemetery property, but you might be surprised at all there is to consider. A memorial service is unlike any other event, and, by some estimates, your loved ones could have up to 200 decisions to make in a short timeframe, during the darkest hours of their lives. The most memorable services are planned thoughtfully, with personalized touches that reflect the individual and bring comfort to those in attendance. A Dignity Memorial funeral director can help you navigate your options and develop a plan for a truly personalized event.

Talking openly about the memorial you envision - and encouraging your loved ones to do the same - removes the guesswork from the planning process, and the focus can stay on honoring a unique life lived and celebrating the moments you and your loved ones cherish.

For more information, visit [DignityMemorial.com](https://www.dignitymemorial.com).

Let's Talk About  
Death and Dying

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The advertisement for Ideal Funeral Parlor, Inc. features a large, blue, serif font for the company name. To the left of the name is a decorative crest with a wreath and a central emblem. To the right is a photograph of a white dove in flight, carrying a red wreath in its beak. The background is a light blue sky with soft clouds.

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# AJGS SHIFTS THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE Submitted by Deborah Morton publicist, DEI Media



AJGS CEO, Dino A. James

Up from the Sandhills of South Carolina emerges a man from the Pee Dee region who is helping to shift the earth's atmosphere by managing oxygen levels for the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, saving marine life on a daily basis: Dino A. James, the CEO of A-James Global Services, Inc. (AJGS).

Dino A. James was raised in Darlington's Society Hill, the "pearl" of the Pee Dee region—this area was heralded as a historic cultural center of the Pee

Dee region well into the 19th century and is still part of this region's pride and joy. As a child, James attended school in Darlington and then went on to Bennettsville, where this future business leader of America went to high school. James says, "When you are raised in a small town, you have to depend on yourself and the family members that surround you. My grandmother and grandfather instilled within me a standard of excellence. It gave me an inner drive to always give my best."

James went on to become the founder of A. James Global Services, Inc., (AJGS) one of the most successful solely owned businesses in the State of South Carolina. AJGS is currently working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Interior and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency for The Savannah Harbor Expansion Project. This \$706 million joint state and federal project dredged 32 miles of the Savannah River. AJGS currently manages and operates a dissolved oxygen injection system, rerouting freshwater flow in the upper and lower harbor, preserving 2,245 acres of freshwater wetlands for the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge.

"I am involved in our business cycle from beginning to end," says James. "I intimately know the important elements that drive the success of AJGS. It's been a long journey, but, eventually, I gained the confidence and learned necessary skills from other prosperous business owners who mentored me on how to drive a successful organization and see the bigger picture."

"Success is directly tied to excellent service, regardless of a small start in your own back yard or partnering with others on million-dollar deals." James tells stories from his childhood and says he got his first taste of making money by helping his grandparents with cleaning up the yard, painting the woodwork, small carpentry tasks and helping with tasks around his neighborhood. James conveys, "It really starts when you're young. As a kid, I liked the freedom that making money provided. I would save it and my grandmother would share wisdom about how money was a tool, not just a toy for playing around."

Now, after many lessons learned, A. James Global Services, Inc., has been recognized as one of the top U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) 8 (a) minority-owned companies in America and scores top on the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS). "It's all about service. It's competing against yourself to consistently offer the best and pushing to find a way to do even better than that—you have to keep evolving." When the GSA took AJGS through the schedule acquisition process, AJGS was evaluated on many levels, from administrative and financial records to past performance and current pricing. "GSA really scrutinizes a company," says James. "This is because GSA wants to make sure you are going to be a reliable contractor and can deliver the products and services you say you can offer. Even when you've made it successfully through the process and are awarded a GSA



Dino A. James is inducted into the prestigious Thomas E. Miller Society at South Carolina State University (SCSU)

Schedule contract, the evaluations don't stop. You've got to keep it all going." James expounds on his role as CEO and says, "My role is not just limited to building a great company, it's also about developing a team and helping them grow. When the people working under you are giving their best then the company keeps growing and keeps getting better over time."

Recently, AJGS inked a deal with Global Fortune-500 transportation leader, Kawasaki, to offer industrial electronic facilities services to the Washington Area Metro Rapid Transit System in Washington, D.C., the second largest transit system by ridership, in our nation. Through this deal, AJGS is now helping to deliver the reliability of the Kawasaki brand to our nation's capital. Additionally, AJGS is also the only African American owned entity to become joint venture partner with blue-chip Fortune 500 Danaher Corporation, a company that designs, manufactures and markets professional "Life Sciences, Diagnostics and Environmental & Applied Solutions."

Dino A. James is a kind-hearted mentor and business philanthropist who has spent both time and money supporting faith-based summer camps for children and performing arts training programs in our region. "The Pee Dee region has been extremely supportive of me, and I feel blessed to be able to create something as a way of giving back—ways to say thank you," says James. He is also an advocate for his home state, serving as an advisory board committee member for Communities in Schools South Carolina, Habitat for Humanity Central South Carolina and the University Industry Demonstration Partnerships (UIDP). His appreciation for culture and the arts prompted him to become one of the first Charter Members of the International African American Arts Museum in Charleston, which will be opening up this summer.

James has created an Educational Endowment for first generation college students at South Carolina State University (SCSU), his alma mater. He is a recent inductee of the South Carolina State University Thomas E. Miller Society and will be honored this spring with the North Star Award, one of SCSU's highest honors. He is especially committed to young leaders and young visionaries at SCSU who demonstrate innovation, financial aptitude and personal commitment as they receive education and leadership skills to build world-class businesses.



## A. JAMES GLOBAL SERVICES SHIFTS THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE

WORK ON SAVANNAH HARBOR PROJECT WITH EPA  
SAVES MARINE LIFE  
AJAMESGLOBAL.COM





# A JOURNEY WITH CHALLENGES, DEFINITELY WORTH IT By Les Echols



Bruce Turner

Bruce Turner makes a living in the Florence community as an entrepreneur and is a diligent servant to several non-profits. Turner started his business, Great Quality Pest Control in 2019, having been in the pest control industry since 2012, in Augusta, GA, before starting his lawn care business, Great Quality Lawn Care, in 2021. His path has been challenging, but Turner continues to excel in business, making strides he did not think possible.

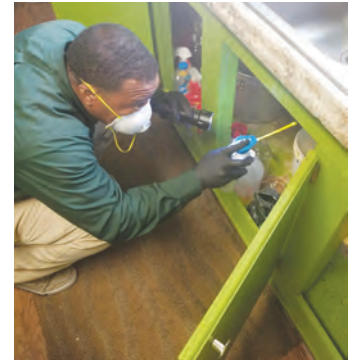
After completing the General Education Development requirements, Turner attended college for electrical engineering, before discontinuing to pursue his entrepreneurial dreams. "I had multiple jobs throughout my career, including working in the food industry, recycling, distribution, warehouse, forklift, electrical, pest control and management. The respective experience I gained in these jobs allowed me to learn how to carry myself professionally and conduct business transactions. The more jobs that I had the more I understood people, and the procedures of work ethic," explained Turner.

"The journey was not easy, but it's definitely been worth it," Turner continued. "In my journey, I had to overcome my fear of cold calling and knocking on doors. I had to understand that I live in a world where stereotypes and discrimination still exist, and at times I let it impede my business," continued Turner. Turner documents another part of his journey that was a challenge, that was, learning how to run his business day-to-day. This meant learning tax and business laws and completing legal documentation for his business. "All these challenges took some time, but I am now in my fifth year of business and I'm still here and I'm grateful

to be able to conduct business and build a legacy for my family."

Turner started his own non-profit, the Savannah Grove Resource Association, which helps the community with resources for education, where he spearheads back-to-school drives and other events to support youth. Turner also serves on the board of the Savannah Grove Community Action League, which is a registered 501(c)(3) organization which operates and advocates on behalf of the Savannah Grove community and its residents. Additionally, he is a member of the Savannah Grove Elementary school education board, a certified pest control operator in the state of Georgia and is the owner of Great Quality Farms and Great Quality Lawn Care. "My goal is to bring back a family business that you can trust. We are hardworking, honest and educational. We specialize in manicuring lawns and eradicating invasive pests," concluded Turner.

Turner can be reached for pest control and lawn care needs at: (843) 601-0557 • Email: [gqpest.com](mailto:gqpest.com) • Website: [www.gqpest.com](http://www.gqpest.com) On Facebook: Great Quality Lawn Care and Great Quality Pest Solutions



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## JOIN US FOR AN EVENING WITH



# FANTASIA

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

# JOE

*Submitted by Lauren N. Revell, marketing manager Florence Center*

This June, Peachez Inc. is pleased to present Billboard chart-topper and Grammy Award winner Fantasia to the Florence Center in Florence, SC. The North Carolina native will be joined by R&B singer Joe, as well as DJ Shaun Nyce. Tickets on sale March 24, 2023.

Fantasia first became internationally known in 2004, when she performed on and ultimately won season three of Fox's American Idol. That same year, she released her platinum-selling and Grammy Award-nominated debut album, *Free Yourself*. Her first single, "I Believe," debuted at #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, and the album featured other hits including, "Truth Is," and the title track, "Free Yourself." Fantasia was the first artist ever to have a first single debut at #1 on the Billboard Hot 100. Her next album came in 2006, the self-titled *Fantasia*, which earned her another #1 single, "When I See U," two Grammy Award nominations and a gold record.

A third album, "Back to Me," was released in 2010, with the single "Bittersweet," bringing Fantasia her first Grammy Award win for Best Female R&B Pop Vocal Performance, as well as an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Song. Her 2013 release, "Side Effects of You," and her 2016 release, "The Definition Of....," both debuted at #1 on Billboard's R&B Albums chart, as well as #2 and #6, respectively, on the Billboard 200 chart. In addition to continuing to top the charts with these releases, Fantasia also continued to rack up Grammy Award nominations, bringing her total to 12 and counting.

Her latest full album release, 2019's *Sketchbook*, was issued on her own label, Rock Soul Inc., and spawned a North American tour in the fall of that year.

Given Fantasia is known for her artistic and heartfelt performances, it's no surprise those talents have also found her on the Broadway stage, beginning in 2007, with the role of Celie in, "The Color Purple," for which she won a Theater World Award. She returned to Broadway in 2013, as a featured celebrity performer in, "After Midnight," a dance-focused musical that celebrates the famed Cotton Club and the Harlem Renaissance. In February 2022, it was confirmed that Fantasia will make her feature film debut, reprising her role as Celie in Blitz Bazawule's movie adaptation of, "The Color Purple," musical scheduled to be released in December 2023.

Georgia native Joe released his debut LP, "Everything," in 1993, the first of 12 full length albums released to date. Over his career, he has topped Billboard charts and has also garnered Grammy, BET, NAACP Image and Soul Train Music Awards nominations. His third album, "2000's My Name is Joe," has been certified triple platinum and features two top five singles in "Stutter" and "I Wanna Know." His last full length album release, 2016's, "My Name is Joe Thomas," debuted at #2 on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and featured the #1 single on the Adult R&B Songs Chart, "So I Can Have You Back." Joe supported the album with a European co-headlining tour in 2017 and has continued to tour consistently in the years since.

Tickets for June 24, 2023, are on sale now. All tickets can be purchased through Ticketmaster.

The Florence Center is a multi-faceted venue offering nine professional meeting rooms, a Jr. Ballroom, Grand Ballroom, state-of-the-art kitchen and a fresh new look to accompany the 10,000-seat arena. The entertainment venue is also the largest convention, meeting, and exhibition facility in northeast South Carolina. Boasting an all new, versatile lighting and sound system, it has become a popular venue for weddings and other private events.

The ASM-managed venue just so happens to be situated as the midpoint destination between New York and Miami along the most heavily traveled corridor on the east coast. It sits in the heart of the hospitality district at the intersections of I-95 and I-20 in Florence, South Carolina. The Florence Center offers nearly 3,000 adjacent hotel rooms, many popular national restaurants, and superb locally owned restaurants offering our local southern cuisine. In-house services include SAVOR -food & beverage services, 2,250 on-site complimentary parking spaces, fiber optic cabling, high speed Wi-Fi, ADA compliant technology, smart meeting rooms and so much more.

The Florence Center's arena hosts a wide variety of concerts and live entertainment shows each year. Entertainers ranging from Casting Crowns to Aaron Lewis and comedian Bert Kreischer to the Harlem Globetrotters have performed here. In addition to community events like the Kid's Jamboree and Jingle Bell Market, the venue also hosts your favorite shows for family fun, Disney on Ice, Monster Jam and The Florence Stampede and Pro Rodeo.

Let our professionals make your next event a perfect one!






# > We're at the center



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Donald Gilliard

**GEORGETOWN**—At an early age, Georgetown native Donald Gilliard was fascinated with politics. It was no surprise then that as a young man, he began working as a state field director for a candidate who was running for governor. Although Gilliard saw success in his early political career, a few bad choices led to him serving a 20-year prison sentence—one that could have easily discouraged him from chasing his dreams again. However, because of his determination and optimism, Gilliard never gave up. Now he has

what Attorney James Battle calls, “an amazing story of overcoming impossible odds,” and Gilliard wants to share this story to encourage others to keep going regardless of challenges.

Today, Gilliard is an accomplished political consultant, motivational speaker and producer/director. As the owner of the production company, Sweet Gilliard Productions and Consulting LLC, he has had local shows of James Weldon Johnson’s, “God’s Trombones,” in Florence, Marion and Columbia, to name a few. Gilliard’s 50-member cast also performs nationwide to help raise funds for organizations and churches. In addition, the book, “But for The Grace of God: I Should be Dead,” by Steve Williams, can be found on Amazon, and details Gilliard’s life in prison where he was still determined to make a difference even while in that environment. In fact, his production company was birthed during his incarceration.

When times were difficult behind bars, prayer is what kept Gilliard encouraged. Each time he prayed and asked God to release him from prison, he’d hear the same response from the appeals court, “Motion Denied.” But Gilliard did not allow this verdict to deter him—not when there was another verdict in God’s plans. “God had already told me I wouldn’t die in prison,” Gilliard said. “I dreamed about being outside the prison walls, and I held on to that hope.”

“Had I not made the bad choices I probably would’ve been in the Senate or Congress right now, so I regret that I did that to my life. That’s why any time I get the opportunity to encourage younger people, I do. Hopefully, I can save someone from making the same mistakes I made in life.”

Gilliard has been afforded the opportunity to serve as a consultant for countless individuals, including attorneys and politicians, such as Senator Ronnie Sabb who said, “Donald is a really good person who I have an enormous amount of respect for. He appreciates life with a sense of urgency, and that is why he is so effective at the things he does. We pray God continually blesses him.”

Wilma Neal Garren, a political strategist and retired union organizer, has known Gilliard for almost 50 years and has witnessed his life challenges and his growth. “I met him as a young student at SC State University who displayed amazing oratory skills and an abundance of gravitas in one so young. I gave him his first political job and ignited a fire inside him for political involvement. Donald later traveled the road of so many in the 80s as he succumbed to crack addiction and all the horrors that it brings. He spent 20 years of a life sentence in federal prison. But Gilliard rode the wings of the phoenix as he rebuilt his life from ashes to find purpose, love and redemption—a feat not many can accomplish when enmeshed in addiction,” Garren said.



She also described how gifted and dedicated Gilliard is. “He has dedicated his life to helping his community in a myriad of ways. He never looked back to his days of addiction. He transformed from a drug peddler to a faithful husband, dedicated father and doting grandfather. He is a credit to his family and community and lives his faith. I am proud to call Donald my friend, comrade and brother as we both have shared the wings of the phoenix to help us rise above our mistakes in life to find peace and kinship in this world of complexities. He deserves any accolades that may come his way.”

Similarly, former congressional candidate Mal Hyman speaks very highly of Gilliard. “Donald Gilliard is a good friend, a savvy political activist, a bridge-builder to many communities and an inspiring redemption story. He was my senior advisor in my congressional campaigns and has gone on to advise leading state senators as well as Senator Bernie Sanders.”

While Gilliard clarifies that he works as a consultant to earn a living, he declares his production company is his passion. “It’s my release. I really enjoy what it brings to the people.” His greatest success was the most recent show at Timberlake Baptist Church in Myrtle Beach because it was “a truly integrated audience.”

All in all, Gilliard wants others to know that “you can never ever quit in life.” This “will keep going,” as Battle describes it, inspires others around Gilliard. As Gilliard says, “I don’t care how difficult it is or what obstacles or pitfalls you have. Never give up. As long as you are still breathing, you have to believe it and wake up knowing you can do it. Just set your mind to make a difference in this world. When it’s all over, you want to know you’ve done something in your life to make it better not only for yourself but also for the community.” And that’s just what Gilliard has been doing since his prison release 13 years ago.

Gilliard lives with his wife and granddaughter in Georgetown. Every day he wakes up and looks at his granddaughter and feels like he has a second chance at life. “When I was in the streets, I had a son and wasn’t in his life. We have a relationship now that I value very much. It’s all about our children and the kind of legacy we are leaving them. I want to leave a legacy for my grandchildren that, ‘my granddaddy got knocked down, but he got back up.’”

For more information, Gilliard can be reached by email at [gilliarddonald@gmail.com](mailto:gilliarddonald@gmail.com) or by phone at 843-240-0432.





# ARTFIELDS 2023

## April 19 - 29



## EXPLORE DAILY

### View ArtFields & ArtFields Jr. Competition Artwork

Over 500 pieces of artwork are on display in over 40 venues around downtown Lake City! Explore and vote for your favorites to win the adult People's Choice Awards by texting the 6-digit code on each artwork label to 843-647-6780.

#### Viewing Hours

April 19-20: 11AM - 5PM  
April 21-22: 10AM - 7PM  
April 23: 1 - 6PM  
April 24-29: 10AM - 7PM

### Lynches Lake Historical Society & Front Gallery Exhibitions

There are two other exhibitions in town that you don't want to miss!

*TRANSPLANTS & CONNECTIVE ISSUES* in Front Gallery open daily from 11AM - 4PM

A historical exhibition on Lake City artists Agnes Singletary and Abe Thomy on display in the Lake City Library daily during the official viewing hours.

### Explore Moore Farms Botanical Garden

Explore 65 acres of dazzling horticulture displays each day 8:30 - 3PM and daily guided tours at 10AM for \$5 each. MFBG is a botanical paradise that you don't want to miss! Closed on Sundays.

Topiary artist Mike Gibson will be working on a new sculpture during the final week of ArtFields with an unveiling on April 29th at 10AM.



# Saturday, April 29th

## Street Festival 10:00 am to 10:00 pm

# CELEBRATE MAIN ST

### Dillon, SC

"Proudly present by Anderson Brothers Bank"



Duke Energy Stage Performers



**Dan E.  
MC ALL DAY**



**Rick Hubbard  
1:45 pm - 2:45 pm**



**Chocolate Chip & Company  
7:00 pm - 10:00 pm**

**Vendors ~ Concessions ~ Car Show ~ Live Entertainment  
Kids Zone with Games & Prizes  
Rides for the whole family, and so much more!**

**For More Information Contact the Dillon County Chamber of Commerce at (843) 774-8551**

## 2023 CELEBRATE MAIN STREET FESTIVAL

*Submitted by Lisa Moody, downtown coordinator City of Dillon*



Anderson Brothers Bank proudly presents the City of Dillon and Dillon County Chamber of Commerce, 2023 Celebrate Main Street Festival in historic Downtown Dillon. This much-loved family-friendly event will take place Saturday, April 29, from 10 a.m. -10 p.m. The Duke Energy Stage will host a variety of local entertainment throughout the day with special guests, Rick Hubbard and the Kazoobie Kazoo Show at 1:45 p.m., and the headliner band Chocolate Chip & Company, that will take you into the night from 7:00pm-10:00pm. There is fun for the entire family with the 19th Annual Dillon County Car Show, Huntington's Disease Society of America Bike & Walk-A-Thon, Kids Zone, Petting Zoo, non-profit and merchandise vendors and crafters, food trucks and vendors and so much more! This year's proceeds from the Dillon Country Car Show will be donated to the American Red Cross. Participants may pre-register on Eventbrite or the day of the event from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

For more information regarding the car show please contact James Bryant at 843-506-2584. For information regarding the festival, contact Lisa Moody with the City of Dillon at 843-845-4393.



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# LE DÎNER EN BLANC RETURNS TO THE CITY OF FLORENCE By Les Echols



Hostess: (LtoR) Charlene McKnight, Nicole Dixon and Sadia McKnight

Le Dîner en Blanc will return to Florence, SC, for its third edition on May 20, 2023. As always, the venue will remain secret until the last minute. Established in 1988, Le Dîner en Blanc has become one of the coolest & chicest ways to give back and support the local arts and small business communities.

Founded on a concept of inviting and partnering with local businesses to come together and promote each city's unique artistic talent &

businesses, Le Dîner en Blanc is so much more than an event. It's a unique cultural movement that empowers friends of friends to gather and celebrate their shared passions for life, food, fashion and community, year after year, with a pinch of mystery and a large serving of spontaneity. Elegantly dressed all in white, guests arrive at a secret location for a chic picnic en masse. They bring their own tables, chairs, picnic baskets—all the trimmings—to sit down with friends and make new connections in one of their city's most beautiful public spaces. The location remains secret up until the very moment of arrival. Over the course of the evening, guests from all backgrounds eat, dance and reconnect with the finer things in life, as they appreciate the night's magical experience. Dîner en Blanc has become both a networking opportunity for its guests, as well as a chic and elegant way to support the local community.

Nicole Dixon, co-host of Le Dîner en Blanc in Florence, SC, is



Pictured: Nicole Echols, Les Echols, Edith Robinson and Edmund Brown

glad that Le Dîner en Blanc is returning to the city, "This chic and elegant affair is perfect to encourage people to shop local and bring to the event their local flavor. It was a fun time with perfect weather last year, so we strongly invite the participants to register early."

Dîner en Blanc members and guests consist of VIPs, local to global small business owners & entrepreneurs, artists & art lovers, city & community leaders/advocates, social media and cultural influencers. A seated dinner is

just one part of the Dîner en Blanc experience, with a typical schedule built around networking, drinks, food, live music and support of local vendor partners.



2022 Le Dîner en Blanc

People can sign-up now by visiting [florence.dinerenblanc.com](https://florence.dinerenblanc.com/) (<https://florence.dinerenblanc.com/>) and clicking on the "Register" tab.

To find out more about how to sponsor or be involved in the Dîner en Blanc experience, email: [florence@dinerenblanc.com](mailto:florence@dinerenblanc.com).

## Summer Solstice

1 Serving | 5 Minutes



### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 oz. Silver Tequila
- 2 oz. White Cranberry Juice
- 1 oz. Triple Sec
- 1 oz. Lime Juice
- Garnish - Fresh Cranberries & Rosemary Sprigs

### Directions:

1. Add ice and all ingredients to your shaker.
2. Shake vigorously for 10 - 15 seconds.
3. Pour shaker contents into your rocks glass.
4. Garnish with Cranberries and Rosemary.
5. Enjoy!





- Complimentary WiFi
- WXYZ Bar
- Adaptive Event Room
- Indoor Splash Zone Pool
- Patio with Fire Pit
- Outdoor Sports Court
- Media Room
- Home2 Market
- Plug & Play Connectivity
- Chargers in every Room

**Aloft Florence**  
**820 Woody Jones Blvd.**  
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- Complimentary High Speed Internet
- Complimentary Breakfast
- Complimentary USA Today
- 24 Hour Business Center
- Indoor Heated Saline Pool
- Spacious Suites with 42" TV's
- Game Room
- Complimentary Laundry
- Home2 Market

**Home2 Suites by Hilton**  
**900 Woody Jones Blvd.**  
**843-664-9008**



- Complimentary High Speed Internet
- Complimentary Hot Breakfast
- Evening Reception
- 24 Hour Business Center
- Outdoor Saline Pool and Sports Court
- Meeting Room with AV
- Complimentary Laundry
- Suite Shop

**Homewood Suites by Hilton**  
**3450 W. Radio Drive**  
**843-407-1600**



- Newly Renovated
- Complimentary High Speed Internet
- Complimentary Hot Breakfast
- Complimentary USA Today
- 24 Hour Business Center
- Indoor Heated Saline Pool
- Meeting Room with AV
- Complimentary Laundry
- Sundry Shop

**Comfort Suites**  
**2120 W. Lucas Street**  
**843-662-5295**



- Complimentary WiFi
- Complimentary Breakfast
- Indoor Saline Pool
- Patio w/Grill & Fire Pit
- Game Room
- Complimentary Laundry
- 24/7 Market
- Fitness Room

**Tru by Hilton**  
**2140 W. Lucas Street**  
**843-629-7050**



- Newly Renovated
- Complimentary High Speed Internet
- Complimentary Hot Breakfast
- 24 Hour Business Center
- Indoor Heated Saline Pool
- Complimentary Laundry
- Fitness Center

**Holiday Inn Express & Suites**  
**2101 Florence Harlee Blvd.**  
**843-629-9779**



- Complimentary High Speed Internet
- Complimentary Hot Breakfast
- Complimentary Cookies and Coffee
- 24 Hour Business Center
- Outdoor Saline Pool
- Meeting Room
- Complimentary Laundry

**Country Inn & Suites**  
**1739 Mandeville Road**  
**843-317-6616**



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**HOTELS**

**www.High-RiseHotels.com**  
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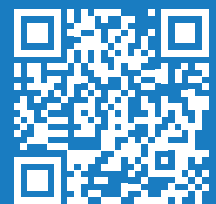
# HIGH PERFORMING

# MATERNITY



Florence Medical Center

SCAN FOR  
MORE ABOUT  
WOMEN'S CARE





# INSPIRING SUCCESS

— *through* —

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

At Food Lion, we value inclusion in all aspects of our business and believe a diverse and inclusive workplace is essential for continued growth and prosperity.



**FOOD LION**  
community  
Nourishing a Sense of Belonging