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DIVERSITY WORKS

JULY 2023 VOLUME 13 ISSUE 3

"For All of Us"



COVER STORY: PG. 46
DONALD L. JACKSON FMU'S OWN BISHOP



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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



Glaciera Brown Mason
Editor

Greetings Diversity Works Readers!

I am thrilled to provide the highlight of what you'll find in this third quarter issue! We are shaped by our experiences and exposures; the things we do, the diverse people we meet, whether for work or pleasure, those are what shape us into the people we are or are becoming. I encourage you to read our magazine with interest from cover-to-cover, as you beat the summer heat. Get the update on the latest news and wonderful activities in and around the Pee Dee that make us a community!

Summer is in full swing and so are planned activities and events, just for you. As you peruse this issue take

special note and be informed from the Florence Downtown Development Office, as they lay out the top five things to enjoy from cooling off at the Downtown Splash Pad to Florence After 5 or dining on delicious local award-winning chef-inspired cuisine.

It's a great time to be in the Pee Dee! Diversity Works' partners and advertisers are important to the success of our publication. We thank the sponsors and advertisers who support diversity, equity and inclusion in the Pee Dee and encourage you, our readers, to support local small businesses advertised herein. We also look forward to your attendance and participation at the upcoming Diversity Focus Training. Plan ahead to attend and be a part of the DEI conversation.

Our community is home to many small businesses. In the ever-changing climate of employer/employee relations, our Business section gives suggested ways to solve the challenges of a hybrid workforce. In recovery from the national pandemic, business entrepreneurs can learn ways to empower and retain employees through tuition reimbursement programs. Read further and see how Duke Energy, a leader in our community does it again by supporting SC Emergency Preparedness as well as the City of Lake City with needed grant funding. Get to know Florence County Administrator, Kevin Yokim and get his thoughts on the four crucial issues facing Florence. You may also find interesting and refreshing, the article about the great customer service practiced at Carolina SupplyHouse, Inc., as well as the generous contributions of MPD Electric Cooperative as they support thru funding, a training facility to accommodate agencies across the region at the Marlboro Sheriff's Department; Mercy Medicine, a free medical clinic for disadvantaged community members with no health insurance coverage and their generosity toward AMIkids in Bennettsville.

We begin our Education section with kudos and congratulations to graduating seniors at all SC institutions of higher learning. In your reading, find interesting education stories, to include how HGTC celebrated its largest graduating class or Claflin University's pinning ceremony for its inaugural Master of Science in nursing graduates. Don't miss the celebratory article from Florence 1 Schools about the opening of the Farm! See what the MCSD Superintendent, Dr. Kandace Bethea shares about the benefits of a modified school schedule. Read and make note of the new Florence 1 Schools staff changes for the upcoming school year and how Butler Academy, a Florence public charter school, in its infancy is doing great things. Check out their story and learn what Butler Academy President, Dr. Jerome Reyes shares about the appointment of its first provost Nateisha Taylor. Help share the news that FDTC is now offering evening electrician certification courses. Our education section is filled with informative stories on what's happening. As parents or guardians, find useful, the story on six ways to fund your child's college education.

Diversity Works shares our Cover Story this quarter from Francis

Marion University as they honor their very own, Bishop Donald Jackson in his 29th year of service as a staff member and advisor to the YGB Choir. Read his story and be inspired by his perseverance.

This quarter's Special section includes stories you'll find useful, informative and interesting as we highlight articles in Parks & Recreation, Artist Appreciation, Suicide Prevention and Recovery. Continue reading for awareness on the great experiences one can find in our local parks. There's something for everyone! Get to know how outdoor spaces benefit wellbeing and what's available locally to enrich your outdoor experiences and get back to nature. Check out the informative article from the Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau that includes the best bike, hiking and walking trails this area has to offer. If you're ready for more, visit the City of Lake City and take your kids to join the fun, fun, fun at their first-ever Anime, Gaming and Entertainment Convention. They'll thank you later!

In Artist Appreciation, be introduced to local artists of the Pee Dee who share portions of their self-expression through their artistry. Meet creative visual arts Photographer, Dalvin Spann and read the story on how his vision is captured through the lens of his camera. In this section, you'll find stories of local artists expressing their talents thru music, graphic and visual arts. Read with congratulations the Florence Regional Arts Alliance's announcement of the Betty Ann Darby Scholarship recipients for students pursuing professional degrees in arts education. For additional cultural experiences, continue reading as the Lake City ArtFields Collective announces the top winners of ArtFields 2023.

Improved physical, psychological and social well-being are a part of a person's recovery from substance abuse. In our Recovery section, we join in celebration of Trinity Behavioral Care's 50th anniversary and learn what they share about removing barriers in our communities. On the road to recovery, read articles about how art therapy helps the challenges one faces.

Suicidal ideations include thoughts and feelings that many face. This special section on Suicide Prevention includes articles specific to suicidal thoughts on college campuses, statistics on suicide risk and how connections with others help. Read these articles to be informed and find resources to, #BeThere for those at risk.

Money, money, money! Money makes the world go round! Articles in our Financial section allow you to educate yourselves in managing your finances. Learn how to empower others through financial literacy, find resources to help in estate planning or establish your first budget. Scrutinize the article on how to protect your biggest investment, then, checkout Anderson Brothers Bank's new management announcement.

We all know that health is wealth. In our Health section, we share articles from the Pee Dee's local health community. We hope you find value and useful health information by reading the articles submitted on celiac disease awareness, sickle cell disease, living a normal life with HIV, diabetes and tips to prevent food poisoning. Read further and be informed about MUSC's designation as the best hospital for maternity care. The elderly and young people are our most vulnerable, refer to HopeHealth's information on the twelve fall prevention steps for seniors and how to stay cool and prevent heat stroke in hot weather. CareSouth Carolina's announcement of a new pharmacy set to open in Dillon, SC is full of information you can use and what it means for local area patient health. Lastly, don't miss McLeod Health Dillon's announcement, naming Jenny Hardee as its new CEO. Congratulations!

As always, Diversity Works does not disappoint in bringing the most informative quarterly news for your consumption. Grab a sweet tea and imbibe all the news you can use. Remember, if you missed an issue, checkout our archives and visit us online at diversityworkssc.com. Happy reading!

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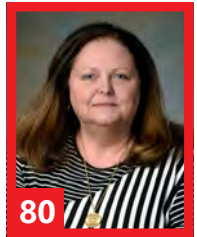
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BBB MERGER MEANS STRONGER PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

Submitted by CEO/President Mallory Wojciechowski, BBB serving Eastern Carolinas



Mallory Wojciechowski

MYRTLE BEACH – The Better Business Bureau is expanding its reach in the Carolinas to serve more businesses and consumers than we ever have before. Better Business Bureau of Eastern North Carolina has joined with Better Business Bureau of Coastal Carolina to become Better Business Bureau serving Eastern Carolinas. Since the merger on January 1, 2023, our

service area has been covering 48 counties in North Carolina and South Carolina.

There was an opportunity to bring the two organizations together to strengthen the impact we make on our local communities. We now serve over 5,200 accredited businesses and service approximately 115,000 businesses as BBB serving Eastern Carolinas.

“The excitement about this consolidation is not only about the growth of our office but about the increase in services that we will be able to provide both businesses and consumers throughout the Triangle, the Cape Fear Region, the Pee Dee and the Grand Strand.” said Mallory Wojciechowski, president and CEO of BBB serving Eastern Carolinas. “BBB has been around for more than 100 years, and our work is just as important today as it was back then. We are looking forward to being an integral part of the community and people’s daily lives in our new territory.”

One of the many ways BBB builds marketplace trust in our community is by providing BBB Accreditation. Businesses who choose to apply for accreditation are screened by BBB to ensure that the business meets accreditation standards, which include a commitment to making a good faith effort to resolve any consumer complaints. There are a multitude of benefits that come with BBB Accreditation, but in short, when customers see that your business is displaying the BBB Accredited Business Seal, it signals to them that your business can be trusted.

If there’s one thing, I would strongly advise all business owners reading this to do, it would be to make sure your company has a Business Profile listed on BBB.org. If your business doesn’t have one, it is free to claim your page. A BBB Business Profile lists a company’s phone number, website, address, email address, logo and more. Each year 140 million people visit BBB.org to explore businesses they can trust, so you’ll want to show up when they search for your services.

BBB also has a lot to offer consumers across the service area. We are committed to investigating complaints that consumers

file against businesses. BBB serving Eastern Carolinas staff will work hard to successfully resolve disputes between businesses and consumers, by hearing from both sides. Complaints are typically closed within 30 days. BBB.org is also the place to go for scam alerts. BBB Scam Tracker is a free tool that allows consumers to inform BBB and other consumers about scams occurring in their area in real time.

BBB of Eastern Carolina has a main office located in Raleigh with another satellite location in the Myrtle Beach, SC area. Our Myrtle Beach area office will become an outreach office providing numerous opportunities for businesses throughout



South Carolina and southeast North Carolina to learn more about self-regulation, ethical business practices and various ways to improve business processes and achieve growth.

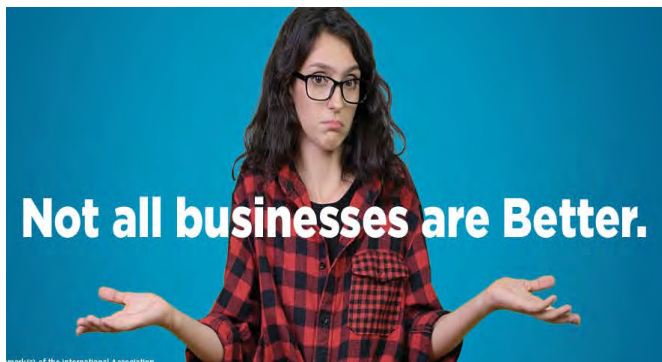
Quantrell Quick, who has been with the BBB of Coastal Carolina office for over 10 years, has been named Regional Manager and leads the team based out of the Myrtle Beach area.

Nicole Cordero joined the BBB serving Eastern Carolinas team in March as Communications Specialist. Cordero participates in media interviews and develops outreach programs and events in the Myrtle Beach, SC; Florence, SC and Wilmington, NC areas.

We can answer any questions you have regarding becoming a BBB Accredited Business and provide you additional tools to improve your company’s success. We are offering new resources for consumers and businesses, including video production services for Accredited Businesses and The Good Guide to Business podcast which features conversations with local businesses across our service area. In addition, BBB regularly hosts free community events to foster a connection in the community, including free shred events in partnership with Shred360 and free professional headshot events.

We are confident this merger will benefit your business as you take advantage of the services BBB Accreditation provides! **About BBB serving Eastern Carolinas**

Better Business Bureau serving Eastern Carolinas is a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit corporation serving 48 counties in North and South Carolina. The organization is funded primarily by BBB Accredited Business fees from over 5,200 local businesses and professional firms. BBB promotes integrity, consumer confidence and business ethics through business self-regulation in the local marketplace. Services provided by BBB include reports on companies and charitable organizations, general monitoring of advertising in the marketplace, consumer/business education programs and dispute resolution services. All services are provided at no cost to the public, with the occasional exception of mediation and arbitration. Visit BBB.org.



THE SIGN OF A **BETTER BUSINESS.**

BBB.org

DUKE ENERGY SUPPORTS FIRST RESPONDERS FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Submitted by Ryan Mosier, Corporate Communications, Duke Energy - South Carolina



GREENVILLE – As hurricane season begins, emergency managers and first responders turn their eyes to the tropics as they continue

to prepare their communities for the possibility of impacts from severe weather.

Duke Energy is preparing as well and stands in support of these South Carolina communities by announcing \$500,000 in microgrants to help increase resiliency and the ability to help residents prepare for and recover from the devastation brought by significant weather events.

“Preparing communities to respond to severe weather impacts begins at the local level,” said Mike Callahan, Duke Energy’s South Carolina state president. “We are committed to keeping South Carolina’s resiliency and economy strong. These grants will help provide fellow first responders with the tools and training to handle whatever Mother Nature throws our way.”

Duke Energy’s Emergency Preparedness and Storm Resiliency Grant Program was designed to help organizations with roles in emergency preparedness increase their resiliency to these events through advanced preparation, planning, equipment and training. Applicants could request funds up to \$20,000. Grants were awarded to 32 nonprofits and governmental entities across the state.

Quotes

- “As we near hurricane season, EMS providers and emergency managers across the state make preparations to ensure our coastline is prepared,” said Mandy Gattis, project director, South Carolina EMS Association. “Through this funding opportunity we will be able to perform an in-depth gap analysis to make better plans and strengthen our EMS readiness to respond to natural disasters.”
- “We are very grateful to receive the grant from Duke Energy,” said Shannon Tanner, fire chief, City of Florence Fire Department. “The funds from this grant will be used to purchase needed equipment and training that will allow us to provide a higher level of service to citizens of Florence and the surrounding area.”
- “We are thrilled to receive a Duke Energy Foundation grant to purchase a MERT

trailer,” said Steve Holmes, Greenwood County fire chief. “This trailer will allow our Fire Services to close roads quickly without taking a fire truck out of service and will create a safer environment for our citizens and first responders.”

Duke Energy Foundation

The Duke Energy Foundation provides more than \$30 million annually in philanthropic support to meet the needs of communities where Duke Energy customers live and work. The foundation is funded by Duke Energy shareholders.

Duke Energy (NYSE: DUK), a Fortune 150 company headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., is one of America’s largest energy holding companies. Its electric utilities serve 8.2 million customers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky, and collectively own 50,000 megawatts of energy capacity. Its natural gas unit serves 1.6 million customers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio and Kentucky. The company employs 27,600 people.

Duke Energy is executing an aggressive clean energy transition to achieve its goals of net-zero methane emissions from its natural gas business by 2030 and net-zero carbon emissions from electricity generation by 2050. The company has interim carbon emission targets of at least 50 percent reduction from electric generation by 2030, 50 percent for Scope 2 and certain Scope 3 upstream and downstream emissions by 2035, and 80 percent from electric generation by 2040. In addition, the company is investing in major electric grid enhancements and energy storage and exploring zero-emission power generation technologies such as hydrogen and advanced nuclear.

Duke Energy was named to Fortune’s 2023 “World’s Most Admired Companies” list and Forbes’ “World’s Best Employers” list. More information is available at [duke-energy.com](https://www.duke-energy.com). The Duke Energy News Center contains news releases, fact sheets, photos and videos. Duke Energy’s illumination features stories about people, innovations, community topics and environmental issues. Follow Duke Energy on Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.



Building a stronger community.

Working together, through community grants, workforce development and hands-on volunteer efforts, to build a brighter future for all of us.

[DUKE-ENERGY.COM/COMMUNITY](https://www.duke-energy.com/community)



BUILDING A SMARTER ENERGY FUTURE®

Summer Top 5

DOWNTOWN FLORENCE

ENJOY A MEAL AT A DOWNTOWN RESTAURANT

DANCE IN THE STREET AT FLORENCE AFTER 5

PICK UP SOMETHING UNIQUE FROM A DOWNTOWN SHOP

COOL OFF AT THE DOWNTOWN SPLASH PAD

EXPLORE THE CITY CENTER FARMERS MARKET ON SATURDAYS

Plan your trip at www.florencedowntown.com



DOWNTOWN FLORENCE, A SUMMER DESTINATION Submitted by the Florence Downtown Development Office Staff



Children enjoying the downtown splash pad.

Longer days are here, summer is in full swing and there is plenty to explore and do in Downtown Florence. We've developed a Downtown Summer Top five for you to check off your summer list and enjoy everything this award-winning destination has to offer.

1. Enjoy a meal at a downtown restaurant. In Downtown Florence, you'll find over a dozen independent award-winning and chef-driven restaurants with a variety of menus from local barbecue at Wholly Smokin' to creative fusion at King Jefe and from farm-to-table fare at Town Hall to fine dining at Victors. Lula's and Lil Jazzi's serve great breakfast fare, and if you are looking for lunch, be sure to check out Top Hat Teas, El Agave, and 135 Seafood Bar & Grill. Prefer nightlife? Then BirdsNest Eats + Ales, Cru Wine and Tap, Leaf Lounge or Jazz on Dargan are your top picks. Downtown Florence is synonymous with exceptional local dining, and we've got more new unique concepts in development and on the way in 2023.

2. Dance in the street at Florence After 5. Downtown's favorite block party is in full swing! Enjoy live music, food vendors and plenty of cold brews on the last Friday of each month, May through September. July's band is Julio and the Saltines followed by Chocolate Chip and

Company on August 25 and Rivermist on September 29. Admission to this award-winning local favorite is free, compliments of Victors, MUSC Health and Southern Crown Partners. Florence After 5 is held in the 100 block of S. Dargan Street in Downtown Florence from 5:30 until 8:30 p.m.

3. Pick up something unique from a downtown shop. From women's apparel to gifts, downtown has you covered, and more shops are on the way. Find gifts for every occasion at Consider the Lilies, ChocoBella, Edible Arrangements, or Cru Wine and Tap. Ladies—Downtown Florence has exceptional women's boutiques that include Agathoula's, MiLadies 182, Ella's Boutique and McCants Lingerie. Be sure to check out K. Niccole Salon and Spa and the Spa at Hotel Florence to treat yourself or a friend!

4. Cool off at the Downtown Splash Pad. Downtown's kid and family-friendly attraction is back for the 2023 season in the 100 block of S. Dargan Street. Operational from 10 a.m. until 8 p.m. daily, the splash pad delights children and families alike with dancing water jets perfect to cool you off on a hot summer day. This attraction is also free!

5. Explore the City Center Farmers Market. Just a few blocks away from the center of Downtown Florence on Sanborn Street is the City Center Farmers' Market, where you'll find a treasure trove of local vendors weekly on Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. From local meats and produce to Pee Dee artisans, this local market is truly something special with over twenty vendors on average each week!

Of course, these aren't all the amazing things you can find to do downtown this summer. Downtown Florence, in partnership with the Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau, sends a free weekly events newsletter with everything you need to plan fun activities throughout the year. Signing up is easy. Simply visit www.florencedowntown.com/newsletter to subscribe.

HOW DIVERSE BUSINESSES CAN FIND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FUNDING



(BPT) - In the U.S., diverse entrepreneurs launch new businesses at a faster pace than any other group, serving as an important source of jobs and opportunity in their communities. Every year, minority-owned employer firms generate \$1.48 trillion for the U.S. economy. They're also

responsible for 9.43 million jobs, according to the Minority Business Development Agency.

Despite the positive contributions they provide, diverse-owned business ventures often struggle to survive and grow, in part because they can't easily access the necessary bank loans and other funding.

When seeking credit, non-diverse businesses receive all the money they request about 35 percent of the time. That success rate is **roughly double** what Asian small businesses (15 percent), Black-owned businesses (16 percent) and Hispanic-owned companies (19 percent) experience, according to the Federal Reserve's Small Business Credit Survey.

It's a threat to the larger economy. If diverse businesses can't access working capital, it could stifle an important source of jobs, innovation and growth and delay wealth creation for diverse businesses.

The roots of the problem

Why is this happening?

First, there is the nation's racial wealth gap. In 2019, white Americans had average per capita wealth of \$383,093 compared with \$60,126 for Black Americans, the Minneapolis Fed reported. When Black entrepreneurs open businesses of their own, they have fewer financial resources to draw on.

Many diverse businesses also find themselves held back by the outdated nature of business lending. Some banks simply won't lend to younger companies unless they can pass strict guidelines, effectively making it impossible for small, newer businesses to qualify.

Unable to access capital through a business loan, diverse entrepreneurs try other, less affordable options like merchant cash advances or small business loans - often at predatory rates.

Other options for funding diverse businesses

Fortunately, there are other, more inclusive options. For example, C2FO - the world's largest online platform for working capital - allows suppliers to receive early payment on approved invoices in exchange for giving a small discount to their customer. Some large enterprises have created special programs on the C2FO platform where they agree to pay diverse suppliers at a preferential rate.

Last year, C2FO's platform delivered over \$4.7 billion in payments to diverse-owned companies - without mounds of paperwork or any qualification requirements outside of being in the C2FO network.

C2FO and the Schultz Family Foundation, which was created by Sheri Schultz and Starbucks cofounder and current CEO Howard Schultz, are partnering to unlock \$100 million in loans for small and diverse businesses. The joint initiative aims to accelerate the growth of emerging, high-potential businesses to encourage job creation, support the building of wealth in historically marginalized communities and fuel a more inclusive economy.

Unlike traditional bank loans that focus on limiting risk, loans given to qualified businesses under this partnership are based on sales growth and the company's trajectory, not traditional hard requirements like substantial profit and multiple years in business. Interested businesses can learn more at <http://explore.c2fo.com/diversebusinesscapital>. This new approach to lending will open doors to many businesses that have been left behind by the established banking system.

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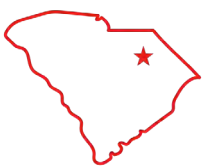


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CAROLINA SUPPLYHOUSE, INC. WHERE CUSTOMER SERVICE IS KEY By Glaciera Brown Mason

The nature of business is to find a need and fill it. At Carolina SupplyHouse, Inc., they've done just that. A family-owned local Florence area small business encompasses a hardware, lighting and paint store, but most importantly, outstanding customer service that keeps customers coming back.

In business for a multitude of years, the Schofield family, "knows how to run a hardware store," says Wanda Carraway of Carolina SupplyHouse. I visited Carolina SupplyHouse twice in early June. On my second visit, I met four dedicated and knowledgeable employees, Wanda Carraway, John Dozier, Karen Milliken and Mark Wisnoski, who shared their contributions to this thriving local small business and their overall experience. The resounding thread through all of my conversations was, that above everything, at Carolina SupplyHouse, customer service is paramount, and it is what sets them apart.

With competition from larger big box chains to advertising messaging, this family-owned business has managed to remain a staple in the Pee Dee area and the City of Florence. They have figured out that consistent customer service plays a crucial role in the success of any business and, how providing outstanding customer service improves customer satisfaction, loyalty and enhances a business's reputation to keep it growing.

Employers understand the impact employees have on their day-to-day business. Whether positive or negative, the people who interact most with customers are a business's employees. They are the first touch points to the public, making a good first impression. "At Carolina SupplyHouse, we value all of our employees and appreciate their contributions. We are a family," said William Schofield, Vice-President and Co-Owner of Carolina SupplyHouse Inc.

When I visited Carolina SupplyHouse, I was greeted as soon as I walked in. That small detail left a positive impression in my mind. As I walked through the clean and well-organized hardware store and the beautiful lighting showroom, I couldn't help but notice the electrical, tools, hardware, fasteners, plumbing, HVAC, paint, receiving and warehouse departments of the store. I found the employees friendly and helpful. There was a sense of family and southern hospitality which I attributed to the longevity of the fifty or so employees at Carolina SupplyHouse.

On my visit, I met employees who had longevity with Carolina SupplyHouse, Inc. which says a lot about a business when employees stay. I met Wanda Carraway, a team lead who schedules and hires cashiers. Carraway has been with Carolina SupplyHouse for over 38 years. She has witnessed the generational change in employees, especially cashiers. Carraway says, it's harder to find good help and the more seasoned employees recognize the value of caring about the customer. "It's been a pleasure working here. They've been good to me, and I've been good to them," says Carraway. She says, it's been good here and the difference between the competing stores is, "customer service, definitely. Here, we try to get the employees that work here to care about the customer, to make sure the customer gets waited on. If we can't help you, we try to direct you to somebody who can help you. The big box stores don't try to hire somebody that works in that department, they hire somebody to fill a space. If we hire for plumbing, we try to hire somebody with a knowledge of plumbing. That makes the difference. We go after customer service more than anything."

At Carolina SupplyHouse, in each department, there is a skilled tradesperson with knowledge and expertise to assist you, whether it be in tools, fasteners, plumbing, HVAC, electrical or any of the various departments, the employees have the knowledge and expertise in that field. An added bonus is that many of the employees are cross trained in the various areas.

John Dozier works in the Tools Department and specializes in hand and power tools. He worked at Carolina SupplyHouse off and on in the 1990s and returned in 2016. Dozier is cross trained and can basically work anywhere within the store. He has a 15-year background in hardware. Dozier says, the difference between local big box stores

and Carolina SupplyHouse is, "we offer personal service. We try to make sure the customer is satisfied, whether they buy it from us or whether they don't. We'd like them to come back." He says, of his overall work experience at Carolina SupplyHouse, "These people have been very good to me. It's family-owned and they care for the employees, that means a lot."

As an example of how customer service is key to ongoing business success, happy customers become repeat customers, and if satisfied, they share their word-of-mouth praise and experiences with others. On this day, I encountered a Carolina SupplyHouse customer, Alonzo Curtis, a plumber from Lake City. Curtis had come from Lake City because he could not find what he was looking for. He shared his experience, "When I went to other supply stores like the big box stores, and I went to a plumbing supply in Lake City, and they didn't carry what I was looking for. An employee at one of the big box stores told me, 'the only place I was going to find it, what I was looking for, was at Carolina Supply,' and they did indeed have it. Now I've made this a store of choice for me. I'll come here first."

Office Manager Karen Milliken is engrained at Carolina SupplyHouse. Hired in 1993, she began in warehousing, left and returned in 2000, and has been there ever since. She has worked in every area of the store except sales. What a great asset, to have the knowledge, skill and ability to work in all fields, backing up co-workers when needed. These days, Milliken works with purchasing, keeps up with inventory, finance and HR. She is responsible for a lot of moving parts at Carolina SupplyHouse. Milliken says her overall experience is good. "It's a family-owned business with a close-knit group and when people need them, they are there. Like a family."

Milliken shared, the difference between Carolina SupplyHouse and other big box stores is, "There is a designated person to assist customers for exactly what they need. We have professionals on each counter who can help the customer; home owners or contractors figure out what they are trying to do." It is intentional that each department has a skilled professional who can explain – some have cross training in various departments.

One of the four key principles of customer service is competency, which has the biggest influence on the customer experience. Mark Wisnoski contributes his skill and expertise from 13 years in the building supply business. Wisnoski was hired by the late James Schofield. "He knew I was in sales. He was a nice man, he taught me a lot," Wisnoski said. He has worked for Carolina SupplyHouse for nine years in the Hardware Department with acrylics, bolts, screws and all different types of materials. The cross training and knowledge of Carolina SupplyHouse employees enable them to refer customers to the appropriate counters when needed. "There is a knowledgeable person at every counter of what we have," says Wisnoski. "It's a good place to work." He says, the difference here is, "100 percent customer service."

Carolina SupplyHouse, Inc. is located at 218 Second Loop Road, in Florence, SC 29505. Hours of operation are Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. drop in and say hello and experience the helpful and knowledgeable employees who put customer service above it all.



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C.L. Pinto Martinez

Branding is a word that many people throw out into the ether without understanding the full scope and magnitude of its meaning. If you are reading this article, you have either just entered the business world and have not yet gained the knowledge of and principles around building a brand or you have been in the business world for a while but have yet to capitalize on the benefits of what quality branding can and should do for your bottom line.

There are those who come from the school of thought that branding is simply just a logo, tagline and a combination of colors and letting that look good on a t-shirt. But branding is more than that! Branding is what not only identifies you to your target audience, it is what sets you apart from the sea of competitors that do exactly what you do, but perhaps you do it in such a way that is totally different, of better quality and pricing than your competitors, this is the message your brand story can get across to your target audience and bring them to your door.

This is where your "reason why" places a key role in developing your brand. Your reason for starting down the road of entrepreneurship can help you do the following:

1. Establish a connection with consumers through your brand story.

Not every business has the same beginning, building your brand story give the consumer insight into not only how you began and where you are, but where you are headed. Your brand story will provide a roadmap for the consumer to follow down the journey with you, creating a community that cares through brand values, a sense of stability through brand consistency, developing a sense of trust through brand quality.

2. Engage and interact with your target audience.

Social media, having a strong online presence, is key to business success. Your brand story can help you engage and interact with your target audience by highlighting your company traditions, core values, community

partners and company culture.

3. Connect and convert consumers into brand loyalists and ambassadors.

By centering your business brand around consumer service and experience consumers will feel connected to your brand. They will become personally invested in its long-term success story, eventually evolving from visitors to family, sharing your company's products and services with everyone they know.

4. Create community awareness & develops community relationships.

I have always said that the only way for people to know who you are is to first let them know that you are here! Your brand focuses around creating a strong community connection by developing partnerships with local leaders, movers and shakers is one way to build brand awareness. If the consumer sees that you are invested in their community, they will invest in you.

5. Establish your company as the clear choice above competitors.

Telling what I like to call your "origin story" provides the consumer with a sense of

who you are, what you do, how you do it, why you do it and for whom you do it. It creates a narrative that is easy to follow, digest and convey to others. It sets the tone for every marketing and advertising campaign that you will enter. It is what you will base your key performance indicators around. It is what will elevate you above the competition as the best, clear and only choice the consumer can trust to provide quality products and services that they are looking for.

At the end of the day your "reason why" matters because it tells the story of how your brand came to be, of its position and importance to the consumers it serves, of the visions it has of the future and the mission it dares to embark upon, of the values and relationships it strives to protect, of the characteristics that make it unique and relatable.

In short, your story is the voice of your brand that provides clear, concise, creative and consistent communication to your target audience letting them know that you are here, you are the absolute best at what you do, and they are the reason you do it!

MPD ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE GIVES BACK TO THE COMMUNITY



Chief Deputy Larry Turner and Matt Haynie of MPD Electric Cooperative

DARLINGTON-MPD Electric Cooperative recently donated \$2,500 to the Marlboro County Sheriff's Office toward the acquisition of a training facility and firing range for officers.

"Our law enforcement officers are some of the most selfless public servants in our community," said Matt Haynie, chief marketing officer of MPD Electric Cooperative. "Officer training and safety is of the utmost importance, and we are proud

to support this project."

The future facility will serve as a multi-purpose building for classes and training and can accommodate agencies across the region. It will also house a six-lane firing range that will be utilized to keep deputies' firearm certifications up to date with South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy standards.

"We greatly appreciate this donation from MPD Electric Cooperative," said Sheriff Larry McNeil. "I will continue to work as hard as I can to help find ways to develop and maintain a respectful, well trained law enforcement agency that serves the citizens of Marlboro County with the highest standards possible."

MPD Electric Cooperative's Trust is pleased to donate \$2,500 to Mercy Medicine, a free medical clinic in the Pee Dee. Mercy Medicine is a safety-net for disadvantaged community members who do not have health insurance and need medical and /or dental care as well as life sustaining medications.

"This year, we have experienced a significant increase in dental applications," said Brian Lowe, executive director of Mercy Medicine. "This donation will be used to specifically care for patients suffering dental pain."

MPD Electric Cooperative's Trust is also pleased to donate \$2,500 to AMIkids of Bennettsville, an outstanding nonprofit that helps children discover their potential, transform their lives and strengthen the community.

Since 1996, AMIkids Bennettsville has empowered youth through care and guidance and, as a result, break the cycle of failure and poverty in an alternative school environment. To date, AMIkids Bennettsville and AMIkids Infinity Marlboro have helped more than 3,000 youth transform their lives for the better.

The program operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, serving kids who have committed a variety of non-violent offenses and are involved with the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. This alternative placement enables children to find solutions to their issues and improve their grades to return to their community and school and complete their GED or obtain their high school diploma.

"MPD Electric Cooperative is pleased to support AMIkids' outstanding work in our area," said Julie Scott, MPD Trust board advisor. "This results-driven program takes a long-term, sustainable approach to help our most vulnerable youth learn the tools necessary to succeed in life. At MPD, not only are we proud to power the seven counties we serve but we're also committed to making them a better place to live."

The donation is made possible by MPD Electric Cooperative's Operation Round-Up®. The program helps those who are having hardships and improves the quality of life for everyone in the Pee Dee.



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IT ALL RISES AND FALLS ON LEADERSHIP By Les Echols



*Florence County Administrator,
Kevin Yokim*

Kevin Yokim is the current county administrator for Florence County, South Carolina. A longtime resident of Florence County, Yokim grew up in Connecticut. At the age of 14, his family moved to Greenville, SC, so he and his brother could go to school in Greenville. Yokim spent three years at Bob Jones Academy, a high school run by Bob Jones University, followed by four years as an undergraduate at Bob Jones University. Yokim earned a degree in accounting and went to work in public accounting.

During the first three years as a professional in Greenville, Yokim realized that the rigorous hours of public accounting were not conducive for his young family, so he began looking for other opportunities. Yokim soon landed at Webster Rogers in Florence. Yokim worked at Webster Rogers for almost seven years doing the Florence County audit. In April 1996, the Florence County administrator at the time hired Yokim as finance director, and he served in this position for 23 1/2 years. His duties as finance director weren't just primarily finance. Yokim handled other things, like risk management, EMS billing, and the Facilities Department, which oversaw all of the county buildings. Yokim was even the interim IT director when the former IT director left. Looking to expand his local government experience, Yokim had the opportunity to go to the City of Florence in 2019 as an assistant city manager. When County Administrator KG "Rusty" Smith announced his retirement, Yokim put his name in the running, and in his words, "was blessed to earn this opportunity".



One of Yokim's many mantras is "It all rises and falls on leadership." "So, it's incumbent upon the leadership to determine the culture of the organization," Yokim explained. "Coming into this organization, one of the things that the three finalists were asked to do prior to the in-person interview was come up with a written assignment. The first question of the written assignment was a 90-day plan. And so, in doing that, my introduction to that plan was that there's three crucial issues facing Florence County in the next three to five years. The first one is leadership development, the second is employee compensation and the third is the growth of the Pee Dee. It wasn't one of my three issues, but another issue I addressed was how can we improve the culture. I went on a visit to all the Florence County offices. My first day on the job, I started at 8:00 o'clock that first morning at the Public Works Department, and I went from Public Works to Environmental Services, the Emergency Management department, Sheriff's Office, Voter Registration, Veterans Affairs, EMS, to the Library, then the Planning building. And then I went to a luncheon at Francis Marion University," continued Yokim.



Yokim had three objectives on these visits. To introduce himself, so that everyone who worked for Florence County knew who he was. Second, and most importantly, he let them know he was being genuine and thanked all of them for what they did. Third, he went to ask what resources they were missing and to let him know that he would try to figure out how to get those tools for them.

Yokim mentioned he would be remiss if he didn't speak directly to diversity. His philosophy has been that a local government organization, as best as it can, should reflect the community it serves. One illustration he used was the Michael Brown, Ferguson, Missouri incident. He mentioned that Ferguson was 75 percent Black, and the police force was 75 percent white, so that created some tensions even before that incident occurred.

Yokim continued to speak on diversity by stressing, "I don't care what your beliefs are about diversity. Every survey I've ever come across, the data show that diverse organizations are more productive, more creative, more efficient, etc. Although it wasn't my doing, when I was with the City of Florence, the City Council adopted a resolution in favor of the Crown Act. In my view, the way you wear your hair is not as important as how you can do the job. If you look at our current department head team, we've got a fair amount of diversity, both racially and gender-wise. Not only should we have a diverse organization, but the people that come through our doors, whether they're residents of Florence County or not, we should serve all of them equally," Yokim concluded.

Yokim has been married for nearly 37 years. He and his wife have three kids, a daughter and two sons, as well as two grandchildren.





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BRIGHT IDEAS GRANTS AVAILABLE

Submitted By Manager of Community Relations Joanna Arnsmeyer



KINGSTREE-Teachers in Williamsburg, Georgetown, Clarendon and Florence counties, applications are now open for the Bright Ideas grant!

Bright Ideas grants are intended to fund projects outside normal school funding parameters and are available to all disciplines in grades K-12. A school may submit more than one application, but a teacher is limited to one application per school year. Grants are awarded for up to \$1,000 each.

For more information about the Bright Ideas Grant program and for the application, visit santee.org/bright-ideas. Completed applications are due by Monday, September 25, 2023.

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 JEN HODGES JOHNSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL	 SHANA BARRINEAU TRINITY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY	 MARK KLAICH MCDONALD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	 BRITTIANI BURROUGHS W.M. ANDERSON PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

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

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Chris Goss
Head of Pharmaceutical
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WANT TO RETAIN AND EMPOWER EMPLOYEES? RETHINK TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAMS



(BPT) - Talent wars. Great resignation. Quiet quitting. Hiring, retaining and inspiring employees to be their best is no small feat these days. Leadership at companies big and small are looking for ways to improve their workforce and professional development is a hot topic. The high cost of turnover

Hiring good people and keeping them is a challenge. Stakes are high and the cost of employee turnover is significant. Companies can lose time, money and resources, not to mention it can be a blow to workplace morale and brand reputation.

According to the Society of Human Resources Management, direct employee replacement costs can reach as high as 50-60 percent of an employee's annual salary, with total costs associated with turnover ranging from 90 - 200 percent of annual salary. That means if an employee makes \$50,000 it can cost up to \$30,000 directly and \$200,000 total.

A people-first workplace

Looking closely at benefits and company culture can provide important insights into employee relations. To help attract and retain talent, many organizations are taking a people-first approach. Putting employees first means prioritizing things like work-life integration, career pathing and professional development.

"Tuition benefits programs are sought after by employees and can be a great way for companies to invest in their future while encouraging skills development," said Dave Barnett, DeVry University's chief human resources and university relations officer. "Whether it's training to learn a specific skill, earning a certification or completing an entire degree, tuition benefits programs show employees you're willing to invest in them, so they are invested in you."

Employer tuition benefits

Employees are eagerly seeking out organizations that offer tuition benefits. According to an EdAssist survey, 84 percent of respondents cited these programs as an important factor in their decision to join their organizations. In fact, 71 percent rated tuition assistance among the best benefits offered by their employers after health care.

However, a DeVryWorks Talent Outlook Study found leaders ranked tuition benefits as the least frequently offered form of professional development at their organizations with just 69 percent indicating it's available to employees. According to the study, here are some top reasons organizations offer tuition benefits:

- * 62 percent helping individuals grow professionally
- * 53 percent retaining individuals at the organization by offering development opportunities



* 51 percent improving quality and execution of work

The good news is the Wall Street Journal reported that 90 percent of large and mid-sized companies offer some kind of tuition reimbursement. The bad is less than 10 percent of workers use the tuition reimbursement. Filling the skills gap

"Aligning impactful development opportunities with future career pathways is becoming an expectation for employees as early as the first interview," said Clark Barber, vice president of DeVryWorks, the workforce solutions team at DeVry University. "While training and developing frontline workers is a top priority for HR leaders, few are leveraging a typically passive benefit like tuition reimbursement as a proactive tool to attract, retain and grow talent."

Barber said the key for business leaders is to ensure their tuition programs are equitable and accessible for employees. Organizations should consider how their policy is structured and measured to ensure inclusivity. But where are leaders seeing the biggest skills gaps? The DeVryWorks Talent Study asked business leaders about the most in-demand skills and opportunities for employee improvement. The results: leadership, data-driven decision-making and digital fluency are the three critical skill gaps leaders are looking to address.

These skills and more can be learned through programs supported by a company's tuition benefits program. For example, nontraditional learners - like part-time adult students - benefit from an educational option like DeVry University. The school strives to close society's opportunity gap by preparing learners to thrive in careers shaped by continuous technological change.

"As critical skills continue to emerge, expand and expire, there's an ongoing need for professional development," added Barnett. "Establishing and promoting tuition benefits programs is critical to the vitality of the organization and the professional journey of employees. It's an untapped resource with endless potential."

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HOW TO SOLVE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF A HYBRID WORKFORCE



(BPT) - Since the onset of the global pandemic there has been a paradigm shift that work is what you do, not where you do it. As workers increasingly return to traditional offices, the need to transform the

space into more dynamic and collaborative business centers grows.

According to Forrester, 70 percent of U.S. and European companies will pivot to a hybrid work model post-pandemic. What's more, 75 percent of CEOs expect their office spaces to shrink, so the space that is retained must be intentionally created with hybrid in mind.

"The problem is that while many American employers have embraced this model for their employees, they have not fully implemented collaborative strategies and the necessary technologies that help workers remain productive, creative and inspired in and out of the office setting," said Shannon MacKay, general manager of WW Smart Collaboration Business Group, Lenovo.

Adopting the right technologies so employees can seamlessly work in the office, at home or elsewhere is key to the success of hybrid work. When done correctly, it can set an organization up for success: According to a recent Lenovo study, a majority (77 percent) of employees and IT decision-makers believe that productivity and collaboration tools have made or will make their business more efficient in the long run.

When done poorly it can diminish productivity, culture and ultimately, the workforce: According to the Adobe State of Work Report, 32 percent of workers (nearly a third) have said goodbye to an employer whose tech was a barrier to their ability to do good work - up from 22 percent pre-COVID.

Hybrid work will require new ways of collaborating to ensure an inclusive environment that attracts and retains top talent. This is particularly important considering in-person meetings will drop from 60 percent of total enterprise meetings to just 25 percent by 2024, according to Gartner's 2021 Digital Worker Experience Survey.

Unfortunately, the Lenovo study shows large enterprises report an average of three unified communication/collaboration applications in use at their companies. This makes collaboration complex and a daily pain point for workers. Not only does this restrict communication, so many of the important interactions between people that build company culture and teams are lost.

"Hearing the live reactions, or impromptu exchanges going on at the end of the table is the difference between feeling like an equal citizen at a hybrid meeting and feeling like a second class one. What about if those microphones can auto-adjust to the positioning of the participants in the room and upweight the sound of those on the right of the room in the right-hand speaker to make it as realistic as possible for those at home too?" said MacKay.

Purpose-built technology like Lenovo's new ThinkSmart One, the world's first Windows-based completely integrated collaboration bar, anticipates the continued growth of hybrid meeting spaces as businesses strive to find innovative ways to work together in a distributed workforce. Designed to easily equip small meeting rooms, the bar offers an exceptional audio-visual through eight microphone arrays with echo and noise cancellation, 15-Watt stereo speakers and an integrated high-resolution camera with wide field of view.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution when adjusting to hybrid work. It is critical for IT leaders to reassess their technologies and best practices to ensure all participants have an equal opportunity to collaborate, share ideas and influence decisions. Companies focused on a successful 'return to work' plan must implement customizable technologies to make sure their office setup matches their employees' needs.

A graphic celebrating the 25th anniversary of South Carolina Manufacturing. It features a map of South Carolina with a palm tree, a crescent moon, and three Honda ATVs. The text "SOUTH CAROLINA MANUFACTURING" is arched over the top, "25 YEARS" is in large red numbers in the center, and "1998-2023" is at the bottom right.

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9 Ways To Foster Innovation Through Diversity Leadership

<p>1 Be conscious of the way you communicate with employees.</p>	<p>2 Be informed about your employees, but don't over micromanage.</p>	<p>3 Be aware and acknowledge even employees' small wins.</p>
<p>4 Be introspective and get real about your biases and assumptions.</p>	<p>5 Identify the different ways people contribute to the organization.</p>	<p>6 Let others share share their expertise, talent and growth experience.</p>
<p>7 Let go of old parameters, limits and processes for innovation.</p>	<p>8 Create opportunities for employees of different levels of experience to work together.</p>	<p>9 Encourage the excitement that comes from the synergy of ideas.</p>

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LAKE CITY RECEIVES DUKE ENERGY FOUNDATION GRANT Submitted by Public Information Officer, Donna Tracy



From left, Lake City Mayor Yamekia Robinson, City Administrator William A. Hall, Fire Department Division Chief Drew Godwin, Deputy City Administrator Joseph “Jody” Cooper, and Mindy Taylor, district manager for government and community relations at Duke Energy. Taylor presented the City of Lake City leadership with a \$15,000 emergency preparedness microgrant. Photo credit City of Lake City/ Donna Tracy

LAKE CITY– The City of Lake City received a \$15,000 grant from the Duke Energy Foundation on June 1. The grant, one of 32 emergency preparedness microgrants totaling \$500,000, will be used toward the upgrade of public safety radios for the city.

“It was a no-brainer to partner with the city on emergency planning and supporting their efforts to make sure they have the equipment they need in the event of an emergency,” said Mindy Taylor, district manager for government and community relations at Duke Energy.

“We started the emergency grant cycle last year and it is such a good fit for Duke Energy. It really aligns with what we do in terms of public safety and providing services to the communities,” said Taylor.

The cost for upgrading the city’s radio system is approximately \$150,000 and is due to be completed before the outdated equipment becomes obsolete in 2025 and 2027. Last year, the city was awarded two grants, another Duke Energy Emergency Preparedness grant for \$20,000, and a South Carolina Volunteer Strategic Assistance and Fire Equipment (V-Safe) grant for \$30,000. Together, those grants covered about one third of the city’s cost to upgrade.

“The Duke Energy grant gives the city the opportunity to continue to upgrade our radio systems in a timely manner,” said William A. Hall, city administrator. “Duke Energy has provided grant money that we are fortunate enough to receive. One radio can cost \$7,000, so this grant goes a long way in achieving our upgrade goals.”

For information about other Lake City projects, visit LakeCitySC.gov. Lake City is a community of 6,000-plus residents who invite you live – work – play – and visit in the southern part of Florence County.



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PRINCIPLES TO WORK AND LIVE BY By Dawn "D.A." Goodwin



Elizabeth Britt

Elizabeth Britt is a 2001 graduate of Winthrop University with a Bachelor of Social Work degree, who has been working in various capacities at ADP since September 2002. Titles she held through the years range from serving as data entry clerk (Operations Support) to account manager (Client Services) and implementation project manager (Implementation) to senior tax manager (Project Management). Today as the senior manager of Service Delivery Processing and in celebrating her 20th year with the company, she reflects on

principles that are beneficial at work and in the community.

“My many roles with ADP help me clarify requirements that balances business needs with innovative ideas and make recommendations to the technical and design approaches to meet requirements,” she said. “ADP Tax Credits calculates and delivers reportable information to thousands of clients throughout the year. This information must be accurate and delivered in a timely manner to aid clients in driving various credit programs. My team is very focused on process improvement and serves as the central resource with design, process, test, quality, and marketing as the product(s) move to production and distribution.”

For Britt, diversity and inclusion are important concepts that promote equality and acceptance in various contexts, such as workplaces, communities and society. “Diversity refers to the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion and socio-economic background. Inclusion, on the other hand, involves creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and supported, regardless of their differences.”

“By embracing diversity and practicing inclusion, organizations and communities can benefit in numerous ways. It fosters innovation and creativity by bringing together people with different perspectives and experiences. It enhances employee engagement and productivity, as individuals feel empowered to contribute their unique skills and talents. Additionally, diversity and inclusion promote social cohesion,

reduce biases and prejudices and create a more equitable and just society,” said Britt.

A principle this hardworking senior manager lives by is one she says goes back to when she was younger. “I believe we learned everything that we needed to in kindergarten... Be Respectful, Be Honest, Be Responsible, Be Grateful and Be Kind.” She demonstrates these principles in daily life and works to help others through her memberships of several organizations, including the International Women’s Inclusion Network, iWIN. iWIN is a Business Resource Group within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. iWIN’s purpose is to engage, equip and empower women to achieve personal and professional success to drive ADP’s business results.

Britt is also the past president of Cultivate, an organization that promotes the professional development of African American associates and our allies. “We inspire, empower and encourage our members through career development, education, mentoring and networking initiatives. We encourage inclusion in our workplace by being agents of change ourselves. When each one reaches one, we all succeed.”

In addition, Britt is a member of Junior League of Florence, an organization of women who are dedicated to promoting volunteerism to help women realize their full potential. “Our purpose is exclusively educational and charitable, as we strive to make a difference in our community through the action and leadership of trained volunteers.” As part of the Junior League, Britt has served as Community Impact chair, vice president of Community Impact, Signature Fundraiser chair, vice president, president and sustainer liaison.

Elizabeth Britt is a resident of Florence, where she lives with her husband Chad and son Drake, who she says is her greatest accomplishment. “I am the proud first-time mother of a 14-month-old little boy, Drake. With his arrival everything changed. The world got bigger, hearts grow fuller, and life means more because he is in it.”

10 Success Principles to remember

- 1 You are the only person responsible for your success.**
The best part of your life will start on the day you decide your life is your own – no one to lean on, rely on, or blame. You are in full control of your future.
- 2 You don't have to invent the wheel.**
Lots of success were found just by taking something that already existed and simply putting their own twist on it (their unique selling proposition).
- 3 There is no progress without action.**
What is not started today is never finished tomorrow. Just remember, no action always results in a 100% failure rate. So get into action now, and begin to move in the right direction.
- 4 Persistence always wins.**
As Winston Churchill once said, “Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm.” A river cuts through rocks because of its persistence over time.
- 5 Focus is everything.**
If you never focus clearly on something, you will never be 100% efficient at anything. Multi-tasking usually reduces your efficiency in dealing with each individual task.
- 6 Failure is necessary.**
If what you did today didn't turn out as you hoped, tomorrow is a new opportunity to do it differently. Interpret each failure as a lesson on the road to success.
- 7 Positivity fuels productivity.**
Success comes from positive energy. You can choose to get caught up in the negativity surrounding you, or you can decide to do something positive about your situation.
- 8 You must believe you can.**
You must find the place inside yourself where anything is possible. It starts with a dream. Dream becomes a reality with commitment, action, determination and time.
- 9 Helping others is a big part of being successful.**
Successful people constantly come up with new ways of helping others. Your long-term success is directly tied to how well you serve your community.
- 10 Success is a journey of countless baby steps.**
It's a constant process of growth. If you want to be successful, you must continue to hold yourself to a higher standard than anyone else, and strive to improve.

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During a City Council work session in spring 2021, Florence City Council collectively

defined initiatives they would like to pursue, and Marketing & Public Relations was selected as an area of focus. A committee of City Council was developed and began working to enhance awareness of City of Florence programs, initiatives and events. The current committee members are Chairwoman, Councilwoman LaShonda NeSmith Jackson, Mayor pro tem George Jebaily and Councilman Lawrence “Chipper” Smith. The committee meets monthly and creates and discusses areas of opportunity for improvement and growth related to communications and promotions. The City Manager, Randy Osterman, along with city Staff Liaisons, Amanda Pope, Marketing, Communications, & Municipal Services director, and Hannah Davis, Downtown Development manager, attend monthly committee meetings in support of this effort.

Following the lead of City Council, staff made a concerted effort to identify opportunities to enhance promotions of city projects, programs and events and to improve community engagement. City staff has used available resources to strengthen its social media presence, enhance the city’s website and actively connect with the public through neighborhood association meetings and other outlets.

One of the first promotional activities initiated by the committee was a COVID Vaccination Campaign. As soon as vaccines were readily available, city staff began an awareness campaign to educate the community on the importance of getting vaccinated. Partnerships were developed with local medical facilities and various media outlets to share important public health information with residents.

The most recent concept that evolved from committee discussions was the idea of a “City 101” class for residents. City staff developed a curriculum and City University was introduced in the fall of 2022. The

six-week class gave participants an inside look at local government and provided the opportunity for more personal interactions with city personnel. Citizens learned about city operations and were able to share concerns, and ideas with city staff.

The City’s most recent initiative is the launching of a Communication Survey. The survey includes questions that will assist the city in determining the best methods to reach the most people. Demographic questions are optional but were included to ensure that survey results are representative of the community. City staff wants to ensure that we hear from everyone to include various age groups and races so that we have a real understanding of communication needs throughout the Florence community.

City staff has requested funding in the upcoming fiscal year budget, FY2023-2024, to cover the cost of a new communications tool that would allow the city to communicate with citizens through text-message and webchat, as well as provide the ability to use push notifications. Pending City Council approval, city staff hopes to release a public bid for the service in early July. With text-messaging being such a utilized communications tool, we feel that the public would appreciate the convenience of receiving information and updates via text from the city. The technology would offer residents the capability to report issues via text message as well. Questions related to the public’s interest in this new platform are included in the survey.

The City of Florence encourages everyone to take a few minutes and complete the survey so that we can better serve you. The survey can be accessed on the city’s website, www.cityofflorence.com and paper surveys are available at the City Center, 324 W. Evans Street or call the office at 843-665-3113. Surveys will be accepted through July 28, 2023, so let us hear from you! The results will allow staff to measure the effectiveness of its current communications efforts and learn more about how residents and utility customers wish to receive information from the city. Together we can continue moving Florence – Full Life. Full Forward.

Check our social medias too!

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The City of Florence has launched a communication survey and is asking for your feedback!

The survey measures the effectiveness of city communication efforts.

Surveys will be accepted through Friday, July 28th.



We’re working to serve you better, so take a few minutes and let us hear from you!

THAT PRAYER YOU DON'T PRAY ANYMORE By Robin Lewis



Robin Lewis



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HEMINGWAY – “Very good! You did like I asked. I’m proud of you.” Ever hear that growing up? I was shaped with a fairly strong performance mentality. If I did the right things, I would be rewarded with people being happy with me. This created a lot of pressure to always be pleasing to others and resulted many times in my feeling powerless. It’s hard on a child or adult to live this way, always hoping for approval, permission and acceptance. As we grow up, we either realize the problem in this kind of thinking, or we repeat it in our relationships. This can also shape the way we see and relate to God. Do you believe that God only answers your prayers if you’ve been doing everything right?

Most people think this is supposed to solve all your problems, but Jesus is not a genie granting wishes or dispensing prizes for good behavior. That would be ‘conditional love.’ For love to be real, it must be constant and unconditional. God loves us, period. And, how he answers our prayers is based in love we can trust completely. There were times in my life, that after praying for some serious problems to be solved, I wondered if he would ever do anything about them.

When we are praying for a long time over situations that are beyond our control, we can be tempted to give up. Maybe there’s something you used to long for and pray for but never saw God’s answer come. Have you given up on asking? If

and following the commandments blamelessly, but they were childless, and now they both were quite old.” One day, while serving as a priest in the temple, an angel appeared to Zechariah and said, “Don’t be afraid! God is showing grace to you. I have come to tell you that your prayer for a child has been answered. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you are to name him John” (Luke 1:13).

What joy! Finally, after decades of waiting, God is answering their prayers! But wait – I want you to notice two things. First, the phrase ‘your prayer’ in Greek could also be translated as ‘that prayer you don’t even pray anymore.’ Second, it had nothing to do with their way of living but had everything to do with right timing. God knew they had given up on their hopes for a child, but he still wanted to give them one and that child would become the person we know today as John the Baptist.



What are you still hoping or praying for? Or maybe I should ask, what is that prayer you don’t pray anymore? Take it to the Lord again knowing that’s his love is completely unconditional. The answer to your prayer might be about right timing. If he has asked you to do something, be obedient and step out in faith. I can promise you this, he cares so deeply and wants so much for us – and he wants us to keep asking and believing, never giving up hope. Ephesians 3:20 says, “Never doubt God’s mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all for His miraculous power constantly energizes you.”

As a child, I was raised to know Jesus. I was told that if I asked, he would forgive my sins and save my soul. Suddenly, one night, I felt his presence and he revealed himself to me. I expected to ask Jesus to forgive me for my sin – for doing things my way, being selfish, hurting people’s feelings, disobeying my parents and the list went on. But when I experienced Jesus’ presence, he didn’t list all my wrongs or remind me of my shortcomings. I didn’t even say a ‘sinner’s prayer.’ Instead, it was the most loving invitation I’d ever felt. In my heart, I heard him say, “I love you and want you to belong to me. Would you like to be mine?”

you have, then you’ve probably given up on hoping as well.

There’s a story just like that in Luke chapter 1. Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and beyond the years of being able to have a child. They had prayed for decades to be given a child, but there was none. Luke 1:5-7 tells us that Zechariah was a priest in the temple and that they lived “righteous before God, living virtuously

So, that prayer you don’t even pray anymore? Decide today that you are going to refuse to let go of hope – bring your requests before God and thank him for always doing what is right and best for you. Who knows but your prayers can bring about great things you’ve never imagined!

Since that night, I have been taught to pray and ask God for what I needed and wanted; to pray in faith and believe.



For prayer, coaching, resources or to book Robin to speak, visit www.RobinLewisLife.com.

DISCOVERING PURPOSE AND EMPOWERMENT AT FAITH WALK CONFERENCE 2023



Chaste'y Rayford-Gibson

SUMTER—As a believer navigating the ups and downs of life, I have come to the realization that finding peace and direction in your faith walk to survive and thrive is essential. It is in this pursuit that God took me on the most remarkable “Faith Walk” journey. Under the leadership of the Senior Pastor of Grace Cathedral Ministries in Sumter, SC, Bishop Anthony Gibson, I was encouraged to listen to the voice of God. In late September of 2021 during a challenging season of the pandemic I began sharing one word God gave me for 40 days, thus the birthing of the 40 Day Faith

Challenge. It has now blossomed into an eagerly anticipated event: the Faith Walk Conference. With the FW Vision Board and the FW Vision Team I have been able to start taking the conference to other cities and just recently returned from Faith Walk Atlanta this past May. I am excited to invite you to join me on the 2nd Annual Faith Walk Conference in Sumter, SC. This transformative experience will take place October 13-15, 2023.

A Personal Transformation:

I vividly remember when the 40 Day Faith Challenge was introduced in 2021. It was a time of uncertainty and fear, and the challenge seemed like a ray of hope piercing through the darkness. I became excited with the opportunity God was giving me to help increase and strengthen faith in his people during such challenging times. I eagerly embarked on this new journey not realizing that those first steps of obedience would produce a series of exciting God given life-changing experiences for me and others.

Through the 40 Day Faith Challenge, I launched Faith Fridays with Friends, a platform that now provides a sacred space to share personal faith journeys. Every Friday, as the founder and host, I take a single word and along with the holy spirit transform that one word into a source of godly wisdom, knowledge and practical application. It was during these moments of sharing my personal faith journey that I began to understand the power of living life on purpose and fulfilling my destiny.

At the birth of the inaugural Faith Walk Conference, I was filled with joy last October watching attendees immersed in a holistic experience of inspiration, deliverance, and empowerment. From a dynamic worship experience with recording artists Shana Wilson, Regina Skeeter and Melody Holman to inspiring speakers and engaging workshops, the Faith Walk Conference became an unforgettable event. This year’s lineup of keynote speakers is each deeply rooted in faith and comes with a diverse range of experiences, ensuring a rich tapestry of wisdom and inspiration. It is an opportunity to connect with fellow believers, share stories and forge lasting connections that extend far beyond the conference itself.

I invite you to join me in Sumter, South Carolina for our annual Faith Walk Conference. This year’s Faith Walk Conference carries a powerful theme: “Prophetic Promises Manifested” (Hebrews 10:32 KJV). I always make decrees at the end of Faith Fridays with Friends and this scripture is truly a declaration that resonates deeply within my spirit. It is the reminder of the unwavering faithfulness of God and the manifestation of His promises in our lives.

In the midst of a world of chaos and life’s tribulations, it is easy to lose focus of the promises spoken over us. However, this year’s theme serves as a reminder to hold onto the word of the Lord and to

boldly confess his promises. It is a sweet reminder that when we align our thoughts, words, and actions with the truth found in his word, and not in our personal feelings, God remains faithful to fulfill what he has spoken.

Dear friends, let me encourage you. Whatever promise God has given you, hold onto it and do not let it go. Walking by faith is done daily one foot at a time. It’s time to search God’s word and remind yourself daily of his faithfulness and love towards you. It’s time to daily decree and declare his promises over your life with unwavering confidence and boldness. The journey may not always be easy, but as we align ourselves with what God says about us in his word, we position ourselves to witness the manifestation of his prophetic promises.

We serve a God who is faithful to every promise he has spoken. Regardless of the circumstances that surround you, hold onto the word of the Lord. Confess his promises over your life and watch as he brings them to pass.

As the countdown to the Faith Walk Conference 2023 at Grace Cathedral Ministries begins, my excitement continues to grow. The transformative power of faith has touched my life in profound ways that I cannot explain it all. I believe it can do the same for you. Together, let us embrace this opportunity to ignite our passion, find our purpose and experience a life filled with divine inspiration and fulfillment. I am excited for the opportunity to connect with you, to share stories and to witness the incredible transformation that awaits us.

To learn more and be a part of the Faith Walk Builders, I encourage you to visit www.thevocalencourager.com or gracesumter.org. These websites offer comprehensive information about Faith Fridays with Friends, the conference schedule, registration process and additional resources to enhance your faith journey. Together, let us step into the prophetic promises of God, fully expecting to witness their manifestation. See you at the Faith Walk Conference 2023, where we will embark on a journey of faith, purpose and the fulfillment of God’s prophetic promises. You don’t have to wait until October to increase your Faith. Join me every Friday on Faith Fridays with Friends on social media platforms and on YouTube as @thevocalencourager.

To empower
yourself
you must find
your purpose.
To empower
others
is to live
your purpose.

BUTLER ACADEMY APPOINTS TAYLOR AS FIRST PROVOST

Submitted by Barbara Chappell, vice president of Development and External Relations



Nateisha Taylor

HARTSVILLE– Butler Academy President Dr. Jerome Reyes announced today the K-12 public charter school’s first Provost, Ms. Nateisha Taylor.

“Butler Academy’s growth since its founding in 2020 has exceeded our expectations,” said Reyes. “For example, we were able to continue in-person instruction throughout the pandemic, supporting both social and emotional development and academic growth, and we have

attracted talented faculty and administrators from across the nation. In addition, this year, we are completing a physical expansion that nearly doubles the size of our facility.

“But for our scholars and their families—the people we were founded to serve—the growth that matters most is the academic growth that Butler Academy scholars are achieving. By all accounts, this year’s academic achievements were outstanding. In fact, during the three years that we have been open, a period when the pandemic caused devastating learning losses for far too many students across the nation, Butler’s students thrived and this year’s rating of “Excellent” by the state reflected it. Obviously, there are many people and reasons behind the growth we’ve achieved – it has been a team effort – but Nateisha Taylor’s professional contributions cannot be understated,” Reyes said.

As provost, Taylor will lead the academic programs of the school’s network – its lower school, its middle school and, in 2025, its new high school. In most K-12 schools, Ms. Taylor’s new position would be termed a chief academic officer, but in a decision that is believed to be a first for the state, Taylor’s new position encompasses the traditional role of chief academic officer as well as the more externally facing responsibilities of an institution’s provost.

“It’s one thing to have a vision for a new school, but it’s another thing altogether to have a team of educators that internalizes and executes that vision to perfection,” Reyes explained. “So often, having Nateisha Taylor as our Dean of Academics has felt like a pass to the HOV lane on a crowded highway. From testing and curriculum implementation to data analysis and teacher development, we’ve navigated so many firsts since opening in 2020 and in my estimation, Nateisha has cut our “ETA to excellence” by years.

“What’s fascinating is that her academic expertise is not even her best attribute. Her connection to teachers, understanding of their needs, loyalty, empathy and ability to communicate with equal measures of clarity and empathy make her one of the best leaders I’ve ever met in my life. And so, I am beyond excited that we have found a way to further expand her impact on our learning community,” Reyes said.

By definition, public charter schools are designed to advance fresh thinking and innovation. Part of Butler Academy’s plan and focus from well before its charter application was filed was to use the school’s programs and culture to create an expectation that every scholar will be prepared to attend a high-quality college or university upon graduation. It is why every classroom in the school is named for an exceptional college or university, and why each Thursday morning – College Day at the school – students in every grade begin their day with age-appropriate classroom conversations about the nature of college.

As Provost, Taylor will not only supervise curriculum

development, instruction and research – as university provosts do – she will extend and deepen Butler Academy’s existing cultural model by exemplifying a personal commitment to academic excellence and to expanding the base of knowledge from which forward-leaning schools must operate.

“Awed by the school’s decision and by the responsibility it presents to me,” Taylor said, “I see in this moment a spectacular opportunity to carry forward Dr. Reyes’ vision for the school and her scholars. Truly, it is the thirst for knowledge and growth that inspires me every day and the hard work of trying to quench that thirst that makes each day’s effort so personally fulfilling.”

“Butler Academy’s push for excellence and for meeting each child’s social and emotional needs so that they can be positioned for academic success is why educators like me and the members of Butler Academy’s faculty are so enthusiastic about what we do. I am grateful to hold the confidence of Dr. Reyes and the B.A. family as we embrace the school’s future,” Taylor said.

Previously, at Butler Academy, Taylor served as dean of academics. Taylor earned a B.A. in English Education from Claflin University and an [M.Ed.](#) in Integrated Studies from Cambridge College. Prior to joining Butler Academy’s Leadership Team, Taylor served progressively more responsible roles including as assessment and accountability coordinator and coordinator of English Language Arts and Social Studies for Darlington County School District and, prior to that, as literacy leader and instructional coach at Spaulding Middle School in Lamar, SC.

Concurrent with Taylor’s promotion, Butler Academy has appointed Ms. Kianee Lee of Seattle, WA, to serve as the school’s new dean of the middle school. In addition, Ms. Rachel Johnston of Sumter, SC, has been appointed to serve as dean of the lower school, replacing Ms. Carol Mendez, who has been serving as interim dean of the lower school since November 2022.

Taylor’s new position begins immediately. A formal installation ceremony will be held early in the 2023-24 academic year.

ABOUT BUTLER ACADEMY

Butler Academy, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is a tuition-free K-12 public charter school with a mission to create an enthusiastic culture of learning in which every student is expected and positioned to succeed academically. At Butler Academy, our core values inform and guide us in all aspects of what we do—from the classroom and playground to home and throughout the community. Commitment to our BRAVE core values (Belonging, Respect, Accountability, Vision and Excellence) helps our organization stay united through a common purpose. As an organization that highly values diversity, equity and inclusion, our learning community is committed to rethinking all education policies and practices through the lens of equity to ensure that all our scholars thrive. Website: www.butleracademy.us

Lee County School District Congratulations Class of 2023

Lee Central High School Mr. Baron Turner, Principal



**Valedictorian
Shadae Rembert**

Our Valedictorian is the daughter of Victoria Austin & Sinatra Rembert. She was born on August 8, 2005. She was a member of Central Carolina Technical College's Dual Enrollment/Early College program where she achieved the feat of obtaining an Associate's in Arts Degree. She maintained All A's in all of her Lee Central High courses and all of her Central Carolina courses. She has been a Beta Club member, SC State Hype Program, Emerging Leaders, Lettered in Athletics for LCHS in Volleyball, Basketball, and Track and served as the President of the Student Council Association. She has earned admissions to numerous top colleges but she will choose to attend the University of South Carolina or Claflin University in the Fall majoring in Political Science in hopes of pursuing a Law Degree.



**Salutatorian
Jaisha Hickmon**

Our Salutatorian is the daughter of Eric & Windy Hickmon. During her matriculation at Lee Central High School, Jaisha was a part of the Emerging Leader Member, Beta Club, SC State Hype Program, HOSA, Lee County DSN Board, the LCHS Student Government and Teacher Cadet Program. Jaisha Hickmon's work ethic and determination to succeed made her the Salutatorian of the Lee Central High School Graduating Class of 2023. She completed her Associates Degree in Arts from Central Carolina Technical College and has earned admissions to The University of South Carolina where she will be majoring in Nursing.

Top Five Honor Graduates



Shadae Rembert— Valedictorian, Jaisha Hickmon—Salutatorian, Alyssa Wilson, Zylayah Williams, Kadaisha Hickmon and Mr. Bernard McDaniel, Sr., Superintendent

118 Lee Central High Graduates

6 Central Carolina Early College Graduates

Total Earned in Scholarships: **\$13,834,332**

57 CATE completers **15** Dual CATE Completers **23** Life Scholarship Recipients

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CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES PERSEVERANCE

Submitted by J. Craig Cotton, director of Public Relations, Office of Communications and Marketing Claflin University



President Warmack with seven of the "Divine Nine" - Claflin's Honors Graduates for the Spring Class of 2023 that earned 4.0 grade point averages. From left: Claflin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack, Jaliyah Robinson (Mass Communications); Nickeisha Cuthbert (Biotechnology); Emmanuel Frimpong (Biology); Khari Oglesby (Early Childhood Education); Mindal Reese (Biology); Tenia Sanders (Psychology); and Arielle Wiggins (History). Not pictured are Kutu Ra (Biotechnology) and Assiya Desoky (Digital Design). Columbia University, Cornell University, Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), New York University (NYU), and the University of South Carolina are among the schools where these scholars will continue their education and research.

ORANGEBURG - Claflin University conferred degrees to more than 230 graduates during its Spring 2023 Commencement Convocation on Saturday, May 6, at 10 a.m. in the Jonas T. Kennedy Health and Wellness Complex. Former South Carolina House of Representative, Civil Rights Activist and Political Commentator Bakari Sellers was the keynote speaker.

Other ceremony highlights included introductions of "The Divine Nine" – high-achieving scholars who graduated with 4.0 grade point averages, the "Super Seven" – the inaugural graduates of Claflin's Master of Science in Nursing program and the Golden Class of 1973. Dr. Randall Harris, associate professor in the Department of Biology, was presented with the Attorney William H. and Annette B. Johnson Annual Faculty Award for Innovative Scientific Research.

"I hope you don't think it's going to get any easier when you walk across the stage," Sellers told the Spring Class of 2023 and the capacity crowd that included family members, special guests, Claflin alumni, faculty and staff. "You did all this work for all those years, and your reward is that you get to work harder. But the secret about that hard work is that it is worth it. Congratulations."

Sellers made history in the 2006 South Carolina state legislature as the youngest African American elected official in the nation at the age of 22. In 2014, he was the Democratic Nominee for Lt. Governor in South Carolina. Sellers has also worked for United States Congressman James Clyburn and former Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin.

Sellers shared the story of Sgt. Maj. Teresa King, the daughter of a North Carolina sharecropper who became the first woman to lead the U.S. Army's drill sergeant school at Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C., before being suspended for a "personnel matter."

"She was 5-4, 130 pounds, and she did not look like a soldier," Sellers said. "But she had grit, determination and a sense of what was right and wrong."

Sellers chronicled King's military career, from serving with the post office in Germany to her assignment at Fort Dix in New Jersey, where she was promoted to sergeant major as a drill instructor. In 2009, King went from sergeant major to command sergeant major and was the first female command sergeant to become a drill sergeant. In 2009, she made history when she became the first woman soldier to serve as commandant of the Army's Drill Sergeant School at Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C.

"It was amazing. The accolades came from everywhere," Sellers said. "But it could not last. First, there were whispers about her leadership style. Those whispers became conversations about how she did not belong here, and those conversations evolved into plans of action and anonymous allegations."

Sellers said King was later suspended, but after an investigation that failed to produce evidence of wrongdoing by King, she was returned to,

CLAFLIN CONT'D

her position. "But that only lasted a few days before the Army asked her to 'hand it over,'" Sellers said. They took her career, future, and good name and ran her out of the Army.

Sellers continued the story by telling the audience that King hired a lawyer, fought the U.S. Army, and after 12 years, she won her court case. "It's an inspiring story, but everybody gets knocked down – but what's important is that you get back up," Sellers said. "We know life is not fair, but it's not fixed either. We have hope, a voice and we know there is something here worth fighting for. Black folks must work longer and harder, but when you believe in something, victory is much sweeter."

Claflin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack admitted he had a special bond with the Spring Class of 2023. Warmack's tenure as Claflin's ninth president began in August 2019. "You hold a special place in my heart. Most of you came to Claflin with me in 2019. I refer to you as the 'Perseverance and Resilient Class.' Warmack referenced a timeline beginning in August when the Spring Class of 2023 came to campus as freshmen for Move-In Day, inclement weather due to Hurricane Dorian and another severe storm that closed the university before the holiday break.

"I will never forget November 13, 2019," Warmack said. "Dr. Durant and I allowed the Student Government Association (SGA) to bring 'Megan Thee Stallion' to the campus for their Homecoming Concert. I took a picture with her that went viral on social media. That's when I attracted an

abundance of praise and a ton of criticism."

Warmack said he was called the anti-Christ, and several predicted he would "bring Claflin down." However, the students enjoyed the show, and after her Claflin appearance, "Megan Thee Stallion" earned her degree at Texas Southern University. In 2022, she became the first female rapper to perform at the Academy Awards. "I believed we showed what a little 'Claflin Magic' could do," he said.

Fast forward to March 6, 2020, when the students left the campus for spring break. A week later, S.C. Governor Henry McMaster closed all colleges and universities in South Carolina due to COVID-19. "You went on the longest Spring Break in Claflin's 153-year history," Warmack told the students. "Faculty had to learn new teaching models, and students had to learn online. We sent laptops and hotspots to students with limited internet access, but through it all - you persevered. You did not quit. You adjusted, and years later – you are here today, receiving your degree."

Warmack announced that in addition to the "Divine Nine" 4.0 GPA graduates, 96 students graduated with academic honors. The cumulative GPA of the Spring Class of 2023 was an impressive 3.64.

Claflin scholars are continuing their academic careers at schools such as Columbia University in New York, Cornell University, Harvard University, New York University (NYU), Medical University of South Carolina and the University of South Carolina.

CLAFLIN CELEBRATES INAUGURAL MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING GRADUATES

Submitted by J. Craig Cotton, director of Public Relations, Office of Communications and Marketing Claflin University



From left: Deonte Thompson, Adrain Sims, Azuree Page, Heidi Reno, Dr. Shannon Smith, President Dwaun J. Warmack, Alecia Moody, Chevron Vice and Patrice Burgess

ORANGEBURG - Heidi Reno did not hesitate when asked how she benefitted from graduating from Claflin's Master of Science in Nursing program.

"This program taught me how to impact change within my environment," she said. "It also increased my knowledge of the business and financial aspects of the nursing industry."

Reno and six other graduates made Claflin history as the first to earn degrees in the Master of Science in Nursing program that launched in 2019. The nursing scholars were designated, "The Super Seven," by Claflin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack during the 2023 Spring Commencement Convocation held on May 6, 2023, at the Jonas T. Kennedy Health and Wellness Complex. The graduates earned degrees in the program's Nurse Leader Track (NL).

"All of my classes were online, so I did not spend time driving or sitting in traffic. I was able to study and review material at the times that were best for me," said Reno who earned her associate degree in nursing from Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College and Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Claflin. She presently works as a nurse at Lexington Hospital in Lexington, S.C. "Claflin's programs offer the best of both worlds," she added.

The inaugural class of master's degree graduates participated in a Pinning Ceremony on May 5, 2023, in Ministers' Hall. The other graduates were Patricia Burgess (Orangeburg, S.C.), Alecia Moody (Augusta, Ga.), Azuree Page (Columbia, S.C.), Adrain Sims (Sumter, S.C.), Deonte Thompson (Ladson, S.C.) and Chevron Vice (Lexington, S.C.)

Claflin's Master of Science in Nursing program includes a Family Nurse Practitioner (NP) track that began classes in 2021. The Nurse Leader (NL) track was added in January 2022. Claflin's master's in nursing program

hosted an accreditation site visit from the Commission for Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) in March 2023. A full accreditation notification is expected this fall and will be retroactive to March 13, 2023.

"These nursing graduates are highly skilled professionals who embrace Claflin's guiding principles. They are committed to valuing people by providing a safe, wholesome, and healthy environment that fosters mutual respect, diversity, and inclusion. These same qualities are essential to being an effective nurse," said Dr. Pandora Ryant, director of the MSN Nursing Leadership program. "They are equipped with the skills and training to contribute effective high-quality care and promote positive patient outcomes."

Claflin's nursing program offers courses 100 percent online and in-person clinical immersions for FNP students once per semester. The program is designed to provide nurses with the flexibility to work full-time while continuing their education. Claflin is the only Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the state of South Carolina that offers a bachelor's and master's degree in nursing.

Dr. Shannon Smith said Claflin's Nursing Leadership Track prepares graduates to lead evidence-based practice and health care in multiple and diverse settings. Smith is associate dean and an associate professor of nursing at Claflin.

"Increasing the number of advanced practice nurses and nursing leaders from diverse backgrounds is critical to expanding the quality of health care in our community," said Smith. "We will have more nurses that understand the needs of the populations we serve."

Deonte Thompson, a native of Ladson, S.C., is excited about his future work and opportunities in nursing leadership. He currently works as a travel nurse with the Veterans Affairs (VA) Travel Nurse Corps, and his career aspirations include becoming a chief nursing officer.

"My experience in the program was spectacular," said Thompson. "I always wanted to earn my MSN degree from a HBCU." Thompson was the only male graduate in the 2023 MSN NL nursing program. He is immensely proud of his role as a mentor to young males seeking careers in the healthcare industry.

"Most of the nursing community consists of females," said Thompson. "Patients perform better when they are treated by someone that relates to them and their struggles. I would encourage anyone who wants to be a nurse to never let their environment deter them from their goals. Be the change you want to see in the world."

FLORENCE 1 SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE 2023-2024 ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

Submitted by Melissa Rollins, communications specialist Florence 1 Schools

Florence 1 Schools Superintendent Dr. Richard O'Malley has announced several administrative changes for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year. These individuals are current employees of the district who will transition to new roles.

The administrative changes for next school year are:

- Jeffrey Gaines has been named principal of Sneed Middle School
- Beverly Greene has been named principal of Southside Middle School
- Alyssa Leibman has been named principal of Wallace Gregg Elementary School
- Talia Dukes has been named assistant principal of Sneed Middle School
- Maureen Moore has been named assistant principal of South Florence High School
- Sophia Frierson has been named assistant principal of Greenwood Elementary School



Jeffrey Gaines

"I believe that these educators are going to strengthen our academic programs in these new roles," O'Malley said. "They have already shown their strength as administrators. I know they will continue to pursue excellence and opportunities for all of our students while building strong relationships within their new school communities."

Gaines has worked in Florence 1 Schools for a total of eight years, serving as a band director, assistant principal at West Florence, F1S director of Arts and Innovative Programs, and principal of Southside Middle School. He holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Newberry College and two Master of Education degrees from Southern Wesleyan University, one in Classroom Leadership and the other in Administration and Supervision. He is pleased to be joining the Squire family next school year.

"I am honored to join the community of learners at Sneed Middle School," Gaines said. "I look forward to building relationships with the students, staff, and stakeholders as we build on a tradition of excellence!"



Beverly Greene

Greene has more than 15 years of experience in education, having worked at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Most recently, she has served as the lead assistant principal at South Florence's Freshman Academy. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Coker University and two Master of Education degrees from Coastal Carolina University, one in Learning and Teaching: Instructional Technology and the other in Educational Leadership.

"I am honored and excited to serve as the new principal of Southside Middle School," Greene said. "I look forward to working with the faculty and staff and continuing to serve the students and families of this community."



Alyssa Leibman

Leibman has worked in education for the last ten years, most recently as the English Language Arts coordinator for Florence 1 Schools. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and a minor in African Studies from the College of Charleston's Honors College. She also has a master's degree in educational supervision with high school, middle school and elementary school licensure.

"With a legacy that spans over a half of a century and a strong connection to the Wilson High attendance area, Wallace Gregg Elementary is a key part of the Florence 1 Schools story and a pillar of the larger Florence community," Leibman said. "It is my honor to serve the students and families of

Wallace Gregg and my privilege to work beside outstanding teachers and a dedicated staff."

Dukes has worked as an assistant principal for the last eight years, serving since 2019 at Southside Middle School. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Francis Marion University, a Master of Arts degree in Education: Curriculum and Instruction from University of Phoenix, and a Master of Education: Education Administration from Grand Canyon University. She said that she looks forward to her new role next school year.

"I am excited to become a part of the Sneed Middle School staff," Dukes said. "I am honored to join a community of lifelong learners and achievers. I look forward to upholding the belief of being "Simply the Best."

Moore has worked in Florence 1 Schools for nearly thirty years, serving as a teacher, coach and administrator. For the last four years, she has been the Assistant Principal of Greenwood Elementary School. Moore holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and a Master of Science degree in Education from SUNY Cortland. She also holds a master's degree in educational administration from the University of South Carolina.

"I am very grateful for this opportunity and look forward to building new relationships with the students and staff at South Florence this next school year," Moore said. "My goal is to motivate students and build their confidence to move on and have a successful high school experience. I am excited for this new journey in my career."

Frierson has been an assistant principal at Sneed Middle School since 2006. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the University of South Carolina, a Master of Arts degree in Learning Disabilities from Francis Marion University and a Master of Arts degree in Educational Leadership from the University of South Carolina.

"I am looking forward to building new relationships with students, teachers, and parents next year," Frierson said.

FIRST BANK PROMOTES FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Submitted by Ashley Christenbury, city executive - SVP.



Pictured left to right are: Malorie Steadman, First Bank Area retail manager, Paul Seward, First Bank Area executive, Ashley Christenbury, First Bank city executive, Trisha Caulder, FSD1 board member and Porter Stewart, FSD1 board chair

During the months of April and May, First Bank challenged all branches to get out of the office and into the schools to promote financial education classes to coincide with, "Teach Children to Save," celebrations throughout the nation. To further support this initiative, First Bank promised that each school visited would be given \$1,000.

In Florence, a total of 1,450 students were educated in 16 presentations ranging from kindergarten to high school classes. Presentations were made to 12 FSD1 schools, Florence Christian School, The King's Academy and two Hannah Pamplico schools.

First Bank's Commitment to service excellence applies not only to its customers and associates, but also to the local communities. First Bank makes it a priority to give back to the communities they serve.

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WEST FLORENCE HIGH SCHOOL






WILSON HIGH SCHOOL

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***10** SC Achievement Honors
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TOTAL AMOUNT RECEIVED IN SCHOLARSHIPS
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FDTC HONORS 606 GRADUATES DURING COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY Submitted by FDTC



FDTC 2023 Graduates

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) honored 606 graduates during the college's commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 11, at the Florence Center.

CEO of Sea Power Marine Products and President of Docks Unlimited Sean A. Barnes shared a message about his humble beginnings, his struggles with dyslexia and ADHD and how he persevered to build his successful company. His message to the FDTC graduates was simple, "If you work hard and do what you are supposed and you continue going, then you are going to succeed in life no matter where you came from or what you do."

At this year's ceremony, 606 students graduated, marking the culmination of years of hard work and dedication. Of the graduates, 364 earned degrees, 75 earned diplomas and 167 earned certificates. In addition, a total of 30 high school students graduated with an associate degree through FDTC's Early College Academy.

The College also honored the family of Gaylen Bouges with a posthumous degree during the ceremony. Bouges tragically lost his life just one month before his graduation in 2022. His mother, brother and grandmother were in attendance to accept the degree and a class ring on his behalf.

"What an absolute honor it was to witness each of our students graduate

and reach their goals," FDTC President Dr. Jermaine Ford said. "Graduating from college is a major achievement and gives each of these graduates a better chance at obtaining a family-sustaining wage directly in their field of study. On behalf of our area commissioners, faculty and staff, we wish these graduates the best as they move on to the next chapter in their lives."

The FDTC Class of 2023 included graduates from a wide range of programs, including nursing, welding, HVAC, automotive technology, dental assisting, phlebotomy, radiologic technology, respiratory care, surgical technology, criminal justice, early childhood development, human services, paralegal studies, associate in science and arts, accounting, cosmetology, computer technology, machine tool, management, marketing, diesel technology and more.

Many of the graduates have already secured jobs in their fields, while others plan to continue their education at four-year universities.

This year's graduation also marked the beginning of two new graduation traditions for Florence-Darlington Technical College. One of these new traditions was the addition of new gonfalon banners which represent the divisions of the college including Nursing and Allied Health; Business, Computing and Social Science; Career and Technical Education; and Science Technology, Engineering and Math. The second tradition was the college's first-ever class ring.

To learn more about FDTC and how you can be a part of the next graduation class, visit fdtc.edu.

About FDTC

Florence Darlington Technical College is a comprehensive community and technical college located in Florence, South Carolina. The College provides a high-quality academic foundation, workforce development, and personal enrichment to its students through extensive educational programs. Florence Darlington Technical College empowers its students with the skills and knowledge they need to enter the workforce and succeed in their careers. For more information about Florence Darlington Technical College, visit the website at fdtc.edu.



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FOLLOW US



FDTC OFFER EVENING ELECTRICIAN CERTIFICATION COURSES Submitted by FDTC



Florence-Darlington Technical College to offer evening Electrician Certification classes beginning in August 2023. These classes (EEM 105 and EEM 117) will be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5:00 p.m. to 8:35 p.m.

Due to increased demand for its Electrician Certification courses, Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) will now offer the courses in the evening. This is in addition to its current day-time schedule.

“It’s always a good problem to have when you have more interest than availability,” FDTC Associate Vice President of Technical and General Education Dr. Dan Averette said. “As we have seen an increase in this program’s interest, we want to make sure to allow potential students every opportunity to take the course when they are available. With that said, offering this course in the evening will give students more flexibility to attend at times that work best for their schedules.”

The Electrician Certificate allows interested individuals to learn

how to wire residential, commercial and industrial applications. Students will learn how to interpret electrical wiring diagrams and safely wire an electrical distribution panel box to various outlets, switches, lights and appliances. In addition, students will become familiar with electrical codes, wiring and perform electrical load calculations. Completion of this certification class prepares students to be entry-level electricians which currently is a starting wage of just over \$35,000 according to JobEQ data.

Also of note, employment of electricians in our region is expected to grow 7.1 percent over the next 10 years. Increases in construction spending and demand for alternative energy will drive the demand for electricians.

The evening classes will begin on August 15, 2023. These classes (EEM 105 and EEM 117) will be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5:00 p.m. to 8:35 p.m.

For more information contact the college at (843) 661-8324 or visit our website at FDTC.edu to apply.

About FDTC

Florence-Darlington Technical College is a comprehensive community and technical college located in Florence, South Carolina. The College provides a high-quality academic foundation, workforce development, and personal enrichment to its students through extensive educational programs. FDTC empowers its students with the skills and knowledge they need to enter the workforce and succeed in their careers. For more information about the College, visit fdtc.edu.

FLORENCE 1 SCHOOLS CELEBRATES OPENING OF THE FARM AT FLORENCE 1

Submitted by Melissa Rollins, communications specialist Florence 1 Schools



Farm at Florence 1 Ribbon Cutting

The Farm at Florence 1 has officially opened its doors, holding a community open house and ribbon cutting May 11, for the nine-acre property on North Williston Road.

Over the last several years, Florence 1 Schools has introduced farm-to-school concepts to students through gardens at many of the district’s elementary schools and middle schools. The Farm at Florence 1 expands that curriculum and provides more opportunities for students across the district.

“We had a vision of providing a space for all of our students that will allow them to be hands-on and really take ownership of their learning,” said Superintendent Dr. Richard O’Malley. “This property fulfills that dream. Regardless of their grade level, interests and needs, there will be opportunities for everyone at The Farm. Through partnerships with the community, businesses and higher education institutions, our students are going to shine at The Farm.”

Farm to School Coordinator Jeff Murrie said that students will be able to “grow it, pick

it, cook it and eat it,” at The Farm, exploring careers and learning new skills, all while having fun and being active.

“Many students across the state of South Carolina are not aware of the career possibilities that exist in the field of agriculture, nutrition, agribusiness, turf management,” Murrie said. “This site will be the catalyst to provide many new opportunities to the students of Florence One.”

Murrie said he has loved seeing all of the parts of The Farm project come together into the finished product.

“I decided about ten years ago that I personally was going to have a legacy; I was going to have something that I left behind that was going to make the lives of children better,” Murrie said. “That is what this Farm is all about for me: making the lives of the children in our community better.”

Along with row crops, The Farm will feature a teaching kitchen with space for students and teachers to prep and cook, raised garden beds, a greenhouse with a hydroponic

system, outdoor classroom space and livestock enclosures. The district plans to incorporate veterinary science and equine therapy through local partnerships.

The produce grown at The Farm will be used in a variety of ways, including being incorporated into the menus in school cafeterias and used for lessons within the teaching kitchen. In the future a farmer’s market will be established, putting students’ entrepreneurship skills to work.

F1S Deputy Superintendent Kyle Jones said that The Farm is an important piece of the district’s continued efforts to prepare students for life after graduation.

“I look forward to all the creative thinking, learning experiences and work that students will produce on our new Farm,” Jones said. “It is important that we continue to prepare students today for tomorrow’s future and provide the skill sets they will use for their entire life. We are excited about everything the Farm offers to our community.”



Farm at Florence 1 Kitchen



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- Winthrop University
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- University of Tennessee
- Villanova University
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute

A BRIGHTER FUTURE: SIX TIPS FOR FUNDING YOUR CHILD'S COLLEGE EDUCATION



(BPT) - The college years are an important milestone in a young person's life - during this time they explore options for future careers and gain experiences that shape the person they will become. These years can also bring stress, especially when it comes to figuring out how to pay for their education. A recent survey found that while 81 percent of students felt a college degree was crucial for their future, 7 in 10 also agreed paying for college is stressful - and 67 percent found the cost surprising.

In the College Ave Student Loans survey, it is clear that most families manage paying for college from a combination of several different sources, rather than relying on any one source of funding.

According to the survey, the top five sources used to pay for college are:

- * Merit aid (scholarships/grants) - 51 percent
- * Federal student loans - 46 percent
- * Parent savings/income - 40 percent
- * Student savings/income - 36 percent
- * Private student loans - 20 percent

Here are six tips to help you get started with putting together your financial plan for college.

1. Everything starts with the FAFSA

If your child will attend school next fall, you probably filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) months ago. This form must be filled out each year your child attends college, and becomes available on October 1. It is not just the federal government that uses FAFSA information to provide grants or loans - schools also use this information to offer financial aid, such as scholarships. Because some funding is limited, it's important fill the FAFSA out as early as possible.

2. Grants

The most well-known government grant, the Pell Grant, is based on student need. However, other grants may be available through your state or school, so be sure to check your state's department of education website.

3. Scholarships are not just about grades

It's not just students with a 4.0 GPA who qualify for scholarships. Some are based on a wide variety of criteria such as where you live, interests/majors, family background - or even by chance. Many employers offer educational scholarships, so ask your HR department (and your child's employer, if they have one). Check with community groups or civic organizations you belong to, or that are active in your area. Your child's high school guidance counselor can also help with finding scholarships.

Don't forget online scholarship searches at websites like Fastweb, Scholly, Cappex and Unigo. One easy scholarship to apply for is a \$1,000 monthly scholarship sweepstakes at CollegeAve.com.

4. Federal student loans

If you need to borrow,

the best place to start is with any federal loans in the student's name that they qualified for as part of their financial aid package. These loans have low fixed rates and offer unique benefits, such as income-driven repayment plans.

5. Private loans

Because federal student loans have annual limits, you may need to consider a private student loan to help bridge the gap between the financial aid your family receives and the amount you need to cover remaining expenses. Use the student loan calculator at CollegeAve.com to look at possible monthly payments, private loan interest rates and repayment terms.

You may also consider private parent loans, if you have strong credit and are able to take on the debt. Private parent loans such as those at College Ave offer a choice of fixed and variable rates and no origination fees, unlike federal parent PLUS loan options.

6. Part-time employment

Students can also help pay for expenses by working part-time. The survey found six out of 10 students plan to have a job while in college. Students who qualify for work-study will have options for jobs right on campus. If not, they can look for other part-time work in the area. Some students may also opt to work over the summer and use that income to help pay for expenses over the school year. Looking for summer jobs in the student's field of interest is also a great resume builder.

Cutting costs up front can also help make college more affordable. Strategies like using public transportation, buying used textbooks and living at home can help students save money. Another option is spending the first year or two at a community college. Just make sure all course credits will transfer to the student's preferred school.

These tips should help you begin putting together your best combination of funding options.

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HGTC EMPLOYEES COMPLETE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS WITH LOCAL CHAMBERS

Submitted by HGTC



Diana Greene (right), executive director for Leadership Grand Strand, presents Dr. Heather Hoppe (left), HGTC registrar, with diploma.

CONWAY—Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) employees recently graduated from leadership programs with local chambers. Dr. Heather Hoppe, HGTC registrar, graduated from Leadership Grand Strand, a program of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. Allissa Santmyer, HGTC assistant chair of Teacher Education, graduated from Leadership Conway, a program of the Conway Area Chamber of Commerce.

The goal of Leadership Grand Strand is to develop a corps of

informed, committed and qualified individuals capable of providing dynamic leadership for the Grand Strand. During the 10-month program, class members volunteer at least 75 hours with various local charities. Over the years, Leadership Grand Strand has created a cadre of leaders who guide the direction of change throughout the Grand Strand. For more information about the program, visit LeadershipGrandStrand.com.

Leadership Conway provides existing and emerging leaders with opportunities to enhance their civic knowledge and civic network. For over a quarter of a century, the program has helped participants better understand how our community works, build relationships with the area's current and future leaders and become inspired to focus talents in a way that will best serve the community. Leadership Conway participants develop the leadership skills necessary to assume leadership roles and become exposed to the involvement opportunities in the community. For



Le Hendrick (left), chair of Educational Programs for the Conway Chamber, and Becky Hubbard (right), president of the Conway Chamber, present Allissa Santmyer (center), HGTC assistant chair of Teacher Education, with diploma.

more information about the program, visit conwayscchamber.com.

Both programs are accepting applications now online.

“HGTC is proud to sponsor and support employees in the participation of leadership programs with our area chambers of commerce,” said Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, HGTC president. “Leadership is not something we take lightly at the College. It is the basis

for every decision we make; leading by example, inspiring passion and motivating our team to accomplish the mission of our college.”

For more information about HGTC, visit www.hgtc.edu or call 843-347-3186.



HGTC GRADUATES LARGEST PARAMEDIC CLASS Articles submitted by HGTC



HGTC had 32 paramedic students successfully complete their paramedic curriculum. (left to right) Front row- John Gifford, Robert Strickland, Chysuk Proctor, Tara Albohn, Jacqueline Brengel, Jonathan Johnson, Dawn Durante, Frank Brown
Center row- Erik Murwin, Steven Berrios, Joseph Griswold, Woodrow Tudor, Beth Petty, Dylan Bauer, Matt Heymann. Back row- Justin Loehr, Chasity MocarSKI, Alexis Jordan, John Assip, Katelyn Walters, Breanna Ziegenhorn, Mackenzie Kipp, Corey Pearre, Keith Norton, Jacob Phipps, Shayne Owens, Robert Bays, Doug Fain, Jacob Smith, James Fahy, Chase Brill

CONWAY – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is proud to announce 32 paramedic students successfully completed their yearlong program and are on their way to becoming certified paramedics.

These graduates are workforce ready and will be working for local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies in time for the busy summer season.

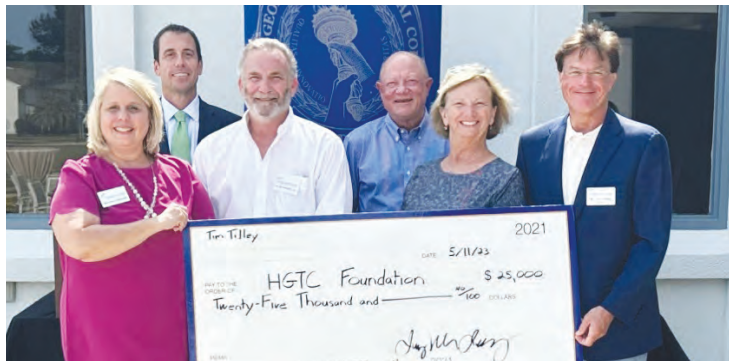
HGTC offers both Basic Emergency Medical Technology (EMT) and paramedic classes. The associate in applied science in EMT degree prepares students to provide emergency medical support to people who are injured or critically ill and to transport them to a medical facility, if necessary. When working in a first-responder situation, such as an ambulance service or fire department, paramedics are dispatched to the scene of the emergency, which can be as varied as a car accident, a fire, a falling injury, a dog bite, a shooting or stabbing, a birth or a person who's suddenly fallen ill. Once at the scene of the emergency, paramedics assess the situation, determine if additional assistance is needed, and if necessary, request the additional help.

The flexibility of the EMT curriculum allows students to enter the profession at two levels - Basic EMT and paramedic. This enables students to continue their education while working. In addition to receiving the technical education necessary for the profession, students can take general-education courses to complete degree requirements. Graduates of the program are eligible to take the National Registry Examination for EMT and paramedic level.

The EMT Program is available for enrollment starting in the fall semester with day and evening options available. The EMT program is a two-semester program with students taking the certification exam in May. There are many opportunities for employment both locally and throughout the state of South Carolina.

For more information about the HGTC Emergency Medical Technology degree, visit www.hgtc.edu or call 843-347-3186.

HGTC FOUNDATION RECEIVES BOARD MEMBER GIFTS



Tim Tilley, HGTC Foundation chairman and board member since 2009, donated \$25,000. (left to right) Shannon Detzler, HGTC Foundation president/CEO John Sawyer, HGTC Foundation vice chairman, Fundraising Initiatives, David Singleton, HGTC Foundation vice chairman, Support Services, Ed Tinsley, III, HGTC Foundation treasurer, Martha Lewis, HGTC Foundation secretary, Tim Tilley, HGTC Foundation chairman and Donor (board member since 2009)

MYRTLE BEACH – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is pleased to announce the HGTC Foundation recently received significant gifts from members of the Board of Directors. Tim Tilley, HGTC Foundation chairman and board member since 2009, donated \$25,000. Terri Nardslicio, HGTC Foundation board member since 2018, donated \$20,000.

“Board stewardship is an integral part of the duties and responsibilities of any Board of Directors. As President and CEO of HGTC Foundation, it fills me with pride to see our board members donating to the cause they not only volunteer their time and efforts, but also believe in. They recognize the importance and see the impact of the Foundation on our students, faculty and community workforce,” said Shannon Detzler, HGTC Foundation president and CEO.

Other Board Members donating \$5,000 to the HGTC Foundation, include Mr. Perry Collins, HGTC Foundation board of directors since 2017; Mrs. Peg Detweiler, HGTC Foundation board of directors since 2006; Mr. Buzz Freeman, HGTC Foundation board of directors since 2004; Mr. Bob Sheahan, HGTC Foundation board of directors since 2018; and Mr. Neyle Wilson & Dr. Marilyn Fore, past and current HGTC presidents.

The purpose of the HGTC Foundation is to raise funds to support the programs, services and activities of Horry-Georgetown Technical College, its students and employees and to create and strengthen positive relations between the college and the community.

HGTC EMPLOYEES SUPPORT ELI COLLINS FOUNDATION



Kari Royals (right), HGTC administrative assistant for Academic and Workforce Development, presents \$1,490 check to Selena Tisdale (left), director for The Eli Foundation. Professor Rachel Fowler (center) and her son, Colt, join in the presentation. (left to right) Selena Tisdale, Eli Collins Foundation director, Colt Fowler, son of Professor Fowler, Dr. Rachel Fowler, HGTC professor of Biological Science Kari Royals, HGTC administrative assistant, Academic and Workforce Development.

CONWAY – Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) employees recently demonstrated support for the Eli Collins Foundation for Premature Babies. The HGTC Academic and Workforce Development Division hosts a “blue jeans week” fundraiser twice a year. The spring fundraiser raised money and collected many items for the Eli Collins Foundation and its efforts in providing support, encouragement, awareness and resources for families of premature babies.

Dr. Rachel Fowler, HGTC Biological Science professor knows firsthand the profound impact the Eli Collins Foundation can have on parents of a premature baby in this area. Her son, Colt, was born weighing only two pounds eight ounces and stayed in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for 61 days. She recalls the difference made in her life during that time.

“While Colt was in the hospital, we had to drive back and forth to Florence every day. The entire NICU journey was a rollercoaster ride of emotions, mentally draining and physically isolating during the pandemic. An unexpected glimpse of hope and sense of normalcy came in the form of a Mother’s Day gift from the Eli Collins Foundation,” said Professor Fowler.

HGTC employees presented a \$1,490.00 check for the cause. Accepting the check on behalf of The Eli Collins Foundation was Selena Tisdale, director.

“I am very proud of the efforts of HGTC employees donating in support of The Eli Collins Foundation. Our faculty and staff genuinely care about the community HGTC serves and always look forward to supporting local charities in the area during fundraisers like this,” said Dr. Jennifer Wilbanks, HGTC executive vice president for Academic and Workforce Development.

BENEFITS OF A MODIFIED SCHEDULE

Submitted by Dr. Kandace Bethea, superintendent.



Dr. Kandace Bethea

MARION - For the 2022-2023 school year, Marion County School District successfully implemented a modified year-round calendar. Although there was some initial hesitation from some stakeholders, the district received positive feedback from teachers, parents and the community. When it came time for the calendar committee to meet and plan for the 23-24 school year, there was overwhelming feedback to continue with the modified year-round calendar for the 23-24 school year. The calendar committee is comprised of parents, community, teachers, administrators, students, and support staff. It's important to have

a diverse group meet us at the table to help make decisions that impact us all.

The district's modified calendar has teachers returning the final week of July and students returning the first week of August. The school year will still consist of 180 days of instruction and testing just as a traditional calendar would too. The main purpose of the modified schedule is to allow for intersessions placed strategically during the calendar year.

Past yearly schedules would often have long stretches of time in which there were no breaks. This led to the potential for burnout of teachers, support staff and students. This calendar has planned intersession in October and one at the end of February, leading into

March. Given the holiday breaks, which remain unaffected, this ensures that there will be time to rest and refocus throughout the school year.

There are future benefits to the new calendar. The district hopes to use this time to allow staff to work with students who may need extra instruction or support on certain standards recently introduced. The ability to provide more timely interventions will benefit the student both academically and emotionally. These timely intersessions will reduce classroom anxiety and promote healthy learning.

Outside the classroom, families will have more flexibility with their vacation plans. The summer is a great time to travel for pleasure or to see family and friends but so are other times during the year. The ability to travel in off-peak times may reduce cost and avoid major crowds. Summer will still be the longest break from school, but with a more balanced calendar, the time away from class will be less, avoiding what is known as the summer slide when students often forget some of their learning from the prior year.

Districts that have implemented the modified calendar, report:

- a positive impact on student achievement/reduces time for learning loss.
- improved attendance
- reduction in the number of disciplinary incidents
- reduced teacher burnout; and improved teacher morale
- balanced time inside and outside the classroom for students, teachers and staff.

Most recently, Marion County School District has utilized the modified calendar as a recruitment tool for hiring new teachers and staff. It certainly catches the attention of new teachers when they can see the built in breaks throughout the school year and know they will have time to rest and recharge.

You can reach Superintendent Bethea, of Marion County School District at kbethea@marion.k12.sc.us.

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FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY'S BISHOP DONALD JACKSON *Submitted by FMU*

Donald Jackson in the front of the Stokes Administration Building where he has worked in accounting for over twenty-nine years.

HARTSVILLE - Born in Hartsville, SC and raised in Brooklyn, NY, Bishop Donald L. Jackson made his way back to South Carolina in 1970, where he's lived since. If there's anything you should know about Jackson, it's that he's lived a life of flexibility. This flexibility has served Jackson well throughout his life and has allowed him to teach others to persevere using his own story.

"Life is flexible," says Jackson. "I was raised by aunts and uncles and moved around a bit, but I didn't get an inferiority complex as so many do. I learned to be flexible and that has made me into the person I am today."

In 1974, he graduated from Butler High School in Hartsville and enrolled in what was then Francis Marion College. Though he ended up stepping away from his studies, his time at Francis Marion was far from over.

Several years later, in 1979, Jackson married his wife of forty-three years, Vanessa, and together they have three children, sons Kwanza and Ahmad, and daughter Arthenius, and three grandsons. Soon after his children were born, Jackson decided it was time to go back to school. Never one to take the easy way out, Jackson was determined to be a traditional student though he was anything but. He attended Coker College during the day for four years while working third shift in his job. In 1993, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting. In January 1994, a position in accounting opened at Francis Marion University. He applied, and on his birthday, January 16, he received what he calls the best birthday present - a job at FMU. Jackson's first position at the university was as an

accounting assistant. He now serves as accounting supervisor.

During his twenty-nine years at FMU, he has been involved in a variety of organizations. He was a founding member of the African American Faculty and Staff Coalition where he is currently the vice president and previously served as treasurer.

For over twenty years, he's been an advisor to the YGB choir. As an advisor, he's traveled with the choir on tour to Chicago, New York, Atlanta, and all across South Carolina. The choir has performed before Rev. Jesse Jackson as well as numerous gospel artists. Above all, Jackson feels a calling to be a mentor for the students involved in the YGB choir.

"It's an honor to serve as an advisor to YGB," said Jackson. "I try my best to teach the choir members about moral character and stress to them the importance of getting an education and finishing well. Along with that, I enjoy working with them as they sing spiritual songs that will uplift those around them."



Donald Jackson in the cap and gown from Commencement where he offers the invocation and benediction for each ceremony.

Since 2020, Jackson has also served as acting chaplain for the university. As chaplain, Jackson provides the invocation and benediction at university events such as fall and spring commencement exercises. This is a natural role for Jackson who started his church, Fellowship of Christians Movement, in 2005.

While driving from Hartsville to Francis Marion each day, Jackson began to have a desire to start a church that could benefit not only the community, but also students at Francis Marion. He wanted to start a church that could be a safe haven and a place of worship and fellowship for many members of the YGB choir as well as other students who attend Francis Marion.

Jackson is naturally drawn to youth and has felt an affinity to serve them his whole life. He feels a calling to be an advocate for youth. His motto that he shares with his congregation, the YGB choir and others he mentors is, "work for Christ while you're young, and when you're old, you have something to lean on."

Jackson is an indispensable part of campus, says FMU President Fred Carter. "Donald gives his all to everything he does whether it's his job in accounting, assisting with the YGB choir, serving his church, or volunteering in various areas on campus," said Carter. "His strong faith permeates everything he does, and we are all better for it."

In 2015, Jackson was the recipient of the Marvin W. Lynch Humanitarian Award. This award recognizes a member of the FMU staff who exhibits an unusual commitment to, and care for, his fellow man, both at work and elsewhere. Award winners are nominated by their peers, fitting for a person like Jackson who is well-respected across the campus and beyond.

For Jackson, coming to work each day is something he relishes. He thoroughly enjoys what he does and those he works with.

"I really enjoy what I do," says Jackson. "I feel fortunate to enjoy my day-to-day work life with my colleagues in the accounting office as well as those all across campus. It truly is a blessing to me to work at an institution like Francis Marion University. I'm thankful for the opportunities I have to be involved throughout campus in many areas such as the African American Faculty and Staff Coalition and the YGB."

Jackson is passionate about his work, both on and off campus. This shines through in all he does and is something he hopes those who come after him can see and emulate.



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FRANCIS MARION
UNIVERSITY

PARKS THROUGHOUT SC OFFER A GIFT IN ITSELF By Cynthia Ford



Paul McCormack

DILLON-Nestled in the heart of Dillon County, SC, lays a treasure. This sweet treasure holds the laughter and love for generations for many miles. This treasure is powerful enough to provide a smooth, serene still moment yet offers a collective burst of nature. Its natural beauty meets you even before you land upon its official entrance. This treasure is the Little Pee Dee State Park.

The Little Pee Dee State Park's name is derived from the Little Pee Dee River. According to history noted in the South Carolina History Trail, The Little Pee Dee State Park is "reminiscent of the woodlands and swamplands that covered much of the Pee Dee Region from the time Native Americans inhabited it through the 19th century."

The park offers several amenities to visitors, including campgrounds, fishing, canoe or kayak rentals, a cabin, boating access, picnic shelters, bird watching, biking, nature walking trails, and bike trails. Many visitors utilize the park for family gatherings and parties. Others take advantage of the priceless moments in nature and use the park for camping trips. One of the unique features of this park is the white sand, the rest throughout the park from an ancient coastline. This park is one of fifty parks monitored by the South Carolina State Parks.

Paul McCormack is the state director for South Carolina State Parks Service. He started as a park ranger at Sergeant Jasper State Park in 1995. With twenty-eight years of service, McCormack has observed several shifts with parks and recreation. However, he still maintains the same sentiments and love for it. McCormack sat with for an interview for Diversity Works magazine and shared his experiences with state parks, with a specific notation of the Little Pee Dee State Park.

McCormack has always loved the outdoors and served at an early age as a boy scout. "Outside is a place where I can be me." Paul.

McCormack genuinely loves parks and recreation and desires to see more diverse groups benefit from the parks and recreation experience. He believes it is essential to know your local park ranger and to visit your local state parks. One unique program South Carolina State Park offers is the Ultimate Outsider program. This program involves collecting a stamp at each South Carolina State Parks you visit. At the culmination of the visit, the visitor's name is submitted to be highlighted as the "Ultimate Outsider" and receives a gift. The adventure in each park offers a gift in itself and precious memories around the state.

The South Carolina Parks and Recreation Department plans to expand by adding three parks in designated areas. There are

currently fifty state parks across the state. When choosing new sites, the area is assessed to ensure the integrity of its nature may be maintained while making it accessible for recreation. The proposed sites are selected for the state. The activities of the state park are embedded in its missions.

The mission is to encourage people to discover South Carolina's State Parks by providing resourced-based recreational and educational opportunities that emphasize the conservation, protection, and interpretation of the state's natural and cultural resources.

McCormack beams with a sense of pride while reflecting on the current state of the state parks. McCormack stands as a leader who desires to ensure that the needs of the staff and visitors are met. All parks are faced with acts of nature that require revitalization. Paul spends several hours ensuring that updates are made, and parks remain safe for staff and visitors. "I hope for the agency to be a great place to work where you could be yourself," McCormack says. He also hopes for people to enjoy themselves while overseeing special places and feel supported by people.



Ground breaking for the Little Pee Dee State Park new road

McCormack believes, if you are open to transformation, park experiences will provide an opportunity for change. He also feels that park spaces are open for people to relax, be inspired and rejuvenated. Paul believes that experiences in nature should start while you are young. He notes that the love for the outdoors creates passion and a better life balance.

"If you struggle as a child to change so that you can be a part. You do not have to do that on a nature trail. There is no judgment, and it is a great place to find who you are."

As State Director, McCormack campaigns to get people outdoors more and use the parks as a community gathering spot. The next generation of park rangers can be inspired by McCormack's story. He traveled to South Carolina from Massachusetts to attend the Citadel. His major in education and love for the outdoors allowed for a perfect combination as a park ranger. Even though he now serves as the state director, his dedication to park duties has not declined.

The South Carolina Parks and Recreation has kept up with the recent digital trends. The parks and recreation departments are very active on social media. They have implemented virtual reality experiences for accessibility. For example, you can experience hiking at Table Rock to virtually explore the top of the mountain. You can also discover distinctive moments in nature, such as lily patches and lighthouses. Wi-Fi connectivity is available in most parks. Even though some visitors go to the park to disconnect or interact with groups, the parks leave disconnecting as a choice. The parks also offer digital scavenger hunts and tutorials on YouTube.



PARKS THROUGHOUT CONT'D



Campers Cabin

The parks love to partner with agencies locally and throughout the state. Some recent partnerships include the Boys and Girls Club, Outdoor Afro and libraries. Another unique offer of the parks is the Artist in Residence program. Artists can book a stay at a cabin in exchange for their art.

“The position of state director gave me the opportunity to see the state parks across the country. I am proud of the people who serve and the resources that are now available.”

McCormack wants the parks in South Carolina to be a highlight experience for people across the state and beyond. “People often think of Yellowstone Park as the ultimate park experience. I hope that the

unique features of our parks will continue to draw visitors as well.” He is proud of the enhancements made at local parks such as the Little Pee Dee State Park. He believes that the experience of this park would help change you for the better.

McCormack notes that there were recent upgrades to the campgrounds. He also expressed that the park villas are comparable to nice hotel stays. The cabins are available for seven-day rental. The Little Pee Dee State Park has a new camper cabin and full hook-up sites. In 2021 the park received a new paved road after damage due to Hurricane Matthew. There was also an addition of family playgrounds. The shelter for reunions and parties was also remodeled.

There is no need for concern for families who are just starting to explore park life. Park rangers are on staff to answer questions or concerns you may have. Fun to watch families who never experienced parks and recreation on that level. Paul expressed that the Little Pee Dee State Park is an excellent place to camp and encompasses a dynamic team. The current Park Manager is Michelle Cunningham. The cost for park entry varies from free to \$12/person. The Little Pee Dee State Park offers free admission.

In a world full of technology, experiencing the outdoors has often become a second choice to some. Parks across the state offer a perfect space to come together as families and communities. Many of the parks offer cabins, creating the ultimate getaway. Every experience is what you make it. Create your park experience with the right company or take the opportunity to experience nature alone. Whichever adventure you choose, answer nature’s call, and create the most memorable park experiences with South Carolina State Parks and Recreation.

OUTDOOR OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND IN SOUTH CAROLINA By Les Echols



Senator Mike Reichenbach and wife Charisse

South Carolina Senator and Entrepreneur Mike Reichenbach has become an individual who makes a difference not only in his community, but in the entire state of South Carolina. Reichenbach and his wife, Charisse, moved to Florence in 2008 to purchase a Ford dealership. “We’ve been blessed with a welcoming community and wonderful employees to where we now have three dealerships, including Ford, Lincoln, VW and Chevy brands,” exclaimed Reichenbach. In 2022, Reichenbach was elected the state senator for District 31 (Florence/Darlington Counties). Among many other things, Reichenbach is a strong advocate for SC7.

South Carolina SC7 is a partnership between two South Carolina based non-profit organizations, Global Eco Adventures and the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor. According to their website, the mission of SC7 is to get people outdoors so they gain an appreciation for the outdoors, and therefore begin to actively do their part to protect the outdoors.

“SC7 is important because it highlights one of the reasons South Carolina is so special: our geographic beauty and variety! Few states afford the opportunity to explore the seven geographic wonders unique to the Palmetto State. From the mountains of the Upstate to oceans of the Lowcountry and everywhere in between, SC7 allows people to see firsthand why South Carolina is often considered one of the most beautiful, scenic and diverse states in the nation when it comes to geographic offerings,” Reichenbach explained.

We asked Reichenbach how he became so involved in the message and vision of SC7. “Charisse and I were fortunate to participate in SC7 last year. After talking with several of the participants, we realized most have not experienced the beauty of the Florence County/Pee Dee Region. While hiking the Oconee Trail with Michelle McCollum, president and CEO of the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, I explained all the wonderful outdoor opportunities we have here, such as our kayaking, walking trails and mountain biking center. Being the relentless marketer, my wife occasionally accuses me of being, I think Michelle eventually gave in to bringing the SC7 expedition here so she wouldn’t have to push me down a trail to shut me up! What can I say, I’m unabashedly proud to be a Florentine and all we have to offer,” Reichenbach continued.

Reichenbach went on to explain that SC7 is so important because if South Carolinians don’t recognize, support and protect geographic treasures, they could end up being lost. “While our state has been blessed with growth and development, maintaining our natural assets is part of my responsibility as a state senator, someone who loves our community, region and state. SC7 presents the perfect opportunity to get a taste of our geographic variety and splendor. A special thank you goes to Tom Mullikin, the patriarch of SC7, Michelle from SCNHC and all the partners, participants, and sponsors for working together to protect South Carolina. Let us never forget how blessed we are to live in such a beautiful state, and give us the focus, strength and collaboration to protect her,” concluded Reichenbach.

LAKE CITY'S FIRST ANIME, GAMING AND ENTERTAINMENT CONVENTION

Submitted by Donna Tracy, public information officer



LAKE CITY— Kids of all ages are welcome this summer to the City of Lake City for the first ever Anime, Gaming and Entertainment Convention (A.G.E. Con); a brand-new, family-friendly convention that celebrates everything in the anime, gaming and entertainment world!

Presented by the City of Lake City, the idea for the A.G.E. Convention stems from the 2021 and 2022

Smackdown Tournaments that did well but didn't have much for the community beyond the participating players. These Esports events focused solely on esports tournaments where competitors from surrounding states traveled to Lake City to compete in games such as Super Smash Bros., Guilty Gear Strive and Tekken 7 for cash jackpots.

"We found that the players were excited and involved, but once their games were completed, they really didn't have much to keep them entertained," said Savon Whitehead, Esports and events coordinator for the city. "Additionally, the family members who came out to support the tournaments, had little to do when their loved ones were not playing."

"When people come to A.G.E. Con, we want them to have a great time and to stay and engage with each of our activities at the event. When you visit A.G.E. Con, we want you to come see something new and find something you may be interested in. There are a variety of entertainment options to explore and there will be something for everyone," said Whitehead.

"There is a demand for things for our youth to get involved in and participate in, in Lake City and this is an activity that we want to offer to everyone and get them involved," said City Administrator William A. Hall. "This genre allows for people of any age to participate regardless of their skill level."

"Esports is a growing industry that offers many career opportunities beyond tournament play," said Whitehead. "From streaming, to



Savon Whitehead, right, Esports and event coordinator for the City of Lake City, presents A.G.E. Con logo design competition winner Philip Jeffcoat with his award in February 2023. The logo competition launched A.G.E. Con, which will be held at the R.O.B. in Lake City, Aug. 18-19. The convention's acronym stands for Anime, Gaming, and Entertainment. (Photo credit to City of Lake City/ Donna Tracy & Jonathan Laster)

commentating, to programming, to coaching, to event management, we started Esports for those students who may not be interested in traditional sports and this convention is a natural expansion of our summer camps and earlier tournaments."

The two-day A.G.E. Con spans the genres of anime, gaming and pop culture with table-top games, a retro arcade, virtual reality experiences and industry panels as well as several gaming tournaments. Tickets are available on Eventbrite and begin at \$20 for one-day general admission. Kids ages 12 and under get in free! VIP packages are also available and include a free swag bag with a surprise gift for the first 200 tickets sold.

For more details about upcoming city events, visit the City of Lake City Facebook page or LakeCitySC.gov. Lake City is a community of 6,000-plus residents who invite you live – work – play – and visit in the southern part of Florence County.

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COMMUNITIES COMING TOGETHER AS ONE By Jennifer Robinson



Trey Nickelson

The communities in which we live are rich in resources. Many of these resources were created to assist in growth and unification. Parks and recreation facilities can be underutilized resources because people are not aware of all their benefits. They have social impact; environmental and health benefits and they provide economic value. To help parks and recreation thrive, people must use them so they will not become devalued or eventually obsolete. To help keep people engaged with the parks, having frequent events to entertain and appeal to all backgrounds helps



we all need to be outside spending time with our family and friends. The awesome benefit is FREE, the gospel music, great and so is the fellowship.”

retain recreational usage.

One of the parks in the Florence community that provides entertainment is Brooks McCall Park located at 2001 Mechanicsville Rd, Florence. The park has picnic areas for family events, playground equipment and activities for kids, a very nice, rubberized walking path, and an amphitheater to hold performances. Do you want to find the best trails in Brooks-McCall Park for an adventurous hike or a family trip? All trails have one great trail for hiking and more. Enjoy hand-curated trail maps, along with reviews and photos from nature lovers like yourself. A popular event held every month is the Gospel Music Live Concert Series hosted by radio personality Trey Nickelson. Nickelson is a radio DJ from 98.5 and knows the power of bringing

The need for events like these is important because communities need to build comradery. It's a way for people to get to know each other and discover common interests. Our youth have opportunities to know the history of the area where they reside. They need to hear the stories and engage in the activities. Parks and recreations are breeding grounds for our future leaders. Children begin to form these relationships by learning how to play on the grounds with other people from other races and cultures. Those relationships grow over time with continued attendance to the parks. After developing those relationships, the children turn into adults whose families can also grow together. That is how communities thrive. And with events that keep people interested in frequenting the parks, it helps them to remain staples in our towns and cities.



Brooks-McCall Park

people together. As an on-air personality for the past sixteen years, he has been afforded the opportunity to see one of his dreams come true. He considers it a joy that he's a part of Glory 98.5 FM & 540 AM on air staff and thanks God each and every day for an opportunity to share in his music ministry. Nickelson knows the impact of social gatherings and how people enjoy being together in celebration of common interests. “The main goal of this Gospel Music Series is the community coming together as one with gospel music. Each month we have church come out to render Praise & Worship and pray. We also feature local artists at the park from 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.,” Nickelson stated. The series has upcoming dates of July 23 and August 27, 2023. Families are welcome to visit the park to have their own gatherings, but the Parks and

Recreation Department allows this special event to happen to keep the community engaged and help it to grow. If the park is thriving, so is the community.

For some, this time is important because their belief system is a part of building families. To make it more appealing to the community, Nickelson emphasizes, “The performance is a live FREE concert series. If the weather is warm and if there is no threat of inclement weather,

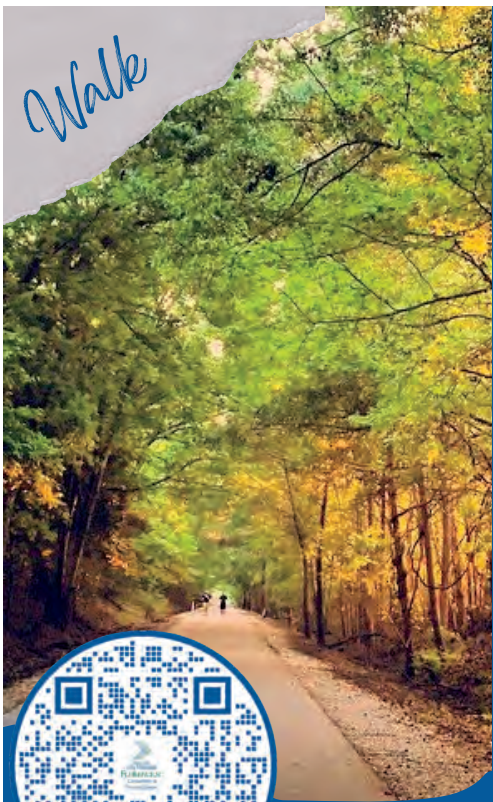


Kids playing in the park

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SUMMER ACTIVITIES AT YOUR BACK DOOR Submitted by FCVB

It's a typical, warm South Carolina summer day here in Florence. You're wondering what type of activities you can find to keep yourself, and maybe the kids, busy. The Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau is here to help!



The first thing is to get moving. The Florence Trail System is made up of a series of connections that link more than 40 miles of trails together throughout the city. The Trail System connects parks, cultural features, and historical sites. You can start your hike at the Freedom Florence Recreational Complex and connect to the Florence Stockade and National Cemetery Trails. Take advantage of the shade and enjoy all the nature surrounding you. Strollers and bikes are welcome, just be courteous to walkers and enjoy.

Don't kick off your bike or running shoes just yet! Instead, explore the High Hill Creek Bike & Run Park. This 4-mile trail runs along

I-95 and is located at the end of Prosperity Way, surrounding the Florence City Fire Training Facility, off Mechanicsville Road. The High Hill Creek Bike & Run Park is intended for beginner to intermediate mountain bike riders but provides good riding experience regardless of skill level. The average time to complete the trail is 32 minutes.

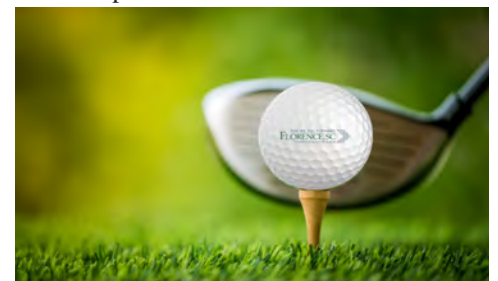
Now that you've worked up an appetite, it's time to visit one of the local eateries on the SC Pecan Trail to fuel back up. With over 20 stops on the trail, there's something for everyone! We also have a full dining guide on our website at visitflo.com/dining.



After your midday break, there are still tons of options. Brave enough to take on the summer sun? Grab your sunscreen and head over to Lynchess River County Park for a paddle excursion down the river. If you want to stay



dry, the Environmental Discovery Center offers an ever-changing learning experience with live animals and all! The swinging treetop canopy walk is a must when you visit. Located right behind the Environmental Discovery Center, it offers a beautiful, panoramic view of the 676-acre park.



FORE! With two public courses in Florence, grab a friend and spend some time on the green. The Olde English Trail Golf Club is located at 3540 Shadow Creek Dr and Traces

SUMMER ACTIVITIES CONT'D

Golf Club is located at 4322 Southborough Rd. How about disc golf? Florence County Parks & Recreation has a 9-hole course at Mars Bluff Community Park. For more recreation opportunities such as tennis, baseball or pickleball, check out both the City and County recreation programs.



Combining art and activity, the Alex Palkovich Sculpture Trail provides a scenic walk while viewing the art of sculpture. Alex Palkovich's works of art can be found across South Carolina, with the greatest concentration at Florence Veterans Park. In total, you will find 20 of his sculptures and busts in Florence County. Three of the sculptures are in Lake City, South Carolina which takes about 20 minutes to get there from the heart of Florence.

While exploring Lake City, check out the Lake City Community Park featuring an 8-acre lake with a boardwalk, five fishing piers, a canoe/kayak launch, a shaded gazebo, a picnic shelter with a wood-burning fireplace and restrooms. Grills and picnic tables can be found throughout the park, as well as magnificent views of trees, flowers and wildlife.

Scout back to Florence in the evening to catch America's favorite pastime on display and root for the home team at a Flamingos baseball game. The Florence Flamingos baseball team participates in the Coastal Plain League. Comprised of 15 teams, this summer collegiate wooden bat league features lots of team interaction, field games with audience participants, delicious hot boiled peanuts and ice-cold beer and souvenirs.

The Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau loves helping you plan for your activities in Florence, South Carolina. If you have a group coming to town or any visitors, send them to the Florence Visitors Center at 3290 W. Radio Drive, to grab a complimentary visitors guide and other information about the area. To keep up to date on the most current events, check out visitflo.com/events.

RECREATION AND OUTDOOR SPACES A BENEFIT TO OUR WELLBEING By Les Echols



Nathan Dawsey
(Photo credit Morning News)

Nathan Dawsey is the director of Florence County Parks and Recreation, overseeing the day-to-day operations and management of recreational facilities and programs in Florence County. He has been working locally for seven years, but his career path took him through various experiences before settling in Florence.

Dawsey attended Coastal Carolina University and initially aspired to work in professional sports. He got the opportunity to work for the Pittsburgh Pirates right after college, but found it wasn't quite what he expected, and he desired to be closer to his hometown and family. Subsequently, he worked for the Kiawah Island Club in Charleston for 10 years. However, as he and his wife were looking to establish roots and be nearer to their family, they decided to make the move to Florence, which turned out to be a positive decision for them.

Dawsey highlighted the heightened importance of recreation and outdoor spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasized that people realized they had taken these aspects for granted. Recreation provides not only physical health benefits but also mental and social benefits through various programming, including youth, adult and senior activities. Additionally, Dawsey mentioned that the economic impact of recreation is often underestimated. He specifically mentioned the significant economic impact of hosting esports events, which brought close to \$750,000 in just two years.

Dawsey further discussed the growth of overnight accommodations during the pandemic and the opportunity they identified to meet the need for outdoor recreation opportunities such as equestrian facilities in Florence. "We realized that there was a real opportunity there to address a need within Florence because there's not a public space to do so. There are, I believe, somewhere close to 80,000 horses in the

state of South Carolina, and in this state alone, it was like a \$1.9 billion industry. We investigated a little bit further, probably about a year and a half ago, myself and Jennifer Majors, who's the park superintendent at Lynchess River County Park, and she told me that it was discussed several years back, but it never got off the ground. So, we said, how about this? Let's take our existing campground, which is relatively small, and it was only 13 sites at the time, and we said we want to transform that one specifically for our equestrian visitors," Dawsey continued.

They will add horse corrals to each site, along with water and electricity connections. Additionally, they are building a new campground within the park, dividing the front area for education-focused facilities such as the Environmental Discovery Center and the back area for recreational amenities like the climbing wall and splash pad.

Dawsey expressed gratitude for his exceptional team, emphasizing that none of their achievements would be possible without their hard work. He acknowledged their efforts in organizing various activities throughout the year and commended them for doing an excellent job.

Dawsey is originally from Lexington, South Carolina, and spent 10 years working in Charleston. He moved to Lake City, his wife's hometown, where they are currently raising their two daughters, ages two and five.



**Florence County
Parks & Recreation**
Creating Community!



ORGAIN THE ARTIST By Cynthia Ford



Nanalee Orgain

MULLINS-The expression of art has a way of taking you on a journey into realms of beauty and connectivity. Artists have the ability to create masterpieces from an open space. Art is everywhere. Art is interwoven in nature. It's in the sun rising over mountains in deep blue skies. It's in the calming rivers that spill over into the ocean. Art is the silent wave of trees as the wind breezes by. It is open fields that hide

the smallest crawling creatures and the distinctive features of human beings.

What makes the art world even more fascinating are the artists who have the gift to duplicate what they see in art form. Whether sculpting, sketching or painting, the ability to craft any piece of art from nothing is a skill worth applauding. Discovering an artist is not delayed until the teen or adult years. The seed of artistry is often planted in the early years of life. It is essential to cultivate artists as early as possible, and the skill of artistry will be with them as they go. That is what happened to Creative and Visual artist Nanalee Orgain.



A Mother's Heart

A recent interview was conducted with Orgain to highlight her as an artist and to present her experiences and sentiments about art. Orgain thrives as an artist in Mullins, SC. She creates multiple art forms, including painting, sketching and woodwork. Orgain's earliest memory of creating artwork was in kindergarten. She recalls that her teacher put her in the art section and asked her to draw on an easel. Orgain recalls drawing a house. It wasn't until high school that she began to have a more profound interest in art. She described this interest as a passion and a curiosity, and recalls winning an art scholarship in high school. During her senior year, she began to lose her passion for art because of the loss of her mother and life's circumstances. Her art skill was cultivated even more through the guidance of her art teacher, Ms. Fairchild.



Gogo Zulu term for grandmother

There is no particular artist that Orgain has studied in depth, but appreciates the work of many fellow artists. One piece of art



Weaned From The Breast Psalms 131

that intrigued her during her earlier years, was created by artist Ernie Barnes. Barnes painted an exquisite piece of art called, "The Sugar Shack," that was featured in the sitcom, "Good Times." Orgain also began exploring the works of Leroy Campbell, Natalie Daise and Frank Morrison.

Art has been a companion with Orgain throughout her life. To Orgain, it is therapeutic and an outlet for traumatic moments. Orgain expressed that art is a reference to what is not spoken by words but expressed through art. Every piece of art has a story. Each movement of the art utensil helps to connect the story of each art piece.

Orgain's mother, Bessie Weeks Orgain, passed while she was in high school, and she was one of Orgain's most prominent supporters and cheerleaders for art. Orgain still has her high school painting for which she won the scholarship. She holds this piece dear, as it was the last of her paintings that her mother saw before she passed. Orgain describes herself as an artist in multiple forms: visual arts, writing songs, spoken word, poetry, writing short skits, creating writing and singing.

One of her favorite pieces of her artwork is a painting of an African grandmother, GoGo. In Zulu, GoGo means grandmother. A bishop conducted a mission trip to Africa, and the photographer snapped a photo of the bishop while the grandmother stood near in the background. Orgain requested permission to recapture the image in the form of a painting. The picture of the grandmother was perfectly crafted and depicted with deep expression and intense emotion. That particular piece holds such significant value. The wooden frame surrounding the portrait was retrieved from an old slave house, noting the wood to be over 100 years old.

Art is a broad scalable career. Orgain has taken her passion and skill for art and begun sharing those abilities on another level. Parting with original pieces of art is one part of art that Orgain does not wish to do. Instead, Orgain would recreate the requested piece, hoping to create it just like the original. A personal and professional shift has led Orgain to establish a business, Art 2 Draw. She now hosts paint parties, sells artwork pieces and offers artist therapy through partnerships.



The Sacrifice

Over the years, Orgain has learned to be open to various levels of art and be in the space to hear about opportunities for growth. Orgain hopes to be an inspiration for artists to come. She leaves the following advice for upcoming artists:

- Protect what you have, and make sure you pray about what you do.
- Preserve your energy; it is a gift.
- You can only be creative when you release in your spirit.
- You must be in a place where you can focus.

Orgain dispels the myth that artists should be able to create anything anytime. The ability to create a visual may come naturally. However, a true artist prefers to be connected to and proud of their

ORGAIN CONT'D



The PLIGHT of the Black Man

“Your life is a purpose.”

Orgain hopes that those who interact with her leave a little better. She believes that it is never too early to begin your journey as an artist. She encourages young artists to start building a portfolio now.

Orgain remains visible in the community of Mullins and has served as a featured artist for Juneteenth Mullins. She also shared her artwork with local businesses, such as a local salon. As a result, many people began purchasing from her through word of mouth. Orgain’s artwork is featured in places as far away as Indiana and Africa.

Orgain dedicated this interview to her parents, Bessie Weeks Orgain and Willie Lee Orgain. “My mother was my cheerleader and drive, and my dad introduced me to other fields of art, such as woodwork.” Orgain notes that her father shared stories with her about his mother’s skill of woodwork, which led to his passion for woodwork. Orgain beams at the fact that her father held on to several pieces of her artwork for many years. “I wouldn’t be the artist I am today without

work, even if designed for someone else. True art takes time.

Orgain hopes to own a studio one day to continue selling artwork and hosting art events. “I’m passionate about what I do and love seeing others evolve.”

She loves seeing clients’ reactions when they finish paintings during paint parties. She notes that their expressions make her smile. Orgain believes in the concept of living, laughing and loving on purpose.



The Decons Prayer

them.” If you wish to contact Orgain for consultation or to book her services, send an email to 42norg@gmail.com.

Celebration is owed to artists such as Orgain. She thrives in every aspect of art that she operates in. Through art, Orgain believes she is operating in one of her purposes in life. She is fulfilled seeing others happy and delighted to see them thrive. We salute artist thriving in their purpose and budding artist waiting to be cultivated. Set no limitations to where the field of art will take you.



A SINGER AND ARTIST IMPACTING THE LIVES OF OTHERS By Jennifer Robinson



Pastor Eartha Edwards

now host concerts to showcase and pay homage to gospel artists.

Pastor Eartha Edwards has been following the gospel music genre since she was a child. As an eleven-year-old she led her first song at Pentecostal Assembly of the World Convention. The congregation was captivated by her powerful voice. It was at that moment she realized that God had graced her with a gift. It became her desire to use her God given gift to uplift others. Gospel music is Edwards’ heritage. It’s what she has known and loved all her life. Her strict Christian background made gospel music the ruling genre in her home. She and her siblings grew up listening to powerful legends such as Andrea Crouch, Hawkins family, Winans family, James Cleveland

Gospel music is inspirational and healing. The lyrics to the old hymn, “Lift Him Up,” shares about reaching people through the good news which is gospel. “Gospel derives from at least three distinct cultural traditions. A well-known variation of gospel is traditional Black gospel, which arose out of the traditions of spirituals and blues. Concurrently southern gospel evolved from hymns, originally as small family groups of white evangelical Protestants and later as quartets. Both traditional Black gospel and southern gospel emphasize the vocals, which may be either exuberant or mournful with themes of praise or repentance (rateyourmusic.com). It is universal and people from Korea to Australia

and Shirley Caesar. She has vowed to continue using her gift to serve people and spread the good news of her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Edwards’ music is showcased in Africa, China, Jamaica, London, the Dominican Republic and across America. Her first television appearance was June 2, 2023, on the largest television station covering Augusta, GA, (WIN) Club 36 WBPI TV 49. The 2023 Stellar Awards weekend live in Las Vegas has invited Edwards to perform on stage at Urban Soul Café, July 15, 2023, with several gospel and secular entertainers. The 54th GMA Dove Awards also has invited Edwards to sing at their Pre-Dove show October 16, 2023, in Nashville, TN.

Edwards says her art is to uplift the community and unify people. She also stated through her journey of singing, many have left with renewed hope. Therefore, she can see singing as a vital role in the world. It has afforded her increased opportunities to impact people from all walks of life. Many have attended her concerts seemingly down but have shared they were uplifted at the end. This shows the power of music. Edwards believes that taking her art outside the walls of the church is part of her mission. This outreach effort has led her to perform at Mission Mullins Gospel Concert, Kings Court Homeless Shelter Concert, Trey Nickelson Gospel Live Community Concert and many others. All her performances were done in efforts of bringing the message of hope and impacts all walks of life. Music moves and brightens things that may otherwise be dark in the world today. People like Edwards make this world a better place as she reaches the masses through gospel singing.



Pastor Eartha Edwards speaking

FLORENCE 1 CENTER FOR THE ARTS MAGNET PROGRAM

Submitted by Amber Harrar, visual arts instructor

The South Florence High School Visual Arts program offers classes in a wide variety of visual arts covering 2-D, 3-D and digital artmaking. In each course, students will be exposed to a variety of art-making practices and techniques, as well as the historical and cultural impacts art has on life. Courses include Art 1-4, AP Studio, 3D Design 1&2 and Media Arts 1&2.

Upon acceptance, FICA students will have additional requirements above and beyond the base requirements for their art classes. These requirements include:

- Active NAHS membership
- One art competition submission per semester
- One art gallery or museum visit per semester
- Attendance at two SFHS Fine Arts events per semester
- Research Project - assigned in enrolled art class.

Audition Requirements for Visual Arts

• Students must complete a portfolio including four artworks: a still-life, landscape, portrait and a free-choice piece. Anime is not an acceptable form of art to be submitted for ANY of the categories. The work must be current from the most recent school year.

• Students are required to bring the complete portfolio to the interview.

• Interviews will be scheduled upon completion of the FICA application.

Contact Amber Harrar with any questions about the Visual Art Program at aharrar@fsd1.org. All students below are a part of the Florence 1 Center for the Arts Magnet Program.

Jacqueline Uscanga (11th Grade)



*Jacqueline Uscanga
(11th Grade)*



Jacqueline Uscanga- Artwork 1&2



I am a native to Florence, South Carolina. I attend South Florence High School and will be a senior next year. I am a self-taught artist and I have been creating art for around four or five years. I mostly specialize in painting, acrylic, gouache and watercolor. The main subject matter of most of my artworks tend to be women and flowers. Although I use very delicate and feminine subjects in my artworks, I use them as leverages to hint at darker themes such as face dysmorphia and codependent relationships.

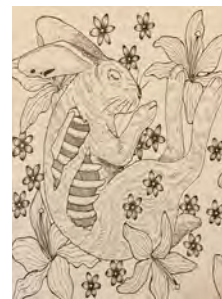
Yulia Prokofyeva (10th Grade)



*Yulia Prokofyeva
(10th Grade)*



Yulia Prokofyeva Artwork 1&2

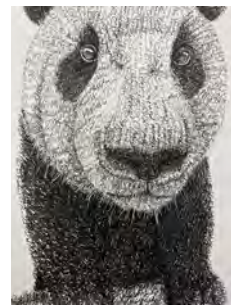


I was born in Russia and lived there for most of my childhood. A few years ago I moved to the U.S. with my parents. Since then, I went to South Florence High School, and I will be in the 11th grade next year. I love doing art and am very happy with the opportunities to take advanced classes in this field.

Liliana Gonzalez (9th Grade)



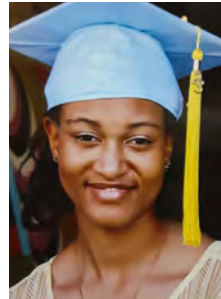
*Liliana Gonzalez
(9th Grade)*



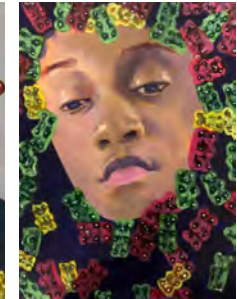
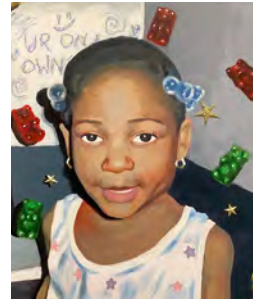
Liliana Gonzalez- Artwork 1&2

I am a 15-year-old artist from Effingham, South Carolina and I attend South Florence High School where I will be in 10th grade in the 2023-2024 school year. I discovered my passion for art during the Covid-19 pandemic. My first medium was acrylic paint, then colored pencils, ink, watercolors and alcohol markers. I am Mexican American and very proud of my cultural heritage. I show this pride in my art by showcasing how beautiful Mexican culture is. I hope to share my culture as well as my own personal identity.

An'Gela Greene (12th Grade)



*An'Gela Greene
(12th Grade)*



An'Gela Greene- Artwork 1&2

My name is An'Gela Greene and I just graduated from South Florence High School. I'm an 18-year-old still trying to find her place in the world. I'm also learning daily who I am (what makes me passionate, what I fear, what I love and more). But one thing is clear as day: the artworks that I create. Through it, I learn more about myself as well as grow from this talent of mine. My artworks tend to show more than what meets the eye. Like, for instance, relating emotions with colors or repetition of important symbolism. In the end it's the viewer's interpretation of the piece. At the end of the day, I'm still a young adult who doesn't have her whole life figured out, which I've learned is completely okay. But one thing is for sure: I'll let my creativity lead the way.



DALVIN SPANN CREATES ART THROUGH THE LENS OF HIS CAMERA

By Glaciera Brown Mason



Artist Dalvin Spann sits among a sampling of his work.

COLUMBIA - A familiar idiom says, ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder,’ meaning that people, from all levels of society, have different ideas about what is beautiful.

A good artist has a particular eye and vision. As we observe Artist Appreciation Month during this third quarter edition, Diversity Works spotlights Photographer Dalvin Spann, among the southern American artists celebrated for their incredible work.

As a visual artist, Spann, the youngest of two, is a proud son, brother, husband and father to four. He grew up in a family of artists and creators, in Columbia, SC, where sharing artistic energy, creating and bouncing ideas among family members was commonplace. With such a powerful lineage and connection, it is no wonder that his artistic exposure has guided his career path.

A graduate of one of the top ranked art schools in the U.S., the Savannah College of Art and Design, in Savannah, GA, Spann has always been interested in art. He began drawing at an early age and excelled in the arts. Spann shared that his focus and path became clear and serious in sixth grade, when an art teacher pulled him aside after seeing his work and told him that he saw something in him. Spann says, “I never thought of doing anything else. I love what I do.”



Like most serious professionals, Spann’s creative process starts with thinking, planning, extensive research, study, looking at fabric samples and textures, landscapes for outdoor shoots, preliminary imagery, image boards and natural storyboards, energy to feel, collaborative efforts with people, concepts, ideas and exchange of feedback and comfortability to get the best results.

On finding inspiration, Spann says, “We are all born with a gift from God, and we do a disservice if we don’t utilize what we’ve been given.” His

inspiration is paying respect to the Most High, by creating and waking up every day, to bring life and tell a story through his art.

When words fail, art stands in the gap. Spann’s specific and unique manipulation of light in monochrome (black and white) photography is distinct and purposeful. His use of subjects is stunning, creating a plethora of beautifully captured photos to be enjoyed by artists and art enthusiasts alike. While monochrome is his preference, his use of color images is as striking, in his selection of clothing, colors and backdrops, all combined, add to the wonderful imagery of his portfolio. The stories and inspirations behind each photo are as interesting and impressive as the artist and his subjects.

When asked if creative artistry is innate within people or if it can be taught, Spann shared his view that, “We all have it in us. Everyone has the ability in our unique way. Art connects with your inner you. Your emotions show in the way you lay your work on paper. People are creators, and we all have our own energy, our own force.”

Spann is the founder of Izms of Art which he began in 2007. He is a current board member, in his second term on the Columbia Design League at the Columbia Art Museum and has previously served on the boards of One Columbia Board – Columbia Design League Board, Main Street Merchants Board - First Thursday Board and the Columbia Art Commission. Spann’s work has appeared at the Francis Marion University Gately Gallery (Florence, SC), the Columbia Museum of Art, Hotel Trundle’s photography installation, the Smithsonian Institution’s Traveling Exhibition, “Crossroads: Change in Rural America,” 701 Whaley (Columbia, SC), Humanitree House Art Gallery (Augusta, GA), Gallery EAV (Atlanta, GA), Gallery West (West Columbia, SC) and the ARTisan Cafe (Richmond, VA).



Some of the changes and challenges Spann has experienced are balancing the creativity of his work versus the advertising and marketing aspect of the business. Additionally, Spann finds it challenging to show his work in the most appropriate places, places that appreciate the artistic process and the storytelling he tries to relay in his work.

Spann’s career began during the era where, if you created good work, you would be seen. Today, the new focus is on self-promotion. A huge change in the industry is the technology in digital cameras and video recorders. When Spann started, film development in dark rooms, was a process that took a lot of time; but now with digital photography, more people are doing more, in less time.

Finally, Spann shared that the best part of his creative process is love. He shared that, in the beginning, to visualize something, a concept comes to him, often, in his sleep. “In the end, to be able to see that vision and nail the concept in your head, and it turns out better than you envisioned, that’s important!” For outside people, it’s cool, said Spann, “but for an artist, you have an itch to keep perfecting your vision, seeing it all come to life, in the end.”

For additional information about future showings, contact Photographer Dalvin Spann at info@izmsofart.com.



Explore Art Year-Round in Lake City, SC

**crossroads
gallery**



TRAX ART CENTER
VISUAL



Dreamscapes | Bree Stallings

Bree Stallings is North Carolina-native multi-media artist, illustrator, writer, and activist. During a residency in Ireland, she was interested in creating “dreamscapes”, landscape paintings of places that don’t quite exist – vivid, soft, multi-layered, and safe. The subjects of her work represent ways that humans interact with the supernatural: through nature, superstition, and prayer.

SMOKE HOUSE | Cedric Umoja

Cedric Umoja is a Columbia, SC based multidisciplinary artist who seeks to enact alchemical change through the use of letter forms, found materials and archetypal totems. He explores the traditions, practices, rituals, and ideas centered around the SMOKE HOUSE. A symbol of preservation & protection amongst those who lived in rural communities, as a means of sustaining history, family, and self.



Lou Haney - Presented in Technicolor

Lou Haney is a Charlottesville, VA artist who creates paintings of domestic spaces that employ nostalgia as a means of temporary escape from the corrupt and chaotic realities of present-day life. Using oil, acrylic, fiber art, & mixed media, she explores themes of memory, yearning, and femininity to evoke tension between fantasy and reality. Haney’s work incorporates floral imagery, pattern, and decoration.

Visit TRAX Visual Art Center, Jones-Carter Gallery, and Crossroads Gallery each week Tuesday - Saturday from 11AM - 5PM.

artfieldssc.org | 843-374-0180 | info@artfieldssc.org

Grand Prize: Amira Hanafi



A visitor interacts with Mexicans in Canada by Amira Hanafi

SURFSIDE BEACH-Amira Hanafi is a poet and artist working with language as a material. Their work has been shown in online and offline exhibitions in cities around the world, and their texts have been published in “Matrix, Makhzin, Fence, Ibraaz, American Letters & Commentary and Index on Censorship,” among other publications. She is the author of the books “Forgery” (Green Lantern Press) and “Minced English,” a number of limited-edition artist’s books, and several works of electronic literature, including as part of the award-winning transdisciplinary project, “A Dictionary of the Revolution.” Hanafi teaches as writer in residence at Coastal Carolina University.

Artist Website- [HTTPS://AMIRAHANAFI.COM](https://amirahanafi.com)

ARTIST STATEMENT

Can text in digital space take us everywhere on the human map? This digital poem re-assembles a sentence spoken by Gabriel Iglesias on the documentary, “Inside Jokes” (2018) — “And the next thing you know, there’s Mexicans in Canada.” The poem moves its reader across the world, through countries and territories, among its citizens, crossing borders. Nations and their demonymic forms are collected from Wikipedia. The script is written in [p5.js](#).

Second Place - Kristen Tordella Williams



40 Burnt Books by Kristen Tordella Williams

OPELIKA, AL-Kristen Tordella-Williams is a contemporary carpetbagger who was raised in Massachusetts, lived and worked in Jackson, Mississippi for seven years and now lives in Opelika, Alabama. Her research focuses on the impact the past has on our present through labor both personal and communal. She re-interprets materials commonly found in recycling bins, hardware stores, visual archives, and

nature as remnants of our labor and explores issues of social justice, identity, gender, and memory manifest in these works. Kristen has exhibited nationally and internationally, most recently in a villa in Berlin, Germany. She has been an artist in residence at Salem Art Works, the Ateliers im Alten Schlachthof, and the TIDES Institute. Kristen is the President of the Mid-South Sculpture Alliance and an Assistant Professor of Sculpture at Auburn University.

Artist Website- KRISTENTORDELLAWILLIAMS.ART

ARTIST STATEMENT

Forty burnt books are presented on custom-made steel brackets jutting out from the wall at an angle similar to lecterns or rare book displays. They represent today’s undervaluing of education, the shift from analog to digital technologies, the fraught contextualization of our histories, and the destruction of knowledge. The tattered and charred pages are a visual representation of years of violence that are invisible but nevertheless have real consequences to our communities and our children’s futures. “40 Burnt Books” references the advent of the internet and the reduced reliance on books to transmit knowledge, for good or ill. Burning books is equivalent to censorship and a fear of spreading knowledge. One only burns or bans a book if the content is so offensive or dangerous to those in power. These books were already destined for the landfill, but now act as physical representations of censorship, historical wrongs, and ephemeral violence made real.

People’s Choice 2D - Stephanie Glen

JACKSONVILLE, FL-Stephanie Glen is an artist who works mainly with one line pen and ink. Her drawings incorporate mathematical elements



One Line Street by Stephanie Glen

into the fabric of every portrait. She considers mathematical chaos to be the fundamental building block of not only her own work, but that of all human experience.

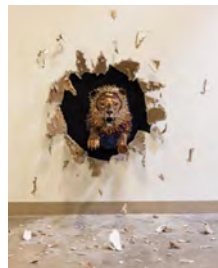
Ever since she taught college mathematics, Glen has been fascinated with the geometry of nature and how mathematical algorithms can create order where seemingly there is none. What started out as mathematical contemplation led to the development of her one-line drawings, which are based on unsolved mathematical problems.

Stephanie Glen lives and works in Jacksonville, Florida, where she is a resident artist at CoRK Arts District.

ARTIST STATEMENT

One Line Street is an ink drawing composed of one continuous line that never crosses its own path. The drawing of visual artist Overstreet “Street” Ducasse is first in the Pandemic series, which depicts ordinary people during the pandemic. Overstreet, like many visual artists, was hit hard by the pandemic. The T-shirt he is wearing, “DEEPpression,” represents his work as an artist and a sign of the times. His neutral expression is a moment in time: the days following the onset of the pandemic and the premature closure of his solo show at the Cummer Museum in Jacksonville. Behind that neutral expression is all of the complexities and worries brought on by Covid and that is reflected by my choice of the one line abstraction; At first glance, the portrait appears to be a simple sketch, but draw closer -- or look within -- and the work appears as though it is a random squiggles, which represents the complex inner workings of the human mind -- or a mathematical problem.

People’s Choice 3D - Aiden Dale



Lion Jumping Through A Wall by Aiden Dale

DURHAM, NC-I am a metal sculptor based in Durham, NC, where I maintain a studio dedicated to my craft.

My work is focused on translating poignant moments, living beings and organic forms into metal. The resulting sculptures represent my attempt to understand and celebrate the mysteries and complexities of our world. I use heat patinas to create brightly colored forms that mimic the fluid movement we see in the natural world.

My art is informed by my interdisciplinary arts education. At Hampshire College I combined techniques across metal sculpture, woodworking, bookbinding, printmaking, portrait art and jewelry-making to create life-scale immersive installation work. Though I now work primarily in metal, I retain an interest in creating arresting environments that transport the audience.

My work can be seen in many galleries around the U.S. and can be found in private homes and businesses all around the world.

Artist Website- WWW.AIDENDALE.COM

ARTIST STATEMENT

When motion is inherent a story is unfolding. Rather than control a narrative, I invite the audience into a plot already in motion. The audience walks into the story without context, just as we encounter the complexity of our world. Is the lion a wild animal caught in the snare of the encroaching human civilization? Is it a symbol of masculinity, performing its identity with fragile bravado? Is it the desire for life itself that ripples through us all? This piece seeks to disrupt the gaze of the viewer, inviting the audience to question the projections that narrow our understanding of the world. I strive to render realism within the rigidity of stainless steel. All colors are achieved through heat, drawing forth a latent potential within the metal and transforming it into a new form that will never discolor. The transformed metal carries the complex weight of a creature that is both real and mythologized, its intrinsic power magnified by our projections and also endangered by them.

A COMPOSER'S MUSIC, UNITING PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE By Jennifer Robinson



Marty Gamble

Music is a unifier - no matter the genre, music brings people together. It can be heard from the most elegant events like galas and cotillions to the most grounded ones like cookouts and picnics. No matter the event, the art of music connects people. The impact of Black music on the world connects people from all backgrounds and all nations. One local music influencer who believes music is a conduit is Marty Gamble.

Most would say the foundation of Black music is gospel. Gospel's origin began during slavery when slaves would create sounds of faith to produce strength. Those songs were the language used by slaves to warn others of anticipated danger from their slave owners. Gospel music was appreciated during the early eras as African Americans fought for equality, just as it is appreciated today. During the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s, Black musicians, like Thomas Dorsey and Mahalia Jackson, were called upon to compose and sing songs that expressed the struggles many of the civil rights leaders like the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had to fight. Today, gospel influencers like Mary Mary, Fred Hammond, LeAndria Johnson, Israel Houghton and countless others continue to spread the good news by using their gifted voices.

Gamble is a music teacher/director in the Hartsville School District

who shares his beautiful voice with others. He began performing at the age of 10. In 2013, he used his influence and implemented his vision by bringing together a vocal ensemble which he called the Voices of Chronicles. The mission of the ministry of Marty Gamble & Voices of Chronicles is rooted in David's words to the chief of the Levites to "appoint their brethren to be singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy" (1 Chronicles 15:16).

The vision of Gamble's ministry is to accept everything God has given them to glorify Him. "We will collectively and individually exalt the Lord with gladness through integrity, accountability, responsibility and transparency of the living word," said Gamble. "We will remain obedient to his calling."

Kirk Franklin is Gamble's favorite artist because he is simply not afraid to be authentically himself as he creatively stretches the traditional sound of Gospel music to a contemporary style to help reach the masses and future generations. "Mr. Franklin's influence and impact allow him to be open-minded," Gamble stated, which is important since he thinks music should include everyone.

Therefore, Gamble's music is "all inclusive" and "unites folks no matter what they are going through, no matter the color of their skin or their socioeconomic status. It is a universal love song in any language."

Gamble began to compose because he feels something is, "missing from music today." He has composed about ten songs that he hopes to record in the near future.

FRAA ANNOUNCES 2023 BETTY ANN DARBY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS Submitted by the FRAA

The Florence Regional Arts Alliance awarded three Florence County high school students the Betty Ann Darby Scholarship, a competitive scholarship for graduating seniors who will be pursuing advanced academic or professional degrees in an arts discipline or in arts education.



Kalen Emanuelli

This year's recipients are Kalen Emanuelli, Adelaide Sprawls and Vanessa Sharper. All 2023 graduates from South Florence High School.

Kalen Emanuelli plans to attend Maryland Institute of College of Art and major in illustration. Emanuelli said that she began art in eighth grade when her local high school (South Florence) initiated a new art management program. She placed in ART three honors in her freshman year of high school. During high school Emanuelli served as secretary for the National Arts Society and won several accolades

including the highest grade of five awarded by the AP Council Board for her 2D art portfolio.

"I am looking forward to continuing to develop my art skills to explore what I can create in the future," Emanuelli said.

In the fall, Adelaide Sprawls plans to attend Winthrop University to major in theater and performance. Sprawls initially began performing in elementary school. Since then, she has performed in productions of Florence Little Theatre's, "The King and I, The Music Man, Aladdin Jr., West Side Story, Frozen Jr., Matilda the Musical and Guys and Dolls."



Adelaide Sprawls

"My goal is to become a successful actress for film and the screen. I am excited to put myself out there and take on any opportunities I come across," Sprawls said. "I hope to be an influence to those around the world that watch media on all platforms. With the education I will be receiving at Winthrop University, I will be able to further establish my abilities in the arts, promoting my talent and allowing myself to fulfill the responsibilities that will lead me to accomplishing my goals."

Vanessa Sharper states, "I am on the Autism Spectrum. Growing up,



Vanessa Sharper

I felt so isolated and alone. The one thing that first brought me comfort, however, was art. I loved drawing, and in every artist's journey, there is a point where you recognize your art isn't as good as you'd like it to be so, you do what you can to improve."

Throughout Sharper's entire school career, she has been in an art class. "It's thanks to these art classes that I grew an adoration for painting. I started taking commissions and doing artwork for people in middle school and I still do it to today." Sharper continues, "Art took over my life to the point where I don't want to live without it." As she pursues a degree in painting at Savannah School of the Arts, Sharper said, "It is for this reason that I have decided to go for a major in painting. Painting gives me the ability to be as free as I want. By majoring in painting, I am confident that I will be able to create the ideas and experiences that other people have had. That thought is really exciting to me."

Since 1997, the Florence Regional Arts Alliance has awarded 52 Florence County students with the Betty Ann Darby Scholarship.

The Betty Ann Darby Scholarship Program is named in honor of one of South Carolina's most distinguished music educators. A former member of the South Carolina Music Educator's Hall of Fame, Ms. Darby served Florence Public School District One for 39 years as a much beloved and highly revered music administrator and music teacher.

To be considered for the scholarship, seniors' primary residence must be in Florence County or graduating from a Florence County public or private high school.

The Betty Ann Darby Scholarships are merit scholarships awarded predominantly on the basis of demonstrated talent, passion for the arts and intention to pursue a career in an arts discipline or in arts education. They are made possible by the generous support of HONDA to the Florence Regional Arts Alliance.

For more information on this program, visit the Florence Regional Arts Alliance at www.florenceartsalliance.org or contact Director Sandra Cook at 843-407-3092 or email director@florenceartsalliance.org.

CREATING HEALTHY MENTAL SPACES

Submitted by Pee Dee Mental Health Counselor, Sheila Jacobs



Sheila Jacobs

LAKE CITY-Sheila Jacobs, MA, Pee Dee Mental Health counselor in Lake City, understands how our physical surroundings impact both individual and community mental health. She explains, “Mentally healthy spaces are designed for individuals seeking support and can be physical or mental spaces. In these spaces, people feel safe from harm and free to speak without filtering their thoughts. Safe spaces are free of judgment, bias, conflict or any threatening ideas or actions. For some, a safe space is a room with four walls such as their bedroom while for others, a park or beach or even a phone call to a friend serves as a safe space.”

For individuals who are housing insecure or live in crowded environments, it can be difficult to change your surroundings but necessary to improve mental health. Everyone’s situation is different, so it is important to find what works for you. Jacobs suggests going for a nature walk to relax and renew. What if you are unable to change your surroundings? Change your response to them. Change can sometimes be scary and difficult; ask for help and realize that you do not have to make the changes all by yourself. The first step is to become aware of how an unhealthy environment at home or work is affecting you; then you can begin to focus on what you can control and find ways to minimize the stress. One healthy way to cope with stressful environments include changing the way you talk to yourself, setting a daily routine, developing outside interests and manifesting what and where you would like to be (Ilisa Kaufman Psy.D., “How to Get Healthy in an Unhealthy Environment: How to improve your life when change is difficult,” Psychology Today, online, March 20, 2021). Kaufman

recommends the following strategies to cope when you find yourself in a mentally or emotionally undesirable situation and cannot immediately remove yourself.

Changing your internal dialogue can improve your attitude and motivation to make healthy changes. The language you use inside your head will influence your reactions. The more alarming and catastrophic the thinking, the more dramatic and intense your actions will be. For example, a negative thought like, “I cannot live each day like this. I’m not going to continue this way for long,” might lead to actions such as suicide, divorce, abuse of drugs and alcohol, or weight gain. Most certainly, these defeating thoughts will not lead to healthy behaviors.

Try healthy self-talk such as, “I will take each day one day at a time. The challenges facing me today will be viewed as opportunities to strengthen my mind and body. Every challenge I work through makes me that much stronger.” This mindset will likely result in healthy outcomes. These healthy behavioral responses will then send messages to the brain that are less catastrophic and more hopeful. Look for hope rather than waiting for it to find you.

Setting a definite daily routine will provide the mental calmness that comes with predictability. Therefore, a first step towards creating a healthy mental environment is to get your eating and sleep schedules the same each and every day. This will be the beginning of behaviorally controlling something that

you actually have the ability to control. It reinforces the age-old advice to control what you can, and not try to control what you cannot. Often, we actually ignore the behaviors that we do, in fact, have control over. In time, these routines will likely instill satisfaction with life.

We all need healthy ways to escape, and, if we do not have them, we will figure out unhealthy ways to “mentally leave.” The gym, yoga, support groups, and socializing with friends are useful not only for promoting a healthy lifestyle but also as alternatives for unhealthy addictions and serve as barriers to unhealthy thinking. When these activities are not available, using art, reading and music are examples of temporary mental “escapes” that are accessible to everyone.

Many people manifest their way to well-being by verbalizing their goals as truth. Practice this by saying aloud every single day what you want and where you would like to be. Keep repeating this and visualizing what it would look like and feel like. While you know what you want out of your current situation, you may or may not have a clear view of what that looks like. Manifesting might produce an overall feeling of well-being within you.

Jacobs is a counselor in Pee Dee Mental Health’s Lake City office. Contact us at 843-317-4073 to learn more about our services and schedule an appointment for an assessment. We serve all ages from preschool to older adults. We offer individual, family and group counseling as well as supportive services for individuals with chronic mental illness.

Ten keys to happier living



- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| GIVING | Do things for others | DIRECTION | Have goals to look forward to |
| RELATING | Connect with people | RESILIENCE | Find ways to bounce back |
| EXERCISING | Take care of your body | EMOTIONS | Look for what's good |
| AWARENESS | Live life mindfully | ACCEPTANCE | Be comfortable with who you are |
| TRYING OUT | Keep learning new things | MEANING | Be part of something bigger |

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

RECOVERY MONTH



MAKING ART IMPROVES MENTAL HEALTH

Articles By Susan Carter, LPC/S



Susan Carter

Art therapy is an integrative treatment that uses artistic self-expression to improve mental health and well-being. As far back as the mid-20th century, making art has been used as a form of mental health treatment (How Making Art Helps Improve Mental Health | Science| Smithsonian Magazine). When soldiers returned from the battlefields of World War II, many were left with a condition previously known as, “shell shock,” but it’s now called, “post-traumatic stress disorder. As part of their healing process, veterans drew, sculpted, painted and made other forms of art to help process their wartime experiences. Trauma experiences are difficult to put into words, but art therapies offer patients a form of nonverbal communication that is therapeutic.

Art therapy is a growing field with around 5,000 art therapists in the U.S. alone. It is helpful for all ages and for a myriad of emotional problems. School-based therapists use art therapy to help children with social and emotional challenges, attention-deficit disorder, low self-esteem, trauma and behavioral disorders. Therapists use art therapy to help adults with issues as diverse as cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, aging seniors, patients with eating disorders, prisoners and many other physical and mental challenges. It has been used in every kind of hospital setting, from hospital in-patient units to intensive outpatient programs to private therapy, both in-person and virtually. It has been effective with people struggling with addiction issues and proven helpful for caregivers of people with long-term physical or mental illness. (The therapeutic power of art in mental health recovery - NC Health News (northcarolinahealthnews.org))

Research has found that making art can activate reward pathways in the brain, reduce stress, lower anxiety levels and improve mood. Various studies have also looked at its benefits among specific populations: It’s been linked with reduced post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among Syrian refugee children and lower levels of anxiety, PTSD and dissociation among children who were victims of sexual abuse, for example. Art therapy can help reduce pain and improve patients’ sense of control over their lives. Art therapy allows individuals to focus mindfully on a single task and “tune out” daily stress and anxiety. (How Making Art Helps Improve Mental Health | Science| Smithsonian Magazine).

Art can improve everyone’s mental health, whether we are experiencing a mental health challenge. Research suggests that creating art, as well as activities like attending a concert or visiting a museum, can benefit mental health. (How Art Can Improve Your Mental Health - The New York Times (nytimes.com)).

Here are a few simple ways to improve your mood with artistic expression:

- Try the three-drawing technique: Quickly draw yourself (stick figures are ok); next, draw yourself with your biggest problem; in the third drawing, draw yourself after the problem has been solved.

- Color something with an intricate pattern, such as a mandala. Studies with both college students and older adults found that spending 20 minutes coloring within the lines of a complex geometric design such as a mandala was more helpful at reducing anxiety than free-form coloring (Coloring Activities for Anxiety Reduction and Mood Improvement in Taiwanese Community-Dwelling Older Adults: A Randomized Controlled Study - PMC (nih.gov)).

- Coloring is a mini vacation for the mind. When we focus on the task and the pleasing sensations of the paper and colors, it becomes easier to tune out distractions and stay in the moment. It is a great form of meditation for those who don’t like the formal process of meditation!

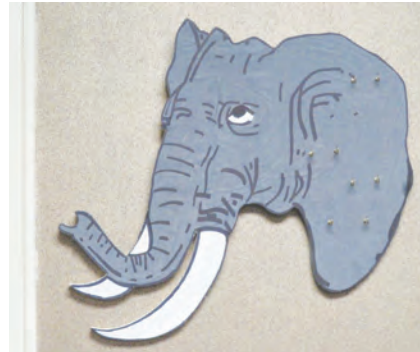
ART OF RECOVERY HELPS HEALTH CHALLENGES

Every year Pee Dee Mental Health Center (PDMHC) participates in the Art of Recovery Program sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH). Patients share the arts and crafts, paintings and other creative projects they created to help them work through mental health challenges including anxiety, depression and schizophrenia. The Art of Recovery Program is an anti-stigma initiative that displays artwork created by children and adults currently receiving psychiatric care from SCDMH. The program allows patients to heal through art while also sharing their talents with the public. Pictured below are some of the pieces of art contributed for this year’s event held April 20, 2023, from 4-7 p.m., in the Conference Center of PDMHC, 125 E. Cheves Street, Florence, SC. Approximately 50

community members, staff members and Pee Dee Mental Health Center Board members attended the event which showcased drawings, poems, jewelry, t-shirts and ceramic mugs designed by individuals in mental health recovery. Attendees purchased several of the items, providing individuals in recovery with financial as well as emotional validation of their talents. Artists’ family members were also in attendance to support their relatives’ displays of talent.

Pictured are PDMHC employees Bernard McIntosh and Cathy Lance-Timmons, Community Integration program manager, along with art contributors Dorothy Graves and Marquis Harris.

At any given time, the program’s collection consists of more than 150 pieces from artists across South Carolina; works are displayed at events and venues across the state and rotate frequently. If your non-profit organization would like to request an Art of Recovery exhibit, contact the Office of Public Affairs to inquire.cars are painful, yes.



Wall-mounted jewelry organizer created by Tommy S.



PDMHC staff member Bernard McIntosh standing by artwork donated by a community member.



Dorothy Graves with drawing and jewelry she created; attendees purchased several items.

JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY
invest in **health**, **home**, **purpose**, and **community**

ART OF RECOVERY CONT'D



Marquis Harris submitted two poems which will be forwarded to SCDMH for display; he is pictured with Cathy Lance-Timmons, Community Integration (CIP) program manager. Below is one of Harris' poems.

Healing

By Marquis L. Harris

Its origins are in sincerity-
No matter the cause or time
Transparency

Vulnerability

Both necessary for healing
Scars are painful, yes.
But exposure in truth MUST
Be in the beginning.

Why live in a State of Shame
When, in fact, you did nothing wrong?
Counterproductive
Debilitative
Neither should you associate with
Your past was painful, yes.
But aligning with truth KEEPS
Minds from going adrift.

There is no room for gripping fear.
If healing is to take effect
Obstructing
Destroying
In keeping you from living
Your wounds are deep, yes.
But walking in truth DETERS
You from drowning
Learn to expect of your future.
Better than where you came from
Significance

Brilliance

While lauding others for your second
chance
Venom still flows through you, yes.
But sharing the whole truth LEADS
To extended hands.

Hands to help in your healing.
For no one can heal alone.
Community
Attentively
Addressing what is now seen clearly.
Alleviating and now – yes
The truth you'll learn to DEFEND.
And without timidity

Healing is a deliberate process.
Hastening will be dire.
Gradual
Fruitful
Though incomplete you can still prove
useful.
Even the bruised can say, "Yes."
If in the truth each REMAIN
Believe that you are essential.

RECOVERY INVOLVES IMPROVING THE HOME ENVIRONMENT AND ACCESS TO SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

Submitted by Bernard McIntosh



Bernard McIntosh

Bernard McIntosh currently serves as the program coordinator for the Community Housing Program with Pee Dee Mental Health Center. He has over 20 years' experience working with different communities and cultures through a variety of state agencies. Bernard has seen many success stories which range from being a foster care case manager to being a probation officer with Florence County DJJ.

Where people live plays an important role in their mental health. The people surrounding you and the energy they bring contribute to your

potential. However, it starts with what your personal resources can afford. Many individuals can't afford to live in "less risky" communities and have to settle for living in much higher risk neighborhoods. Don't get me wrong, it doesn't mean that you can't have strong mental strength in "higher risk" areas, yet many are less likely to experience a higher level of stress because they're either living with someone who may be less tolerant of their behavior or develop habits that are not in their best interest.

Many people with mental health conditions cannot change their surroundings. They are challenged with surviving the only way they know how. Some of them have been forgotten by their families, causing intense emotional pain in addition to the symptoms of their illness. Change is not easy to those who don't have the means to make change happen and the ones they have in their circle don't talk about change. Unfortunately, chronically mentally ill people may associate primarily with others who are not motivated to change or live a healthy lifestyle. Some clients connect with those that live around them because they're able to share their skills and they form a family based on their mutual

acceptance of each other. Of course, they would want to be in a better place but that comes with a cost and process they can't afford or don't understand, and this makes them feel that the system is out to get them. "If you look at the people in your circle and they don't inspire you, you don't have a circle. You have a cage. Many of our clients are satisfied with cage.

Many advocates and organizers know these things and they do the best they can to provide information, but it comes down to the mindset of the individuals in unhealthy communities. The generation is changing, and the "village" mindset is no longer there. Most communities have healthy spaces but when unhealthy activity takes place, they tend to stay quiet and accept things for what they are. Let's not overlook that unhealthy spaces are in middle- and upper-class communities as well and they don't always seek help. Some rely on their knowledge of those they know. Sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't and that leads to an increase in drug and alcohol usage in all communities.

Being outdoors is great therapy, especially taking a quiet walk which provides a chance to think without interruption. Sometimes it takes going on a walk with someone who can inspire or encourage you which can lead to a change in thinking. Watching a sporting event through your recreation department and observing the behavior of others gives you a chance to see something new; just being engaged in pro-social activities helps to keep the mind clear.

Community centers and churches offer workshops with creative names such as, "Overcoming Stress" and "Compassion Fatigue" to avoid the stigma of mental illness. To attract more people who, need these services, churches have taken the lead in reaching out to the community to promote good mental health. Religious leaders in our community play an important role in helping church members and others accept the mental health services offered by Pee Dee Mental Health including our Mobile Services which remove any transportation barriers by providing services in the community.



“Every Child Deserves a First Chance”



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www.circlepark.com

WE DO RECOVER! REMINDER: YOU ARE ENOUGH Submitted by Robyn Nuzzi, certified peer support specialist.



Robyn Nuzzi

Peer Support is about allowing another to “hold the hand inside you.” The essence of peer support is to gently guide another out of indecision, model the way out of mental illness and addiction. Peer support motivationally engages with another human being on a level that is exactly where they are at the present moment. Peer support pulls from the lived experience of graphic addiction, criminal activity, domestic violence,

homelessness, broken relationships, personal bondage (isolation), stigmatizing degradation and overwhelming hopelessness and reinforces that IT IS NEVER TOO LATE to materialize your life’s purpose.

Upon being released from jail, my family asked me if I would like a vacation. I hopped on the plane and pulled out the map from behind the seat in front of me to get a grip on where exactly I was headed. Florence, Italy!! Nope. Florence, South Carolina. Wait! What? A man picked me up with the words, “GOD’S WILL”, tattooed on the back of his calves. I rolled my eyes. I was headed to yet another residential drug rehab. Nice vacation, thanks family.

I was old enough to know better, do better. The slow burn of addiction, the instant gratification of an underground lifestyle became my sole identity. I muddled through life for an extraordinary number of years hiding, deflecting and pretending...an actor in my own life. Detaching, a common personality defect in alcoholics, I had resigned myself to the

depravity and havoc I reeked on others. There simply was no choice to be made. “Suck it up, Buttercup” was my motto.

There was no bright light. I was not catapulted into radical transformation. My trepidation did begin to dissolve while I was in treatment. I was given an assignment to write about, describe my idea of God. I wrote a poem instead and read it at my 90-day commencement ceremony. My sobriety date is December 10, 2018. My sustained recovery is profound, even to me. Time and repetition have grounded me into a new way of living. Laying down evidenced-based healthy habits that bring me joy and fulfillment on a daily basis fills my love tank. Authentically extending my hand to another is mind blowing.

Peer support is empathizing from the heart, validating that the struggle is REAL and moving on...slowly, steadily, through time, repetition and accountability. The spirit of peer support is collaboration between individuals, piggy backing on each other’s success, and supporting one another on a not so linear path.

I was invited to join Circle Park Behavioral Health in September of 2022. I received certification as a peer support specialist in December 2022. I work in a satellite office in Williamsburg County, a very rural socio-economically disadvantaged area in South Carolina. Unfortunately, the statistics have reported the highest number of HIV, syphilis and drug overdoses per capita in the state. The diverse population that I have immersed myself in and have the privilege of serving is primarily Black. I look very different from the majority of our clients. The color of our skin may be different, but



WE DO RECOVER! CONT'D

on the inside, I am just like you. Building bridges, identifying and confronting stigma through advocacy, are all actionable passions that make our office a significant presence within the community.

Peer Support is my first legitimate career. Circle Park Behavioral Health invests in people. The vast array of continuing education, compassionate supervision and a built-in sense of family with my coworkers, are benefits that go above and beyond a healthy work environment. I sincerely love my job as a CPSS.

Circle Park has given me the landscape to inspire, nurture, encourage change and imagine possibilities through collaboration and connection with our clients and in the community.

If I can live a life beyond my wildest expectations, I sincerely know you can too!!

It is NEVER TOO LATE to be who you are meant to be. Believe that.

NEW ARC OFFERS REFUGE AND HOPE FOR RECOVERY

By Dawn Goodwin



House of Hope staff and board members celebrate the opening of the Addiction Recovery Center. Photo credit Seth Taylor

To the House of Hope CEO Bryan Braddock, National Recovery Month means having a month in which an emphasis is placed on supporting the needs of first responders, healthcare workers, organizations and community leaders who are in the trenches fighting the national epidemic of addiction. One way the House of Hope is fighting this epidemic is through its newest ministry, the Addictions Recovery Center (ARC).

“Addiction affects several in the homeless community. Sometimes it is the cause of homelessness, but other times it is a result of homelessness,” said Braddock. “We have been addressing the addiction issues of our residents and guests at the House of Hope for several years through partnerships with local addiction’s ministries and healthcare providers. Although we have seen success with our current programs and facilities, we have also had some failures. Some people just need more time, more attention, more love and more faith before they are ready to be exposed to the temptations of their addiction. Having a facility with a little distance from these temptations and more time to get a firm foundation was the reason for the addition of the Addictions Treatment Center,” a place Braddock calls “140 acres of space to see the true beauty of God’s creation.”

The new recovery center brings refuge to individuals, offering separation from the busy world we live in, an opportunity to develop a daily walk with Christ through daily devotions, Christian counseling and mentorship along with a structured daily schedule that includes classroom studies, work therapy, group counseling and leadership development. The need for this type of refuge in our community is much needed, and Braddock, whose title recently changed from executive director to CEO, is leading the charge.

Even with the new title, his roles and responsibilities are the same. “One reason for my title change is my mentality that you have to run a nonprofit like a business. My role is to lead our staff, volunteers and



Inside look of the Addiction Recovery Center bedrooms

donors towards the fulfillment of the mission of the House of Hope. It is my responsibility to make sure my team has the resources they need to accomplish this mission,” he said.

This mission is personal to Braddock, who is all too familiar with addiction. For several years, he was addicted to opioids and cocaine, and it cost him almost everything. Not only that, but he was also convicted of felonies for the actions and decisions he made during his addiction. “I hurt several people, mostly those closest to me,” he said. “But I found hope in Christ, which led to my victory over drugs. God has taken the worst of me and used it for His glory. To whom much is given much is required, and I have been given so much. I am so grateful for the House of Hope Board, staff and supporters for taking a step of faith to begin this new ministry to help people that are just like me!”

Today, leadership training, strategic planning, and vision and team building are Braddock’s major responsibilities. Additionally finding the funding to support the financial needs of the organization is a high priority. “Basically, my job is to guide, equip, encourage, and support the people that carry out the mission to provide dignity, safety and the love of Christ to the homeless men, women and children in the Pee Dee community,” he said.

There are ways that the community can get involved to support the recovery of others. First, Braddock says, “Pray for our staff. Working to help people in recovery is difficult work. It is a spiritual battle, and we need constant prayer for our staff and people we serve.” Another thing that House of Hope can use is money. “Our Addiction Program will have a very low cost of \$2000 per month, but with the population we serve, most are not going to be able to cover this fee. We will give scholarships to most of our applicants, but we need monthly support to offset these expenses as well as the cost for facilities improvements.” Last, he asks that we get the word out to friends, churches and businesses.

“Addiction affects almost everyone that I come in contact with, and it is going to take an all-in approach at every level of society to combat this life scattering issue,” said Braddock. “I love the fact that it is called National Recovery Month. There is HOPE!”

What’s next for House of Hope after starting the new addictions recovery program for men is that they also hope to have a program for women in the months to come. Please visit www.Hofh.org for information or to apply to the program.



REMOVING BARRIERS FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES By Jennifer Robinson



Diane Hall

September is National Recovery Month, and throughout the state, counseling centers are being recognized for treatment and prevention services. September also marks Trinity Behavioral Care's 50th anniversary providing the residents of Marion, Dillon and Marlboro Counties substance use disorder services. Founded in 1973, Trinity's professional staff are proud of their accomplishments associated with service quality and community collaborations. They provide integrated substance use disorder prevention, intervention and treatment with on-site medical

partners providing medication assisted therapies and integrated primary care and family wellness services. Donny Brock, LAC, AADC is Trinity's current executive director. However, a leadership transition is in process; as the organization's board of directors have named Ms. Diane Hall, LPCS, LACS, AADAC their new executive director effective February 2024.

Trinity's mission is to reduce problems in communities caused by substance misuse. From Trinity's humble beginnings, they have evolved into an organization whose services are often seen as a model to be replicated. They have treatment and prevention services that address the opioid crisis and other substances such as alcohol and cannabis use. In 2021 the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration highlighted Trinity's innovative opiate treatment, prevention and recovery care as a model for rural communities. Trinity addresses the area's high overdose rate by identifying overdose clusters then moving



Trinity's Dillon facility opened last year.

quickly to partner with other local organizations, churches, schools, law enforcement and medical partners to target those areas with education, NARCAN, fentanyl testing strips and immediate access to treatment. "Unfortunately, we have seen overdose death rates in our areas that exceed the state average. Our evidenced-based solutions has made a difference and we believe it has helped to reduce the spike," Brock said.

From 2020 to 2021, the total number of drug overdose deaths in South Carolina increased by more than 430 individuals, from 1,734 deaths to 2,168: an increase of more than 25 percent. By comparison, there were



Trinity's Marion office opened in 2019.

only 573 drug overdose deaths in the state in 2012. Opioids continue to be the primary cause of overdose deaths in recent years, contributing to 1,733 of the 2,168 fatal overdoses in 2021 ([scdhec.gov](https://www.scdhec.gov)). Providing education about drugs and substance use disorder treatment informs individuals who are struggling, and their loved ones, and provides access to the assistance they need. An example of misinformation is that many residents are unaware that drugs that were popular 20-30 years ago are not obsolete. Cannabis, amphetamines, meth, cocaine and crack, heroin (many of which are fentanyl laced) remain popular. As does misuse of alcohol.

Families should know their loved ones need support battling the disease of addiction. Hall stated, "Our patients define who their families are. It does not have to be biological family." Clients who have supportive family systems are more likely to be successful in their recovery. The National Institute on Drug Abuse says, "Many people don't understand why or how other people become addicted to drugs. They may mistakenly think that those who use drugs lack moral principles or willpower and that they could stop their drug use simply by choosing to. Drug addiction is a complex disease, and quitting usually takes more than good intentions or a strong will. Drugs change the brain in ways that make quitting hard, even for those who want to. Fortunately, researchers have found treatments that can help people recover from drug addiction and lead productive lives." When people are informed, they are more inclined to seek organizations that provide treatment and begin their journey of recovery. Hall mentioned that because Trinity Behavioral Care is partially publicly funded, "no one will be turned away because of inability to pay." Trinity also accepts Medicaid, and their services are often covered by private insurance plans.

Trinity can be contacted at 843-423-8292 or on their website [chooseabetterlife.org](https://www.chooseabetterlife.org). Counseling services they provide for patients aged ten and up include:

- Outpatient Treatment/Counseling Services
- Medication Assistance Treatment
- Prevention
- Pop up crisis sessions

"As we celebrate our 50th anniversary we continue to grow the organization by increasing our evidenced-based care and providing it in modern state of the art facilities," Brock stated. Trinity will soon begin construction of a new facility near Bennettsville. It will be their third since 2019. Both Brock and Hall expressed gratitude to their legislative delegations who have assisted in state grants to subsidize the cost of these new facilities and welcome the community to drop by and pick up some NARCAN that could reverse an overdose and save a life.



**BUILDING AN
EQUITABLE FOUNDATION**

**Removing barriers to access for people with
mental health and substance-use related disabilities**

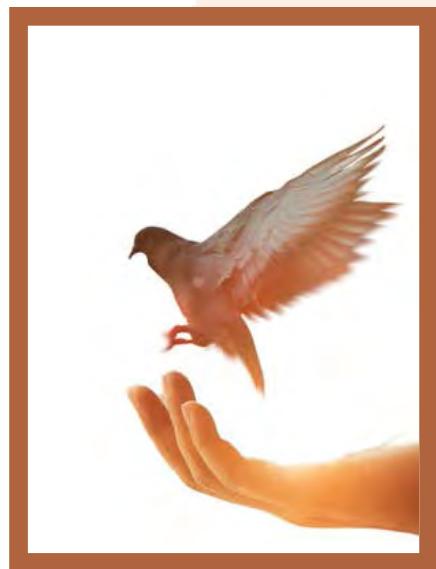
WORTHY ENOUGH TO LIVE By Cynthia Ford

What pain filled your mind? What crushed your dreams? What consumed your thoughts and sealed your freedom in a cage? What blinded your visibility to the opened door of freedom? What silent scream consumed you with thoughts of hopelessness, cutting your sweet life so soon?

How precious this thing is called time? Time cannot be purchased, and whatever we choose to do within our given timeframe has no bearing on time's continual pace. As time ticks, we proceed with our lives and establish connections or relationships and center our actions around the allotted time for these relationships.

The art of love is what causes one's heart to shatter when a loved one leaves this world. We were taught to love early on in life. Through the bonds of love, we are interwoven on various levels. Love yields a feeling of hope, happiness and security. This bond is part of why it is challenging when a loved one dies. Death is inevitable. However, the blow of its effect still hits hard on loved ones left behind.

One form of death that often leaves family members with many questions is suicide. The act of suicide initiates with a single thought that leads to agreement with the thought and ultimately acting on the thought. Our bodies naturally fight to live. Even at the point of suicide, we question whether to end it all or choose an alternate route. Loved ones playback in their mind, wondering if there was something they've missed or if there was anything they could have done to keep their loved one alive. Often these questions are left unanswered. Many reflect on their last time spent with their loved ones or other special memories that stand out the most.



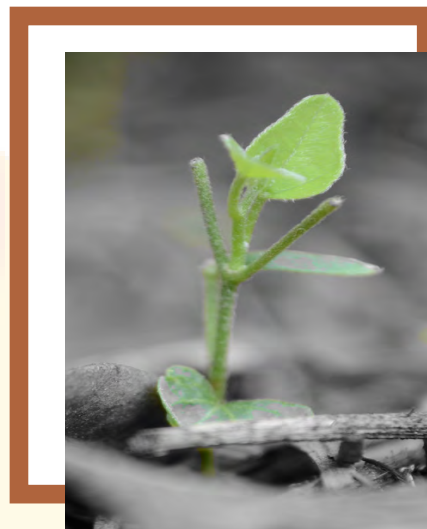
The decision to end one's own life is like standing at a crossroads with the daunting task of making a very significant decision. One end of the spectrum, ending it all, while the end still yields hope and a promised future. The voices of pain and hopelessness speak loudly, and fear suffocates traveling thoughts.

Suicide is a topic that is rarely talked about but happens often throughout the world. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide was the 10th leading cause of death and led to over 47,000 deaths in 2019. Suicide is also noted as being the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24 years old. As a result of the increasing concern, several measures are put into place to increase awareness and prevention. Mental health centers, medical facilities and private counselors offers a range of preventive services to address thoughts of suicide. Services are now available via phone calls, in person and virtual means of communication.

Each September, we recognize National Suicide Prevention Month. Many mental health providers and organizations unite to promote awareness and extend services to individuals in need. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline noted several risk factors that are associated with suicide. A few of the risk factors are a history of mental illness, substance use disorders, hopelessness, impulsive or aggressive tendencies, a history of trauma, financial loss, a sense of isolation, cultural beliefs and exposure to others who have died by suicide. As we focus on prevention, it is important to be aware of some of the warning signs associated with suicide. These include talking about wanting to die or kill themselves, searching for ways to kill themselves, talking about having no reason to live, talking about feeling trapped or unbearable pain, talking about being a burden to others, increasing the use of alcohol or drugs, changes in sleep patterns, withdrawing or isolation behaviors or extreme mood swings.

The mind is the battleground. Tackling suicidal indentations and attempts requires tactics that are powerful enough to sustain a mind that has become fragile. Joining efforts to tackle suicide is not just the job of family members directly affected or mental health providers. It is a job that everyone can take part in. We must push past the act of highlighting potential warning signs. We must increase awareness of outlets of relief, letting everyone know that there is another way out.

At the surface is the presenting problem that appears to scream loudly



that there is no other option besides ending it all right away. Collectively our efforts of prevention should scream, **YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS FIGHT TO LIVE!** Let's increase the conversation by showing everyone their worth. Let's normalize seeking help before the problem becomes unbearable.

Let us come together like never before to not only spread awareness but to be the bridge for healing and the light of hope. As a collective community, we should ban together to normalize seeking help. Across the board it should be normal to connect with counselors. Mental stability and freedom are what we seek. As a whole we will work to be consistent safe havens of hope. The suicide prevention hotline should be known, as well as the universal number for emergencies. The suicide crisis lifeline can be reached by dialing 988 to speak with someone right away. This option is available 24/7.

To family members who lost a loved one to suicide, grieve at your own pace. You, too, are not alone in this fight. Let the good memories from your loved one live on. Live with no regrets, as we are unable to change what has happened. Consider doing something special that will spring forth continual life and make their name live on forever. One idea would be to plant trees or make a garden in their memory.

For those who suffer from suicidal thoughts, keep fighting to live. Remember if you are suffering from suicidal thoughts or ideations dial 988 to speak with a crisis counselor right away. Help is available. I speak peace, healing, and restoration to you who suffer in silence. You are not alone in this fight. May you find light in the midst of your dark moment. Give yourself grace and a chance to live. You are worthy enough to live.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

CONNECTION PREVENTS SUICIDE By Susan Carter

connection prevents suicide



Suicide is a serious public health problem that affects all ages and demographics of American society. In 2021, suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-14 and 20-34. It was among the top nine leading causes of death for people ages 10-64 that year. In addition to the loss of a valuable life, it leaves lasting harmful effects on

individuals, families and communities. This event contributes to premature death, long-term disability, lost productivity and significant healthcare costs. However, this complex, devastating problem can often be prevented when an individual has strong personal connections. Other preventive factors include learning how to cope with stress in healthy ways and being knowledgeable about how to access crisis hotlines. Suicide is often preventable and we all play an important role in prevention efforts.

Death by suicide was responsible for 48,183 deaths in 2021, which is about one death every 11 minutes (<http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10-expanded.html>). In 2021, approximately 12.3 million adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.5 million decided and 1.7 million attempted to die by suicide. Suicide rates vary by race and ethnicity, age, and other factors, such as where someone lives. By race/ethnicity, the groups with the highest rates are non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native people followed by non-Hispanic White people. Other Americans with higher-than-average rates of suicide are veterans, people who live in rural areas and workers in certain industries and occupations like mining and construction. Young people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual have higher prevalence of suicidal thoughts and behavior compared to their peers who identify as heterosexual. (Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2011-2021 ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/yrbss/))).

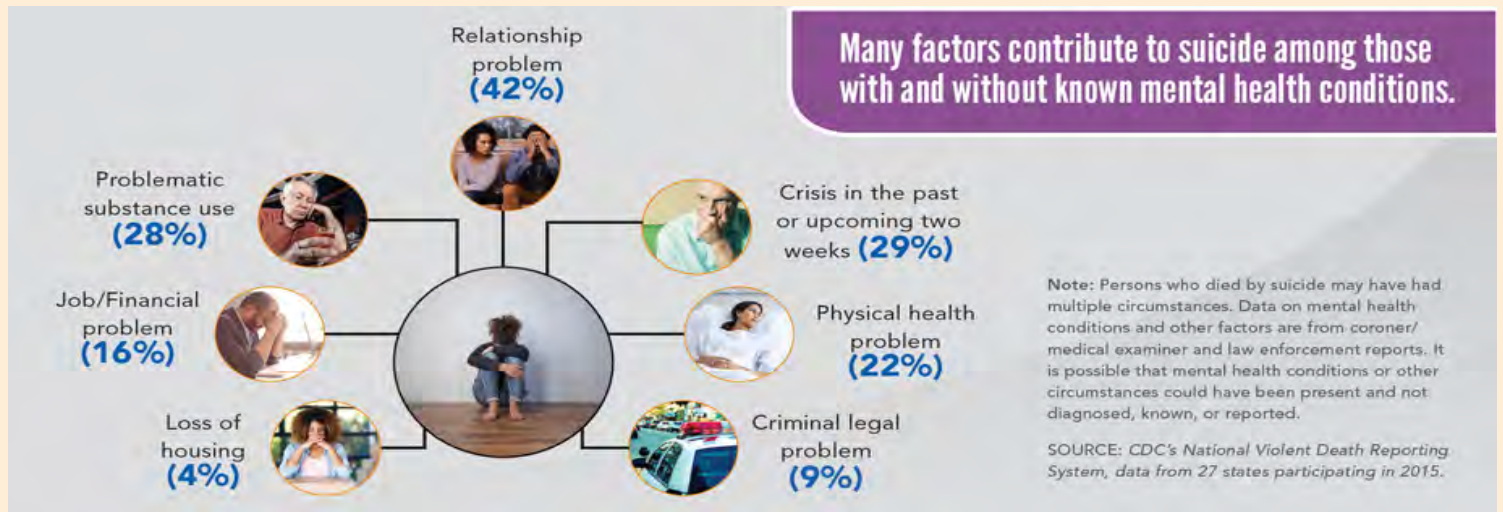
Many factors contribute to suicide risk. Suicide is rarely caused by a single circumstance or event. Instead, a range of factors—at the individual, relationship, community and societal levels can increase risk. These risk factors are situations or problems that can increase the possibility that a person will attempt suicide. (Suicide Prevention Month: Partner Toolkit | Suicide | CDC). Individual risk factors include a previous suicide attempt, history of depression or other mental illnesses, serious physical illnesses such as chronic pain, criminal/legal problems and job/financial loss. See the chart below for more information. Relationship risk factors such as bullying, family history of suicide, loss of relationships, high conflict of

violent relationships and social isolation, account for 42 percent of suicide risk. Suicide is connected to other forms of injury and violence. For example, people who have experienced violence, including child abuse, bullying or sexual violence, have a higher suicide risk. Community risk factors include challenges to a person's ability to access healthcare, community violence and discrimination. Societal risk factors are cultural and environmental factors within the larger society that contribute to risk including stigma associated with help-seeking and mental illness, easy access to lethal means of suicide among people at risk and unsafe media portrayals of suicide. TikTok's algorithm identifies young people with anxiety and depression and selects content that can encourage these vulnerable kids to consider suicide (TikTok's Algorithm Keeps Pushing Suicide to Vulnerable Teens - Bloomberg).

Suicide and suicide attempts cause serious emotional, physical, and economic impacts. People who attempt suicide and survive may experience serious injuries that can have long-term effects on their health. They may also experience depression and other mental health concerns. Suicide and suicide attempts affect the health and well-being of friends, loved ones, co-workers, and the community. When people die by suicide, their surviving family and friends may experience prolonged grief, shock, anger, guilt, symptoms of depression or anxiety, and even thoughts of suicide themselves. The financial toll of suicide on society is also costly. In 2020, suicide and nonfatal self-harm cost the nation over \$500 billion in medical costs, work loss costs, value of statistical life, and quality of life costs. (Facts About Suicide | Suicide | CDC).

Many factors can reduce the risk of suicide. Like risk factors, a range of factors at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels can protect people from suicide. Everyone can help prevent suicide. We can act in communities and as a society to support people and help protect them from suicidal thoughts and behavior. Individual protective factors against suicide include effective coping and problem-solving skills, reasons for living (such as family, friends, pets, etc.), and a strong sense of cultural identity. Healthy relationship experiences protect against suicide risk because partners, friends, and family offer support and a feeling of connection to others. Supportive communities offer protection against suicide risk by providing a sense of connectedness to schools and other social institutions and offer consistent and high quality physical and behavioral healthcare. Societal protective factors include cultural, religious, or moral objections to suicide.

Suicide is preventable and everyone has a role to play to save lives and create healthy and strong individuals, families, and communities. Strategies range from those designed to support people at increased risk to a focus on the whole population, regardless of risk. Improved household financial security and stable housing are essential to reducing suicide risk. Protective environments that reduce access to lethal means among persons at risk of suicide, healthy workplace policies and cultures and reduced substance use through community-based policies and practices are public



CONNECTION CONT'D

policy interventions that can affect broad social change and prevent suicide. Suicide can be prevented if we improve access and delivery of suicide care. This will involve more coverage of mental health conditions in health insurance policies, increased provider availability in rural areas and rapid and remote access to help through crisis lines and first responders with mental health training.

Promoting positive behaviors such as reduced or no alcohol consumption and encouraging community members to participate in shared activities can reduce suicide attempts through healthy connections. Offering social and parenting skills in communities will improve family relationships and support resilience when facing challenges. Along with providing these community-wide interventions, it is essential that those at-risk of suicide are identified and supported. We need trained gatekeepers who can respond to crises and to develop individualized safety plans and provide follow-up after an attempt. Effective therapeutic techniques, such as trauma-based cognitive behavioral therapy, can reduce the likelihood of subsequent attempts.

When a suicide does occur, a “postvention” helps to identify what we can do to improve future outcomes.

Everyone needs to be aware of the warning signs for suicide and to be willing to speak up and offer help.

Know the 12 Suicide WARNING SIGNS

- Feeling like a burden

- Being isolated
- Increased anxiety
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Increased substance use
- Looking for a way to access lethal means
- Increased anger or rage
- Extreme mood swings
- Expressing hopelessness
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Talking or posting about wanting to die
- Making plans for suicide



If you are experiencing mental health-related distress or are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support, contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline or Chat at 988lifeline.org. You will be connected with a trained crisis counselor. 988 is confidential, free and available 24/7/365 days a year. Visit the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline for more information at 988lifeline.org.

Pee Dee Mental Health has offices in Florence, Lake City, Hartsville and Marion. Walk-in assessments are always available. Call 843.317-4081 to find out more or go to our website at www.peedeementalhealth.org to learn more about our locations and programs.

THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES By Jennifer Robinson

Parents send their children to college and hope they are prepared for college culture. There are classes, schedules, new friends, social groups, social gatherings and the pressure of studying. And those are just some of the things incoming freshman are faced with as they enter the dorms and halls of their chosen institution. But does the pressure they face from college life cause and ignite mental struggles that many of them find unmanageable?

The website bestcolleges.com describes what college students experience and how suicide is the leading cause of death on campuses. Though many colleges have programs that now assist students who struggle with mental health, they are performing researched based prevention strategies for current and future care. In 2022, two percent of college students surveyed said they attempted suicide in the past year.



Eric Robinson

Eric E. Robinson, a resident assistant (RA) at a university in Columbia, shared his experiences.

“As an RA at Allen University, my job is to help provide students with a proper housing experience filled with fun and security. My relationship to the students is more than just an RA, it is to be that extra ear when no one is around, to be a vessel of support and an overall friend. In my opinion the most common mental issue amongst

college students is between anxiety and depression. Anxiety would run more into the upperclassmen as they continue to claw their way towards graduation. Classwork and other school activities may begin to bear down, and they simply want to get away from it all. Depression mainly targets incoming freshman towards the middle of their first semester. They start to miss home and wonder if college is really for them, this usually last until they go home for Thanksgiving/Christmas break. They rarely have issues once they return for their first spring semester.

I feel like colleges, HBCU’s especially, are taking giant steps forward in addressing mental health within their campuses. It’s very

encouraging to see, and it becomes another outlet to get students involved. Our housing unit works hard to provide healthy outlets to keep students involved and with good spirits. We try to hold mental health events about once a month in a semester. We do not single anyone out and we try to focus on all types of mental illnesses and the best ways to combat them. I do have concerns that some students begin to make harsh or rash decisions when facing mental health issues. Partying, drinking, smoking, all these things are accessible in the college world. I am afraid these things can be taken over the edge when introduced to a depressed or suicidal college student. It could lead to not only that individual being hurt, but others around them as well. Let’s continue to get students involved on campus and away from these bad influences.

Peer support is DEFINITELY important to students. That validation from your RA or friend may be the only word you have to go by at that time. There is a trust formed when you make friends in college, and the bond is unmatched. The knowledge and/or wisdom passed from one friend to the next can give a different perspective in a situation, and maybe even save them from a bad decision. I personally deal with depression and anxiety myself daily. Although I don’t let it affect my work as an RA, it does take a huge toll on me behind the scenes. I just want to be there for everyone without having to face my own battles. I have been an RA going on two years now (three semesters). It has been an exciting journey so far and I’m excited for the future. This job has allowed me to make wonderful connections with staff and students alike. It had allowed me to meet people I’d never have the guts to approach, and it has put me in places I can only thank God for. I do plan on going to graduate school and continuing my journey as an RA once I graduate. I’m not sure where, but I’m sure the wind won’t blow me in the wrong direction.”



EMPOWERING OTHERS THROUGH FINANCIAL LITERACY By Dawn "D.A." Goodwin



Jennifer Kimbrell

MULLINS - Last year, Jennifer Kimbrell graciously accepted the position as AVP, CRA (Community Reinvestment Act) officer, and loan compliance member with Anderson Brothers Bank (ABB), a position in which she can apply the strong work ethic she gained from her parents into helping the community. In her role, she seeks to create an environment where financial literacy is prioritized in low- and moderate-income (LMI) and distressed areas to help individuals gain financial independence.

Kimbrell started her banking career nearly 20 years ago as a lender with Wachovia Bank (now Wells Fargo). "During my time there, I learned a great deal about general banking and regulatory compliance, thus laying a solid foundation for my career. After a few short years with Wachovia, I accepted the VP of Mortgage Lending position with the now ArborOne Farm Credit. I enjoyed nearly 17 years at Farm Credit, where I grew with the company to become the AVP of Special Assets and Compliance Officer."

Now at ABB, Kimbrell oversees all aspects of the bank's Community Reinvestment Act Program, including ensuring compliance with the Act and Federally Regulated Consumer Protection Laws. She finds her position as the CRA officer of a local hometown bank to be extremely rewarding. "I see the impact of ABB's work on Main Street," she said. "ABB bankers are busy supporting revitalization and job growth in small towns throughout our region. We make a concentrated effort to understand the needs of our communities and cultivate meaningful relationships with area non-profit and civic organizations. We align ourselves with organizations that primarily provide services to LMI individuals, promote affordable housing and job creation through economic development and revitalization efforts."

"Our leadership team is here on the ground, serving with us daily. As an organization, we get to know our customers and listen to their needs and the needs of our communities. ABB has twenty-five branches located in Marion, Florence, Dillon, Williamsburg, Georgetown, Horry and Dorchester Counties. We work side by side with other community stakeholders. Our bankers volunteer in various community service roles, and they serve on boards and committees with the goal of improving the lives of all residents within our footprint."

Headquartered in Mullins, SC ABB's dedication to the region is clear to Kimbrell. This is important to her, as she grew up in a small, rural community. "I attended public school with the same kids from K-5 through 12th grade. Few people left my hometown, but even fewer moved into our area. There -were about 30 people in my graduating class. I tell you this to help you understand that my world was small. I had no idea what waited ahead for me. As a kid, I saw my parents put God first and work a lot, leaving little time for family. I came to believe that a man's career was more important than a woman's; that men handled finances, not women and, that as a woman, I would need to make myself small in the presence of men."

"As I aged, I realized that was not exactly what my parents were trying to show me. I got one thing right. God comes first in all things. The rest was more about my perception. I realized that my parents worked so much, not because they wanted to, but because they had to. My parents were trying to teach me that a strong work ethic is important and that when I have a family, I should do what is necessary to provide for them, even if that means having less free time. My parents took those traditional marital roles because it was what they were taught to do, and they kind of liked it. My dad's career was not more important than my mom's; my mother started her career later

in life because it was the right choice for our family. Surely, women handled finances; my parents made the decision that my dad would handle their finances. And the idea of making myself small, because I was a female, was a lesson that my mom wishes she could erase from my memory. Nevertheless, here I am today, a strong female leader, advocating for financial literacy and making a difference for others."

"After growing up, I also learned the reason my school was so small was because our community had no industry," Kimbrell added. "I was living in a distressed area and had no clue. People were not moving in because that isn't where the opportunities were, and I didn't see people leaving because my parent's generation and those that came before them enjoyed their rural lifestyles." My obscured perception had been wrong.

"When I attended my first ethics class, I was stunned by the varying viewpoints. I quickly learned that not everyone thought like me; shocker, that was okay. After that, my world evolved and got bigger. I thought I had a diverse upbringing because I grew up in a majority-minority area. Little did I know that wasn't what diversity meant. Many years have passed since I took that ethics class, and I've learned a lot. Diversity and inclusion are not just situational awareness. It is about acceptance. We do not have to agree on everything or even have the same values for us to work together and respect each other. There is great value in collaborating with people from other cultures or walks of life. When we are willing to learn from our differences, we can accomplish great things."

As Kimbrell grew in her career, she aligned herself with roles that allowed her to ensure that differences are protected. One such role is serving as a member of ABB's Loan Compliance Department, where she works with the loan compliance officer to ensure the bank's consumer and commercial lending activities adhere to bank policies and both state and federal banking regulations. "In both my CRA and loan compliance roles, I work to ensure that consumers are treated equally regardless of where they live, of their race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, marital or familial status."

Working alongside her ABB peers, Kimbrell has had a hand in the bank, making great strides in the community. "So far this year, we've dedicated over 100 volunteer hours to financial education," she said. "However, there is still work to be done. As bankers, we have a responsibility to promote financial education within our communities—education that is founded on the principles of equity and inclusion."

Within the community, Kimbrell serves in various capacities, all the while encouraging others to support financial literacy programs in public schools. As leader of the Finance Pathway Committee for Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation's 2023 P2PSC Career Expo, AKA Pathway 2 Possibilities, she coordinated efforts between the foundation and four financial institutions, including ABB. She recruited volunteers, created materials and led an engaging pathway. The event attracted over 7000 eighth graders visit from schools throughout the region.

In addition, Kimbrell just finished meeting the requirements to be a SCORE workshop presenter and volunteer. The Grand Strand Chapter of SCORE serves Horry, Georgetown, Florence, Marion,

Financial Empowerment in Our Community



EMPOWERING OTHERS CONT'D

Williamsburg, Dillon, Chesterfield, Darlington and Marlboro Counties. "I am very excited to start my journey with my local SCORE Chapter. SCORE offers a combination of free resources, educational workshops and mentor services to area small business entrepreneurs. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and SCORE provides owners with the tools they need to be successful."

Kimbrell's dedication to her work in the community reveals just how

deep the principles instilled within her have reached, and her excitement to continue promoting financial literacy is one to be respected and supported.

Jennifer Kimbrell is a lifelong resident of Marion County who graduated from Brittons Neck High School and attended Florence-Darlington Technical College, where she obtained an associate Business Degree in Marketing. She is married to her loving and supportive husband, Patrick, and together they have two sons, Mason and Coleman.

ABB ANNOUNCES NEW MANAGERS

Submitted by Samantha Strickland, marketing coordinator



Bradley Moore

CONWAY— Anderson Brothers Bank is pleased to announce the promotion of Bradley Moore as branch manager and Katlin Sawyer to relationship banker in the bank's Conway office at 2651 Church Street, Conway, SC 29528.

In his role, Moore will continue to assist customers with a full array of commercial and consumer lending products. In addition, he will now provide supervisory support within the branch to ensure effective and efficient customer service. He joined Anderson Brothers Bank in 2018 as a loan officer, continually growing and building customer relationships.

"Bradley has an excellent reputation as a knowledgeable, experienced and reliable banker in the Conway market," said Richard Carroll, vice president-regional executive of Anderson Brothers Bank. "He has proven ability and track record of assisting clients with all their financial service needs. Bradley will make a significant impact in our continued growth in Conway and surrounding markets."



Katlin Sawyer

In her new role, Sawyer will consult with consumer and business customers to identify, understand and prioritize financial needs, including developing and maintaining consumer and small business loan and deposit relationships.

Sawyer joined Anderson Brothers Bank in 2021 and has continuously advanced in the Conway Church Street branch. As a native of the area and a graduate of Conway High School, she not only has a welcoming familiar face but also understands the needs of her customers, helping to expand bank relationships.

"Since joining ABB in September of 2021, Katlin has proven herself as a valuable asset to the bank through her willingness and determination to go the extra mile in serving both her customers and her teammates," said Moore, loan officer at Anderson Brothers Bank Conway Church Street Office. "We look forward to Katlin growing with Anderson Brothers Bank and meeting the needs of our customers as a relationship banker."

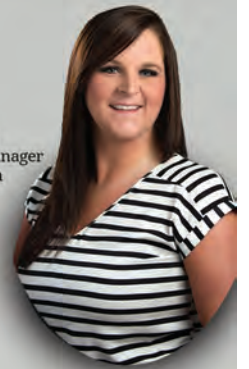
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THE JOY IN SERVING OTHERS Submitted by Dedicated Community Bank



Janie Foster

DARLINGTON - Janie Foster has been a part of the Dedicated Community Bank (DCB) family for 29 years! As a bank teller, she administers various day-to-day transactions for our customers and knows them all by first name, and oftentimes nicknames, as well as their children, grandchildren and even their pets. When asked what she enjoys most about her role at DCB, she quickly shared, "greeting and serving our customers are the highlight of my day – every single one."

She loves her family, southern food, Forrest Gump and the Atlanta Braves. Foster is a constant source of encouragement as she is often reminding others to always do their best. Over the last few years, our customers continue to select Foster as "Best Bank Teller" in a local newspaper's contest. Jim Ivey, president/CEO, shared "the Board of Directors, officers and staff at Dedicated Community Bank congratulate Janie and appreciate her longtime commitment. We are especially grateful our customers recognize and value Janie as much as we do."

Before starting her career in banking, Foster worked for Nytronics, Incorporated for nearly two decades in customer service for global

accounts. Her primary role was handling and expediting resolutions to any of their concerns. She graduated from Mayo High School in Darlington, South Carolina as a member of the largest graduating class in the school's history at that time; the year was 1959. Foster is a lifetime member of Cherry Grove Missionary Baptist Church where she is very active and currently serves on the Finance Committee and as a trustee. Her life motto, "I don't meet strangers; I meet people," has endeared many customers and co-workers over the years.

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For a \$300,000 mortgage loan for a term of 5/1 adjustable rate of 4.75%, with an APR of 6.484%, the monthly payment would be \$1,564.94. A 7/1 adjustable rate of 4.875%, with an APR of 6.26%, the monthly payment would be \$1,587.62. A 10/1 adjustable rate of 5.00%, with an APR of 5.971%, the monthly payment would be \$1,610.46. Based on 100% loan to value and 0.5% Origination Fee. Adjustable interest rates and payments are subject to increase after the initial fixed-rate period (62 months for a 5/1 ARM, 7 years for a 7/1 ARM, and 10 years for a 10/1 ARM).

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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HOW TO PROTECT YOUR BIGGEST INVESTMENT



(BPT) - Your home is likely the biggest purchase you'll make in your lifetime, and your most important investment. Current home prices remain strong, and this helps boost the average amount of equity per U.S. homeowner. Home equity is the primary driver of household wealth - but also one asset most people forget to provide complete protection for. Are you protecting your most important investment?

You probably already protect important belongings such as your vehicle with auto insurance, and have homeowner's insurance for your property. However, there's one crucial area homeowners overlook that could be the difference between calling your home and investment or a source of severe financial loss: your home's title.

Most homeowners have good intentions to protect their property, but home title fraud is an area often overlooked. You may be automatically protected against major destructive events like natural disasters and theft via your homeowner's insurance, but this does not cover home title fraud.

Many homeowners don't realize the vulnerability that exists with the home title recording system in the U.S. The fact is, anyone can present a fake deed with a fake notary stamp, pay a small fee and, if all the spaces are filled in correctly, the county recorder's office must accept it.

Homeowners can be completely unaware of this until the lender tries to foreclose on the home.

This ease of filing and online access to detailed property records has created a new wave of cyber-crime called home title theft. Whether your house is worth \$200K or \$2M, it's imperative to understand all the ways you can protect it. The first step is determining how much equity you have in your home. To calculate your home's equity, subtract your current mortgage balance from your home's market value. If that number is \$50,000 or more, you should have an equity protection plan in place.

Why should you go beyond home title insurance?

One common misconception is that home title insurance will cover any issues that occur after you purchase your home. Most policies protect against past history up to the day you close on your property, but they do not cover future events. In addition to home title insurance, your bank, your homeowner's insurance and legal trust also do not protect against home title fraud.

Protecting your home's title is a two-step process: home title insurance for until the sale is completed, and then home title monitoring identity theft prevention services for any conveyances made after closing.

When new documents are recorded that could affect your property value or ownership, you'll be alerted in real-time. If potential fraud does occur, you're not alone, as a team of experts are there to help you navigate the situation. The company also provides a free home title history report with initial sign-up, which allows you to see past activity on your property and learn if you're already a victim of home title fraud.

With these steps, you can have peace of mind that your biggest investment - your home - is better protected.



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ESTATE PLANNING FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



An estate plan is not just for high-net-worth individuals, it's for everyone who is single, has a spouse, has a partner, has dependents, owns a business, has investments, has retirement funds, owns property, or has material possessions of value such as a car. An estate plan may reduce estate taxes and shield your beneficiaries from having to go through probate. It means your last wishes will be heard. You can name a guardian for any young children and can even direct how you wish a beloved pet to be cared for after you are gone. Having an estate plan can also prevent a mess by bringing clarity to your beneficiaries, and it can protect assets from unforeseen creditors.¹

The estate plan² may contain a will or living trust, the names of your beneficiaries, the appointment of an executor, a letter of intent that tells a beneficiary or executor what you wish to be done with specific assets, funeral details, and special requests. It should contain a healthcare directive with a power of attorney appointing a trusted person to make medical decisions for you when you can no longer voice your opinion, and a durable power of attorney appointing a trusted friend or relative to make financial and legal decisions for you, if you become incapacitated. It may also contain a trust or trusts for passing on assets to your beneficiaries. Life insurance can be an important component in the

overall estate plan.

You should update your estate plan whenever a major change occurs in your life, such as purchasing a home, moving in with a significant other, getting married, having or adopting a baby, selling your business, getting a divorce, retiring, or having a beneficiary die before you do. Review your plan when federal and state laws on estate taxes change.

If you should die without a will (which is called "intestate"),³ the state and federal governments will have standard procedures for distributing your assets, and they may not be in line with your wishes. Your beneficiaries may have to pay more in estate taxes, and probate may take considerably longer than it would if you had a will in place.

Trusts can be complicated to set up, so consult a professional trusts and estates attorney or certified public account before you begin.

This educational, third-party article is provided as a courtesy by Julie A Cord, Agent, (CA Ins. Lic.# 4166847) New York Life Insurance Company and a Financial Advisor with Eagle Strategies LLC, a Registered Investment Advisor and a New York Life Company. To learn more about the information or topics discussed, please contact Julie A Cord at 317.289.3010 or jacord@ft.newyorklife.com.

1 Julie Garber, "5 Reasons You Need an Estate Plan," The [Balance.com](https://www.thebalance.com/top-reasons-why-you-need-an-estate-plan-3505444), Updated November 3, 2021.

<https://www.thebalance.com/top-reasons-why-you-need-an-estate-plan-3505444>

2 Glenn Curtis, "6 Estate Planning Must-Haves," [Investopedia.com](https://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/07/estate_plan_checklist.asp), Updated February 27, 2022. https://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/07/estate_plan_checklist.asp

3 Julia Kagan, "Intestate," [Investopedia.com](https://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/intestate.asp), Updated November 23, 2022. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/intestate.asp>



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FINANCIAL FIRST: MAKING YOUR FIRST BUDGET PLAN Submitted by Palmetto First Federal Credit Union



How many times do we set a financial goal with the full intention to achieve it only to stop within a month? This time, we're ending just as strong as we start. And our secret weapon is going to be a budget plan! We promise it's not as stressful as it sounds, especially with Palmetto First Federal Credit Union on your side.

By creating a budget, you will be able to see where your money is going, where you will be able to save money, and how to have a clear mind when it comes to your finances. Today, we'll explain two popular budgeting methods for you to consider: the "Zero-Sum Budget" and the "50-30-20 Method."

One of Dave Ramsey's philosophies for financial success is the zero-sum budget. Essentially, it is your monthly income minus expenses equals zero. So, if you make \$3,000 a month, that \$3,000 should be allotted to

food, utilities, transportation, housing, insurance, miscellaneous expenses (giving yourself a buffer), debt, etc. This way, every dollar you make is being put to good use—either by spending or saving. Click the following Ramsey website link to see how you can make your zero-sum budget for free. <https://www.ramseysolutions.com/ramseyplus/everydollar>

This source will take you through a series of questions asking your current financial goals, your monthly income, your monthly payments and debts and savings, and will calculate it all for you. It's free, and it does the math for you—sounds like a win, win!

Another budget plan that could work for your savings plan is the 50-30-20 method. That is, 50 percent on needs, 30 percent on wants, and 20 percent on savings. The "needs" department includes rent, mortgage payments, utilities, food and transportation. The "wants" area is designated for dining out, vacations, entertainment, new electronics and fancy coffees. And the "savings" is allotted to exactly what it is named: savings and investments. This can be your regular savings account, an IRA account or investing in the stock market. Take the time to write down all your expenses and categorize them within these three departments, and you will thank yourself later.

With either of these budget plans, you will go from wondering where your money went over the month to knowing where, when, and how it was spent. Life should be enjoyed without the looming stress of your financial status. Start the new year off right while also looking out for your future self and start your budget today!

Need an extra set of eyes for your budget? Don't hesitate to reach out to our team for advice or financial help! Contact Us

Sources:

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TRIGGER WARNING: TRIGGERS ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

By: Dr. Nika White, president and CEO, Nika White Consulting and author of, "Inclusion Uncomplicated: A Transformative Guide to Simplify DEI," published by Forbes Books.



Dr. Nika White

Chidiebere Ibe, who was seeking a more diverse representation of this natural process.

The internet went wild. While some people praised it as a win for a more diverse representation of childbearing, it triggered others. At first, I wondered what could be so triggering about seeing a common depiction of a woman's body carrying a fetus. When I thought more about it, I realized this single illustration could be triggering people for a multitude of reasons.



In our current political climate regarding reproductive rights, seeing a fetus in a womb can be triggering for many people. It can be triggering for those unable to bear children or struggling with fertility issues. It could trigger those who had a child but recently lost them. It could also be triggering for folks who are uncomfortable with discussing the body and its natural functions. For whatever reason, this image evoked both joy and discomfort at the same time.

For the people who found joy, representation and pride in this image, they basked in the ambiance. For those who were triggered, their roars raged on, arguably louder than a simple illustration should have warranted. So, if you are a person who is easily triggered by something you see or something that's said, perhaps it's time to go deeper.

The rise of trigger warnings

Trigger warnings have changed the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) landscape. When difficult topics came up in the past, people may have been confronted by uncomfortable feelings that had to be dealt with, oftentimes without warning.

But in the late 1990s, "trigger warning" as a term began to surface on feminist internet message boards and, thus, found its way into common discourse. Nowadays, before discussing a potentially traumatic topic like sexual violence, self-harm or other forms of violence, you should mention a trigger warning, or "TW" for short.

These days, people are quick to raise the "trigger flag" and say that someone harmed or traumatized them. But there's also room for the person who is triggered to take responsibility, own their trigger, and work to heal it.

Owning our triggers

What brings one person joy, triggers another person. But who is responsible for managing the feelings of being triggered? The person who shares a photo of a Black fetus in a womb. Or the person looking at and responding to the image?

We're at a turning point where we all need to acknowledge what triggers us and find ways to address those triggers within ourselves. To me, this is an important line of demarcation. Those who are constantly triggered may want to ask themselves, "Is it time for me to take responsibility for my triggers?" Or "is it time for me to go to therapy and address the traumatic situations from my past?" I would implore us to explore and analyze how personal triggers affect others in the room and how we can work through them to be more mindful members of our community.

More often than not, our triggers are unhealed parts of ourselves

that keep coming up to haunt us every time a related topic emerges. But how do we effectively ensure we're aware that a potentially triggering message may be coming and prepare ourselves while simultaneously allowing others to experience joy and happiness in the moment?

There's not enough focus on individual accountability for healing triggers. While shared accountability has its place (more on that in the next section), it can feel unfair and unrealistic to make everyone else responsible for shouldering another person's triggers. So, where's the balance between healing ourselves, warning others, and holding space for another person's joy?

The power of shared accountability

While no one is perfect, and we all carry trauma with us, there's room for shared accountability regarding triggers. Individuals own their trauma while communities can be aware of them and exercise caution and compassion. This isn't the same as saying "trigger warning" and then watching the community back away, it's about saying "TW" and watching the community lean in. To embrace someone in compassion at that moment, to not alienate them, but to understand and affirm them.

People who have experienced trauma must feel safe to disclose vulnerable information, like when they were victims of violence or were treated unfairly. It takes strength and vulnerability to say, "This is triggering to me." Still, once the trigger is communicated, the person on the receiving end should have enough awareness and sensitivity to act with compassion.

As mentioned earlier, one person's trigger is another person's joy, so sharing accountability and sensitivity to someone's trauma doesn't dismiss one's need and desire for joy and celebration. We can be compassionate to others and focus on our joy simultaneously. The ask for shared accountability is to simply be aware of the potential impacts a triggering scenario may have on someone who experienced pain or trauma while still maintaining your personal experience in the moment.

Final thoughts

Triggers are real, and for decades, issuing "trigger warnings" was the most thoughtful and kind way to address difficult topics with those who may have experienced trauma in the past. While not everyone shares the same traumas, there's room for individuals to work through them and begin the healing process. In contrast, others have the opportunity to balance sensitivity and compassion with personal joy and happiness.

My observation has been that one person's joy is another person's trigger, and as we navigate this world together, we should be mindful of those who are not feeling tortured or triggered and let them feel good in the moment. And those of us feeling triggered should embark on the personal journey to seek professional help and work through our traumas.

We should all be able to experience joy without having to tiptoe around another person's long-term, unhealed trauma. When we can co-exist with trauma and heal in a way where everyone feels they can live their full experience in peace, then we can turn the page on building more compassionate communities and discussing the topics that trigger and inspire us.





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Robb and Daryn Sasser commit to help patients on their cancer journey.

The Sasses have been giving to the McLeod Health Foundation since 1997. But it was a life altering loss 20 years later that inspired their current philanthropic focus.

Robb's mother and both of Daryn's parents passed away from cancer. The loss of their family members motivated this generous couple to seek out a way to help cancer patients.

Years ago, their good friend Robin Aiken helped establish the HOPE (Helping Oncology Patients Everyday) Fund for patients treated at the McLeod Center for Cancer Treatment and Research. Once Robb and Daryn learned about this special patient assistance fund, they knew immediately this is where they wanted to direct their support.

"Cancer requires everyone in a family to come together to get through it," Daryn explained.

While Daryn's father underwent cancer treatment, he was forced to travel over an hour away from their small town for care. Daryn and her siblings lived hours away and had to determine how he would be transported. With the help of a compassionate neighbor, he was able to make it to all of his appointments.

"Robb and I quickly realized that the HOPE Fund would fill the gap for those who do not have this kind of support," Daryn recalled. "Cancer is so debilitating. It is important to help anyone you can."

The couple began their crusade for the HOPE Fund with a generous gift from Daryn's parent's estate. Later, when the McLeod Foundation launched the HOPE Fund Endowment, it, too, became the focus of the Sasser's giving.

"The HOPE Fund is special because it truly provides human services beyond medical care to those struggling with their cancer journey," Robb explained.



As a volunteer in the McLeod Cancer Center, Daryn shares items from the Hope Cart with patients like Denny Connell while they are receiving treatment.

and volunteers regularly in the Cancer Center.

"We grew up in small towns and both of our families had to travel to larger towns for advanced healthcare," Robb said. "We have always known that we are blessed to live in a place that has such excellent healthcare close to home."

While the impact of Robb and Daryn's gifts help those in our region, their thoughts always return to their beloved parents when supporting the McLeod Foundation.

"We are comforted by the fact that the passing of our parents has led us to a legacy of giving back to help others in their cancer journey," Robb reflected. "We are confident they would approve."

INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION



Barbara and Allie Brooks support the McLeod Children's Hospital by mailing in their donation each month.

Allie Brooks had planned on a long career in the United States Military. Serving in ROTC at South Carolina State University as he completed his education degree, he had no expectation of becoming a teacher.

However, after an honorable discharge from the military, Brooks began serving his country by investing in the next generation. Beginning as a math teacher at Moore Middle School, Brooks quickly worked his way up to principal at Wilson High School, a role he held for three decades. His career culminated by serving as superintendent of Florence School District One.

"Being an educator gives you the chance to help mold children," Brooks explained. "Being a principal and a superintendent allows you to increase your impact in helping students become productive adults."

While Brooks strived to develop the next generation, Barbara worked to provide specialized and compassionate care for the Pee Dee region as a registered nurse at McLeod Regional Medical Center. With a career that spanned more than 46 years, Barbara also believed in the value of giving back to the community and was a loyal supporter of the McLeod Health Foundation's Employee Campaign during her years of service.

Through their careers as well as the fact that their three children were born at McLeod, Brooks and Barbara know the value of having children's healthcare available locally. In 2016, they joined other generous donors of the McLeod Foundation to support the McLeod Children's Hospital Expansion Campaign.

"It is a blessing to have a Children's Hospital in the Pee Dee," Brooks says. "The services they provide children in our region – from babies no larger than your hand to teenagers – are immeasurable."

The Brooks are both retired now, but they remain committed to improving the lives of the next generation in our region by tutoring elementary school children and mentoring at risk K-12 students. In addition to a busy volunteering schedule and Brooks' service on the McLeod Health Board of Trustees, the couple gives monthly via direct mail to support the McLeod Children's Hospital.

JENNY HARDEE NAMED CEO MCLEOD HEALTH DILLON

Submitted by McLeod Health



Jenny Hardee

DILLON - Jenny Hardee has been named as the new CEO of McLeod Health Dillon.

This organizational change is an opportunity to see McLeod relationships evolve with the community, medical staff and patients, while remaining the Dillon area's choice for medical excellence. In addition to leadership qualities, Hardee will focus on the mission and values of McLeod and an alignment with the local community.

Hardee joined McLeod Health in 2005 as the chief nursing officer for McLeod Health Darlington, and previously served as interim administrator of McLeod Health Cheraw during a leadership transition. She also served as administrator of McLeod Health Darlington. Her clinical background includes experience as a staff nurse, nurse manager and clinical leader as the corporate vice president of McLeod Occupational Health. She has also worked as a school nurse and clinical instructor for the nursing program at Florence-Darlington Technical College.

Hardee says she looks forward to serving the staff and patients of McLeod Health Dillon. "In this role, my goal is to serve alongside the staff and community to ensure the availability of excellence and quality medical care to the residents of Dillon and surrounding counties."

Hardee received her associate degree in nursing from Florence-Darlington Technical College. She also earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing and a Master of Science in Nursing from the Medical University of South Carolina School of Nursing. While in graduate school, Hardee was also a member of Sigma Theta Tau, the nursing honor society.

Hardee and her husband, J. Todd Hardee, reside in Darlington. They have two sons and two grandchildren.



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NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO HIGHLIGHTS CARESOUTH CAROLINA'S PAT WEAVER

Submitted by CareSouth Carolina



Pat Weaver, APNP-BC

HARTSVILLE-CareSouth Carolina's Patricia Weaver, APNP-BC, was featured by National Public Radio (NPR) in its latest piece, highlighting the difference CareSouth Carolina is making in its patients' lives who are struggling with diabetes, chronic conditions and medical debt.

Patricia Weaver, APNP-BC, who serves as a provider in the CareSouth Carolina Bennettsville office, revealed the struggle that many patients go through, as those who are living with chronic conditions are also living with medical debt. She explains that the departure of plants to overseas locations over the past 15-20 years has

had a devastating impact on the town. A hospital that once existed there is now gone, leaving the community in a state of poverty.

Over one-third of residents in the surrounding county have medical debt in collections, and an equal proportion live in poverty, according to locals interviewed by NPR. Weaver and others attribute the community's health problems to Bennettsville's shifting economic circumstances. Half of the city's households earn less than \$32,000 annually. Lower-income residents often lack the means or make choices that compromise their ability to consume healthy meals necessary for managing diabetes. The prevalence of fast-food consumption exacerbates this issue.

"The fast foods don't help at all, and a lot of people just eat it every day, and that's a problem. It truly is," she said.

Weaver shared that over 90 percent of her 3,300 annual appointments involve patients with Type 2 diabetes, and that CareSouth Carolina offers programs to assist its residents who are struggling with the chronic condition.

One of CareSouth Carolina's programs involves going into the grocery store with patients. At the grocery store, the patient shops as they normally would, and CareSouth Carolina's FSS III workers spend time educating them on healthy nutrition and giving helpful tips when it comes to their selections. The FSS III workers let the grocery store know ahead of time that they are coming so they are aware, as well. In the fight against poverty and its impact on health in Bennettsville, CareSouth also takes additional measures. The center employs a sliding fee scale based on individuals' ability to pay, and it operates an in-house pharmacy that leverages a federal program to maintain affordable drug prices.

Though these measures have made an impact on Marlboro County and the surrounding community, CareSouth Carolina still has plans in the future to continue addressing the health needs of the Pee Dee region.

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 medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, women's services, OB/GYN, HIV/AIDS primary care, infectious disease primary care, IV therapy, substance abuse prevention, dental, chiropractic services, pharmacy, senior support services, family support services, clinical counseling, laboratory, ultrasound, X-Ray, agricultural worker health services, and veterans' choice provider.

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Hartsville, SC 29550
843.332.3422
843.339.5520 Chiropractic |
| Bennettsville Pediatric Center
210 W. Main Street
Bennettsville, SC 29512
843.479.1200 | Lake View Center
103 N. Kemper Street
Lake View, SC 29563
843.759.2189 |
| Bennettsville Women's Center
1076 Marlboro Way Rd., Suite 1
Bennettsville, SC 29512
843.454.2294 | Latta Center
122 Latimer Street
Latta, SC 29565
843.627.6252 |
| Bishopville Center
545 Sumter Highway
Bishopville, SC 29010
803.484.5317 | McColl Health & Wellness Center
3080 Highway 15-401 E
McColl, SC 29570
843.523.5751 |
| Bishopville Pediatric Dental
101 Harris Street
Bishopville, SC 29010
866.815.9845 | Society Hill Center
737 S. Main Street
Society Hill, SC 29593
843.378.4501 |
| Cheraw Center
715 S. Doctors Drive Suite E
Cheraw, SC 29520
843.537.0961 | Public Employee Health Services - Marlboro County
100 Matheson Street
Bennettsville, SC 29512
843.456.7752 |
| Chesterfield Center
204 Perry Wiley Way
Chesterfield, SC 29709
843.623.5080 | |
| Dillon Center
1016 Old Latta Highway
Dillon, SC 29536
843.774.4337 | |

Pharmacy Locations:

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545 Sumter Hwy
803.588.7960 | BENNETTSVILLE
999 Cheraw Street
843.456.7777 |
| SOCIETY HILL
737 S. Main Street
843.378.4148 | CHERAW
715 S. Doctors Drive, Ste. A
843.865.4080 | |
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CARESOUTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY PHARMACY SET TO OPEN IN DILLON

Articles submitted by CareSouth Carolina



DILLON - In a move that is set to greatly benefit patients in the community, CareSouth Carolina (CSC) is opening a new pharmacy at its Dillon medical office, 1016 Old Latta Highway Dillon, SC 29536.

The addition of an on-site pharmacy means that patients will no longer have to wait for next-day delivery and can conveniently walk straight to the pharmacy for their medication needs. This development has been hailed as a significant step forward in providing enhanced care and improved patient experiences.

“Being able to actually open up a pharmacy in Dillon for CareSouth Carolina will be huge for the patients that utilize our medical facility,” CareSouth Carolina Chief of Pharmacy Ashley Singleton said. “Now, they’ll be able to have a pharmacist to speak to, put a face with a name, develop relationships and have all the benefits that come with continuity of care. Hopefully, that will make the process much smoother for the medical team, pharmacy team and most importantly, the patient, as we are all working under one roof.”

The CSC Community Pharmacy will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, providing ample opportunities for patients to access their prescriptions. For more convenience, patients can also download the mobile app, Mobile Rx, which allows them to manage and fill their prescriptions online.

The pharmacy accepts all major insurances and is open to all, even those

who are not patients of CareSouth Carolina, and aims to be a full-service pharmacy that offers excellent care through consultation and affordable prices on prescriptions. The pharmacy is equipped to handle various services, including the 340-B retail program, and has a full-service drive-thru. Lucile Owens, a Dillon native, will serve as the pharmacist in charge at the new pharmacy.

“I am thrilled to be returning back to my hometown to open the newest CSC Community Pharmacy location in Dillon,” Owens said. “CareSouth Carolina is an exceptional organization that provides our patients much-needed cost-saving opportunities for their medications that cannot be found elsewhere in our community. Patients should not have to choose between their life-saving medications or their other essential needs and CareSouth, through our 340-B program, in all of our pharmacies, allows for ALL of our patients the ability to afford both. My pharmacy team and I are looking forward to opening our newest location and serving the patients of the Dillon community.”

CareSouth Carolina has been a prominent healthcare provider in the area and is committed to delivering comprehensive services to meet the diverse healthcare needs of the community. In addition to the new pharmacy in Dillon, CareSouth Carolina has pharmacy locations in Hartsville, Bennettsville, Bishopville, Latta, McColl, Society Hill and Cheraw.

CareSouth Carolina and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control opened the new 18,640-square-foot Dillon facility last year as part of a partnership. The facility allows CareSouth Carolina to continue to provide preventive health services in Dillon, including family planning, Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections, HIV, immunizations, family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, women’s services, substance abuse prevention program, dental, pharmacy, geriatrics, social services, behavioral health counseling, laboratory, ultrasound, x-ray, migrant services and veteran’s choice provider.

CARESOUTH CAROLINA SHOWCASED BY THE COMMONWEALTH FUND FOR “TRANSFORMING CARE”



HARTSVILLE-The monumental task of assessing the eligibility of 92.3 million Americans for Medicaid benefits based on their age, income and disability status has begun in all 50 states. These crucial “redeterminations,” typically conducted annually, were temporarily

halted during the COVID-19 public health emergency to ensure continuous coverage for individuals at high risk of severe outcomes from the disease.

As the redetermination process unfolds, an estimated 15 million individuals are projected to lose their Medicaid benefits over the next 13 months, according to The Commonwealth Fund. Some will no longer meet their state’s eligibility criteria, while others may be disenrolled due to administrative and paperwork errors. Among those affected will be individuals who miss notifications regarding the redetermination process, subsequently missing deadlines to enroll in affordable marketplace plans or apply for coverage through an employer.

Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), responsible for caring for approximately one in six Medicaid beneficiaries, are expected to play a pivotal role in identifying individuals at risk of losing their coverage. These centers will assist in maintaining their enrollment, or alternatively, support them in finding alternative insurance options.

As a FQHC, CareSouth Carolina was one of the community health centers showcased in the report. CareSouth Carolina CEO Ann Lewis expressed the concern the organization has about ensuring people get the coverage they need.

“It can be a heavy lift for each application because there’s so much uncertainty about the personal information the state has and may request,” says Lewis. “One of her biggest fears is that the addresses in the state’s database are outdated. “This is a population of patients that moves around quite a bit,” she says. “Ultimately, people are going to fall through the cracks.”

CareSouth Carolina’s Community Outreach Team is working hard to ensure that community members are properly re-enrolled in Medicaid. One

of these ways is through the newly introduced Healthy Kids Project initiative. CareSouth Carolina was awarded a grant from The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to help enroll and renew Medicaid coverage for kids, parents, pregnant individuals and non-English speaking individuals.

If you need assistance in changing your address or signing up for Medicaid, CareSouth Carolina has Family Support Services Benefit counselors who are available to assist.

For more information or help with Medicaid re-enrollment, please call 1-866-498-0399 and a CareSouth Carolina representative will be happy to help.

Through the Healthy Kids Project, CareSouth Carolina has hosted community events, marketed in targeted areas and looked to eliminate transportation barriers to patients who may not be able to get help otherwise. You don’t need to be a CareSouth Carolina patient to receive these services, either.

Ashley Ford, director of the Healthy Kids Project, said that CareSouth Carolina understands that the Medicaid enrollment and re-enrollment process can be confusing. That’s why the organization will be with you and take care of all aspects from start to finish.

“If in doubt, just give us a call,” Ford said. “Don’t scramble your brain to try and figure it out. We’ll be able to walk with you through the entire process. Let us do the lay work for you. Going to the local Medicaid office can be stressful, but we can do all of that for you, if you’ll let us assist you. It doesn’t cost you a thing.”

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

AMERICAN RED CROSS CONNECTS FOR CHANGE

Submitted by Michael Hesbach, executive director American Red Cross, Eastern South Carolina Chapter



Michael Hesbach

September is Sickle Cell Awareness Month, and the American Red Cross supports those diagnosed with the inherited disease. One in twelve Black Americans or African Americans is born with Sickle Cell Trait, and Sickle Cell Disease occurs in one out of every 365 Black or African American births.

Sickle Cell Disease makes red blood cells hard and crescent or “sickle” shaped instead of soft and round. Those sickled cells only live for 10 to 20 days, while normal red blood cells live for 120 days. This

disparity in red blood cell life causes many patients with Sickle Cell Disease to require frequent blood transfusions, with some patients needing as many as 100 pints of blood per year.

Because of their abnormal shape, the sickle cells can also get stuck in blood vessels causing blockages that generate extreme pain. Sickle Cell Warriors, the term collectively adopted by those with the disease, undergo a routine of treatment that starts with warm compresses, pain medication and rest. The routine will often escalate to hospital visits with pain management, oxygen therapy and a transfusion of multiple units of blood.

Dreylan Holmes, age 12, is a Sickle Cell Warrior. “One day, my son is perfectly fine. He’s laughing and joking, spending time with our family and the next, he is in excruciating pain,” says his mother, Vesha Jamison.

When Holmes and other warriors experience the pain and begin their management routine, it is known as a Sickle Cell Crisis. During his most recent crisis, Holmes received six units of blood, the most he has ever received. Some adult warriors require monthly blood exchanges of up to 12 units.

Donors who are Black or African American are almost three times more likely to match the blood needed for most sickle cell patients than donors who are not. Patients battling sickle cell typically need blood donated by individuals of a similar race or ethnic background because blood and blood antigens differ by ethnicity, and the best blood match ensures the best chance of effective treatment with fewer adverse reactions.

The Red Cross Eastern Chapter holds blood drives daily across the Pee Dee, and nationally, the Red Cross provides about 40 percent of the nation’s blood supply. Here in South Carolina, the Red Cross supplies blood products to hospitals across the state, including Darlington, Florence, Marion, Horry and Georgetown counties.

To learn more about Red Cross blood services, to host a blood drive, or to invite a Sickle Cell educator to speak to your group, please contact Michael Hesbach at 843.412.8519. To donate blood, visit redcrossblood.org.

STAY HEALTHY AND COOL IN THE SUMMER Submitted by HopeHealth News Desk



As you look forward to spending time outdoors this summer, here are some facts and tips on heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Both conditions are preventable, yet, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 600 people die every year of heat-related illnesses. They occur when the body loses its natural ability to cool itself in extreme heat conditions and happen most often when temperatures are higher than average, and people are spending more time outside.

Heat exhaustion is a fairly common condition in the summer. It occurs when the body has dehydrated through excessive sweating and loses its ability to cool. Symptoms include sweating heavily, a fast and weak pulse, muscle cramps, extreme fatigue, weakness, headache, nausea or vomiting, dizziness, lightheadedness and cool, clammy skin.

Heat exhaustion may be mild and often can be treated by drinking water, cooling off and resting, but depending on the severity of your condition, you may need medical evaluation at a doctor’s office. If you experience extreme exhaustion with hot skin temperature, decreased urination or very dark urine, you need to be evaluated in

the emergency department. Severe, heat exhaustion can affect vital organs, including the heart, kidneys and brain.

Heat stroke is a less common medical emergency and the most serious form of heat-related illness. It requires urgent evaluation and treatment in the emergency department and occurs when the body loses its ability to sweat and normal self-cooling mechanisms are impaired.

With heat stroke, body temperature reaches 103 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, physical symptoms of heat exhaustion are present, and the skin is usually hot, red and dry. Neurologic symptoms are the hallmark of heat stroke and can range from mild confusion to severe delirium and life-threatening seizures.

Severe cases of heat-related illness can cause acute kidney injury, abnormal heart rhythms and, in extreme cases, may lead to cardiac arrest and death – all in a matter of hours if symptoms are unrecognized and inadequately treated. Effective interventions like IV fluids and electrolyte replacement help the most in the early hours of severe heat exhaustion and heat stroke, before lasting damage has occurred.

Anyone can be affected by heat illness, but infants and the elderly are most at risk. Additionally, there are a number of at-risk groups, including those with chronic illnesses, developmental disabilities, mobility problems, people who are on dialysis and those taking medications that reduce the ability to sweat or increase the chance of dehydration.

Many common medications also can increase the risk of heat illness, so please discuss with your primary care provider or pharmacist whether excess heat should be avoided.

Others at risk include workers exposed to hot conditions such as road maintenance and factory workers, emergency workers, police officers, construction crews and landscapers.

Prevention

When possible, avoid heavy exertion during the hottest part of the day. Do yard work and exercise when it’s coolest in the morning or late evening. Stay indoors in air-conditioned spaces when you are able and drink plenty of water. If you do not have air conditioning at

STAY HEALTHY CONT'D

home, spending time in public places such as a library or shopping are sensible ways to pass the hottest hours of the day. Some communities might set up heat-relief stations in schools or churches during heat waves.

When you must be outside, wear lightweight, light-colored, loose clothing that “breathes” and allows air movement to cool you. Wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses to protect your eyes and an SPF 15 or higher sunscreen - SPF 30 or 50 is recommended - to protect your skin.

If you start to feel bad or notice someone with heat-related symptoms, move indoors immediately if possible. If not, get to a shaded area. Rest, drink plenty of water and fluids with electrolytes such as Gatorade or Pedialyte and monitor symptoms closely.

You may use cold packs, cool baths, showers and fans to cool the body quicker. If symptoms worsen, especially a severe headache, nausea and vomiting, irregular pulse, confusion or other mental changes, go directly to the nearest emergency department. This is an appropriate time to call 911 if you are unable to transport yourself or the individual affected.

Heat-related illness is preventable but can have very severe and devastating consequences if prevention is not practical. Think ahead when you are going to be outside for an extended time during hot weather. Have plenty of fluids available, seek shelter when you notice the earliest symptoms of heat fatigue and, if symptoms are not improving within an hour or two with home treatment, seek medical attention.

Do not leave infants, children, pets or adults in a hot car for any length of time. With a little planning, you can keep most cases of heat illness from ending in tragedy. Early recognition and treatment of heat-related illness is the next-best strategy to reduce serious heat-related injury – but prevention is always best.

For more information, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has many great materials at the touch of a button. Check [cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress) for tips and, yes, there’s even an app for that!

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has many helpful free apps that you can use to assess your own risk for heat illness, including the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool App and podcasts. There are many resources for employers and workers to reduce the risk of heat illness and recognize early warning symptoms.

HOPEHEALTH’S NEWEST PROVIDER

Submitted by HopeHealth Publications Coordinator, Sheridan K. Murray, BS, BA,



John Browning, MD

John Browning, MD is an OB/GYN providing women’s care services at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science from Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia, and with a medical degree from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Browning enlisted in the military in 1986 and provided OB/GYN care in Washington and Germany before being promoted to Major in the Army Reserve in 1992. His residency was completed at Madigan Army Medical Center. He has practiced in Florence since 1994.

Browning is a member of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the SC OB/GYN Society and the SC Medical Association.

HopeHealth is a nonprofit leader in providing affordable, expert health care and infectious disease 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](https://www.hope-health.org).

Your Home For Women’s Health Services

Services:

Cervical Cancer Screenings
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LIVING A NORMAL LIFE WITH HIV IS POSSIBLE

Submitted by Harmeet Gill, MD, Internal Medicine and Infectious Disease HopeHealth



Harmeet Gill, MD

Human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, is an infection that attacks and destroys the body's immune system. The first case of AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, was diagnosed in 1981. At that time, a diagnosis of HIV/AIDS was thought to be fatal, and people were fearful of contracting and/or spreading the virus. This led to decades of stigma. Unfortunately, stigma associated with HIV/AIDS still exists today, although people can live healthy lives without fear

of spreading HIV if they adhere to proper medication and treatment guidelines.

HIV specifically attacks white blood cells called CD4. If left untreated, CD4 levels drop. This leads to a compromised immune system with an increased risk of developing bacterial infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and certain types of cancer. HIV can progress to an AIDS diagnosis if left untreated and is based on CD4 blood levels and/or HIV associated medical conditions.

In the United States, 1.2 million people live with HIV. Of those, it is estimated that 13 percent of people are unaware they have HIV, while 57 percent are in medical care with viral suppression and are living normal lives. In 2019, over 38,000 cases were newly diagnosed in the United States.

HIV is spread through IV drug use while sharing needles or by having unprotected sex with an infected partner. The risk for acquiring HIV is highest in gay or bisexual men at 61 percent, heterosexual partners at 28 percent, intravenous drug users (IDU) at eight percent, IDU with male-to-male unprotected sex at three percent, and other causes at less than one percent. African American and Latino populations are disproportionately affected relative to their size in the population with African Americans having the most of any race living with HIV in the U.S. HIV also affects younger populations with those under age 35 accounting for 57 percent of new HIV cases in 2019.

Many people who have HIV may have no symptoms while others may have flu-like symptoms two to four weeks after becoming infected. The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested. The Centers for Disease Control recommends that everyone ages 13-65 get tested at least once, with those at higher risk needing more frequent testing. Developing a relationship with a primary health care provider and discussing your risk is the best way to determine when and how often to test.

Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is a treatment consisting of medications designed to decrease the HIV viral load in the blood down to undetectable levels if taken as prescribed. These medications typically do not have side effects. If the infected person's blood tests show viral suppression, research shows they cannot transmit the virus to others and can live a normal life.

A worldwide campaign called U=U, meaning "undetectable equals untransmittable," was developed to spread awareness that HIV medications are extremely effective, and those that are undetectable cannot spread the virus. This campaign is also important to help decrease and eliminate the stigma of an HIV diagnosis.

UNAIDS is leading a worldwide effort to end AIDS as a global health threat. They launched the 90-90-90 campaign in 2014 with a target that by 2020, 90 percent will be aware of their HIV diagnosis, 90 percent will be in treatment, and 90 percent will be undetectable.

This target suffered during the COVID pandemic; the updated target is 95-95-95 by 2025.

A patient in the HopeHealth HIV program, who prefers to stay anonymous, shares his inspiring HIV story, in the hopes it will encourage others to seek treatment.

"I was released from prison in 2016 with only the clothes on my back and went to live with my sister. I tested positive for HIV while in prison, and my probation officer referred me to HopeHealth to continue care when I was released. I met with my doctor for medical treatment and also met with Regina Pompey, a medical case manager. I now see Dr. Gill and only have to take one HIV medication a day. I am happy to say I remain undetectable for HIV."

He goes on to share benefits of the program. "Ms. Regina has been by my side advocating for me since I first came to HopeHealth and helped build my confidence. She assisted me in getting my medicines covered, remembering appointments, finding transportation when I needed it, helping coordinate referrals and scheduling my other medical appointments. She also helped me live on my own in a nice place by getting the first and last month's rent covered, and I received help starting out when I got behind on bills."

In his personal life he says he is happy and making great progress. "With Ms. Regina's encouragement I was able to get my driver's license, buy a car and find a better job. Over time, I was able to get my CDL license and began to make good money as a truck driver. I traveled the U.S., a lifelong dream. Now I have a local route, I can be home more and spend time with family, friends and my girlfriend.

This patient's health is now a top priority. He explains, "I don't



Shyam Tantry, MD

HopeHealth Endocrinology

Endocrinology is a specialty that offers diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the endocrine system, such as diabetes, hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, and adrenal insufficiency.

For More Information

(843) 432-3716 | hope-health.org/services



Now Accepting New Patients!

LIVING A NORMAL LIFE CONT'D



miss medical appointments, and I never skip my HIV medication. I've even started going to church again and don't drink alcohol or smoke marijuana anymore. The continued support I received from HopeHealth turned my life

around, and I'm living better now than ever before."

While there is no cure at present, patients who take their medications as prescribed and utilize HopeHealth HIV Program can become undetectable and learn to live a full life without the fear of spreading it to others. The Infectious Diseases team at HopeHealth focuses on support and providing up-to-date care for patients and encourages them to live their best lives. It's a huge step forward for any patients who struggle with the possibility or reality of an HIV diagnosis and also for their family and friends and others with whom they interact. These services ensure living a normal life with HIV is possible.

Gill is a board-certified infectious disease physician and has recently joined the practice at HopeHealth. He is accepting new patients as well as any former patients who may have discontinued HIV care. HopeHealth is also part of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program facilitated by the Health Resource Services Administration. The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program helps low-income people with HIV access medical care, medications and essential support services to help them stay in care. For more information on the HIV Program at HopeHealth, call 843-667-9414 or visit hope-health.org.

STAY ON YOUR FEET: 12 FALL PREVENTION STEPS FOR SENIORS

Submitted by Krissy Huntley physician assistant, HopeHealth Medical Plaza



Krissy Huntley

Do you know an older person who has taken a fall? Chances are you do, since one in four seniors (adults over 65) injure themselves annually. While some falls may not cause an injury, one in five falls is linked to broken bones or a head injury.

Once a person falls, the chance of them falling again doubles. People who fall once may become afraid and decrease their daily activities to avoid another fall. This decrease in activity can cause weakness and, in turn, increase falling risk. The good news is most

falls are preventable with a good fall prevention plan.

What causes a fall in seniors? There are several risk factors to be aware of:

- Home hazards that can cause a slip, trip or fall such as throw rugs, clutter, uneven steps, slipping while bathing or showering or climbing on a step stool or chair to reach something.
- Having lower body weakness or difficulties with walking and balance
- Attempting to carry items while going up or down steps or while walking on uneven flooring.
- Taking medications that cause dizziness or sleepiness such as anti-depressants, tranquilizers or sedatives and certain over-the-counter meds such as ibuprofen and sleep aids.
- Impaired vision or hearing

- Foot/leg pain or poor footwear
- Vitamin D deficiency

The more risk factors you have, the higher your risk of falling.

Once you turn 60, it's important to start assessing your fall risk and reviewing your risk each year. There are several important steps to consider to help prevent falls:

1. Equip your home with adequate lighting – add more lights and/or brighter bulbs if needed. Place night-lights in bedrooms and bathrooms.
2. Repair any broken or uneven steps as well as uneven flooring and remove throw rugs and clutter on the floor. Make sure all pathways are clear.
3. Install hand rails on both sides of any steps and add grab rails by the toilet and inside and outside the shower/tub area.
4. Place things you use often in lower cabinets to avoid using a step stool.
5. Being in a hurry is a major risk factor for falls! Take a deep breath and slow down if you feel rushed or anxious.
6. When going from sitting to standing, take a few breaths, focus on balance, and plot your course before starting to walk. Use any walking equipment carefully. Be aware of your feet and surroundings as you walk. Stay mindful when moving.
7. Make sure to schedule an annual vision exam. Your vision can change as you age, and not seeing clearly increases fall risk.
8. If you or others notice a change in your hearing, schedule a hearing exam, as loss of hearing can also affect balance.
9. Let your family, friends and health care provider know if you're having trouble with balance, walking or dizziness. Ask for help if you need it! It's also important to discuss fall prevention topics with your health care provider:

10. Review all medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medications and supplements. Taking more than four medications can increase fall risk, so an annual assessment of all medications is helpful. Report any symptoms such as dizziness, sleepiness or loss of balance with any new medications.

11. Ask your provider about exercise safety. If cleared for exercise, look into programs that promote lower body strength and balance such as strength training and Tai chi. If you are referred to physical therapy, keep doing home exercises after you are discharged to maintain strength and balance or join a program to help you stay strong.

12. Discuss fall prevention topics with your health care provider.

Less than half of seniors tell their provider about a fall. It's important to contact your provider if you have a fall, even if you're not hurt, to make sure you're medically assessed properly. Check in with your provider after a visit to the emergency department or hospital.

If you or a loved one experience a fall outside of HopeHealth's normal operating hours, Access Hope is a convenient after-hours program for patients as an alternative to an expensive emergency department visit. Access Hope providers are available in Florence and Manning Monday-Saturday from 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Your provider is there to help you stay healthy and independent as long as possible. Create a fall prevention plan, talk to your provider about your plan, and stay on your feet!

Krissy Huntley is a physician assistant at Access Hope at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence, SC. Access Hope is an after-hours program for HopeHealth patients. With services in Florence and Manning, Access Hope can assist patients with minor sprains, acute illness such as respiratory or urinary infections, immunizations, blood sugar or other in-office testing. If you're not a patient and interested in these services visit hope-health.org or call (843) 667-9414.

MUSC HEALTH FLORENCE 2022-2023 BEST HOSPITALS FOR MATERNITY CARE

Submitted by John Russell, MUSC Health Florence Division marketing manager



U.S. News & World Report, the global authority in hospital rankings and consumer advice, has named MUSC Health Florence Medical Center as a 2022-2023 High Performing hospital for Maternity Care (Uncomplicated Pregnancy). This is the highest award a hospital can earn for U.S. News' Best Hospitals for Maternity Care.

The annual evaluation is designed to assist expectant parents and their doctors in making informed decisions about where to receive maternity care.

MUSC Health Florence Medical Center is the only hospital in South Carolina to earn a High Performing designation in recognition of maternity care. The criteria for the award is measured by factors such as newborn complication rates.

"We are thrilled to receive this designation as a top hospital for maternity care," said MUSC Health Florence Division Chief Executive Officer Jay Hinesley. "Providing the highest quality maternity care is crucial. This award confirms that our efforts to provide great patient outcomes are working."

U.S. News evaluated nearly 650 hospitals that provide high-quality labor & delivery services for uncomplicated pregnancies for its 2022-2023 Best Hospitals for Maternity Care. Fewer than half of all hospitals that offer maternity care and participated in the survey received a High Performing designation.

"When expectant parents are considering their options for welcoming a baby to the world, the Best Hospitals for Maternity Care are designed to help them identify hospitals that excel in delivering babies for uncomplicated pregnancies," said Ben Harder, chief of health analysis and managing editor at U.S. News. "A hospital that has earned a High Performing designation may be a good option for parents, in consultation with their medical provider, to consider."

The U.S. News Best Hospitals for Maternity Care methodology is based entirely on objective measures of quality, such as C-section rates in lower-risk pregnancies, newborn complication rates, exclusive breast milk feeding rates, early elective delivery rates and vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) rates, among other measures.

For more information, visit Best Hospitals for Maternity Care and use #BestMaternityHospitals on Facebook and Twitter.

About MUSC

Founded in 1824 in Charleston, MUSC is the state's only comprehensive academic health system, with a unique mission to preserve and optimize human life in South Carolina through education, research and patient care. Each year, MUSC educates more than 3,000 students in six colleges – Dental Medicine, Graduate Studies, Health Professions, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy – and trains more than 850 residents and fellows in its health system. MUSC brought in more than \$327.6

million in research funds in fiscal year 2021, leading the state overall in research funding. MUSC also leads the state in federal and National Institutes of Health funding, with more than \$220 million. For information on academic programs, visit muscedu.

As the health care system of the Medical University of South Carolina, MUSC Health is dedicated to delivering the highest-quality and safest patient care while educating and training generations of outstanding health care providers and leaders to serve the people of South Carolina and beyond. Patient care is provided at 14 hospitals with approximately 2,500 beds and five additional hospital locations in development; more than 350 telehealth sites, with connectivity to patients' homes; and nearly 750 care locations situated in all regions of South Carolina. In 2022, for the eighth consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the No. 1 hospital in South Carolina. To learn more about clinical patient services, visit muschealth.org.

MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets totaling \$4.4 billion. The nearly 25,000 MUSC team members include a world-class faculty, physicians, specialty providers, scientists, students, affiliates and care team members who deliver and support groundbreaking education, research and patient care.

About U.S. News & World Report

U.S. News & World Report is the global leader in quality rankings that empower consumers, business leaders and policy officials to make better, more informed decisions about important issues affecting their lives and communities. A multifaceted digital media company with education, health, money, travel, cars, news, real estate and 360 review platforms, U.S. News provides rankings, independent reporting, data journalism, consumer advice and U.S. News Live events. More than 40 million people visit USNews.com each month for research and guidance. Founded in 1933, U.S. News is headquartered in Washington, D.C.

U.S. News & World Report has named MUSC Health Florence Medical Center as a 2022-2023 Best Hospital for Maternity Care. The designation was decided based on data submitted for expectant mothers following an uncomplicated pregnancy. This is the highest award a hospital can earn for maternity care, and MUSC Health Florence is the only one in South Carolina to receive it.

Hospitals are evaluated in eight areas, including C-section, early elective delivery rates, overall unexpected newborn complication rates, exclusive breast milk feeding rates, and episiotomy rates among other criteria. The annual evaluation is designed to assist expectant parents and their doctors in making informed decisions about where to receive maternity care.



AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE

Submitted by Hanna Caddell, marketing and communications coordinator



Kayla Canteen, FNP, Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

HARTSVILLE-Life experiences led Kayla Canteen to her current role as a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) at Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center (CPRMC) in Hartsville.

For instance, seeing the impact of a lack of health education on family members prompted her to pursue even more education beyond her nursing degree at Francis Marion University. She hadn't yet completed her bachelor's in nursing when she decided she would also attain a master's degree as a nurse practitioner (NP), a role that allows her to prescribe treatments, order tests and diagnose patients.

"I already knew I'd go back for my masters as a nurse practitioner because of my experience with both of my granddads who weren't educated enough about their illnesses," she recalled. "One was on dialysis in the home, and tried to make changes, but he didn't feel like he had a lot of advocacy from his providers. He didn't feel like they were telling him anything. He ended up passing, and that's what made me want to go into the medical field and work in the community."

Her work as a nurse in the intensive care unit (ICU) at McLeod gave her an additional push.

"When I went to work in the ICU and saw so many people that reminded me of my grandfathers, well, that solidified that I didn't want to stay in intensive care for too long, because more of it was around hospice care and

helping people at the end of life," she said. "I wanted to make a difference in the community before people get to that point."

Today, she gets to pursue that vocation in her practice in the Primary Care office of Carolina Pines Medical Group. She sees more than a dozen patients on a typical day, applying equal amounts of healthcare and health education.

"Since I came from critical care, it's actually a passion of mine to prevent people from getting that sick," she said. "I offer a lot of education about chronic illnesses like high blood pressure, diabetes, and kidney disease. I also prescribe medications to help control these chronic illnesses and try to keep patients out of the hospital." She adds, "Sometimes we see patients who haven't previously established a relationship with a primary care provider, frequently visiting the hospital because they're having trouble managing their care on their own. This is where we try to intervene, and then as patients of our practice, we're able to closely monitor and care for them, and keep them out of the hospital."

Canteen uses her time with patients to really focus on educating them. Patients who are knowledgeable about their conditions and the steps they must take to stay well will see better outcomes.

Since arriving at CPRMC in April 2021, the Georgetown County native and now-Florence resident says she's enjoyed being able to impact her patients' lives. She says she relishes "actually seeing positive outcomes, being able to see patients get better – seeing that lightbulb come on and they understand what you are talking about."

"Sometimes, patients go to providers, and they are afraid to ask questions, or they hear a medical term, and they don't know what it means and are afraid to ask," she added. "I try not to use those words when I am talking to patients, and that helps me sleep well knowing my patients can talk to me and ask exactly what they need, what that word means, or 'what's that on my chart.' That's my passion, to help people."

Another asset she brings to CPRMC is her diversity. She noted that it is often comforting for many patients to see healthcare professionals



who look like them.

"I have so many people when I walk in a room that say they are excited to see me because they can talk to me," Canteen said. "Even if it is older African American patients or younger women – sometimes it is easier to talk to somebody who can relate to you. If I look like you, I'm more likely to have gone through the same experiences as you have than someone of a different race or sex. A lot of times when I talk to patients, especially patients that look like me, they kind of have a sigh of relief knowing that I can relate to them on levels even outside of healthcare."

She said that relatability extends to also being from this region. And as an example, she pointed out that Hartsville resides within the "stroke belt," a part of the country with high incidences of stroke, mostly due to sometimes unhealthy dietary practices.

"I can relate to what people around here eat, and even pinpoint exactly what they eat, and what they need to cut out," she said.

Canteen says thus far, she's appreciated her time at CPRMC. The hospital's smaller size puts her in closer proximity to physicians who are readily available if she has questions, and her role as a nurse practitioner allows for more time to consult with patients.

When she isn't seeing these patients at Carolina Pines, you'll likely find Canteen with her eight-year-old daughter enjoying road trips or cooking (but mostly healthy foods).

FNP Canteen is currently accepting new patients! The Primary Care office is located in the Carolina Pines Medical Group office building at 701 Medical Park Drive, Suite 207. For more information or to book an appointment, call 843.383.2764 or visit cprmc.com/schedule.



TO GLUTEN, OR NOT TO GLUTEN? CELIAC DISEASE AWARENESS.

Submitted by Ashley Beckum, MD MUSC Health – Primary Care - Hoffmeyer



Ashley Beckum, MD

be at risk if you have an immediate relative with celiac disease or if you have type 1 diabetes, autoimmune thyroid disease or Down syndrome.

What are the symptoms?

Many of my patients complain about an upset stomach that has lasted for months or even years. Some of these symptoms may include diarrhea, bloating, abdominal pain or gas. When going to the bathroom, your stool may be bulky, foul-smelling or floating in the toilet. A lot of people may experience unintentional weight loss. There are some other signs of celiac disease with skin and tongue changes, but they are less common than the previously stated symptoms.

How it's diagnosed?

Diagnosis comes from initially being screened by a blood test. If the blood test is positive, or if you are at high risk of having the disease, then your doctor may order an esophagogastroduodenoscopy (EGD) test. An EGD involves using an endoscope with a camera on the end passed down your throat to examine the upper GI tract i.e., esophagus or stomach. During the EGD the physician may take a sample, also called a biopsy, to send to the lab. This is how a physician can confirm if you have celiac disease. The EGD test is an outpatient procedure and doesn't typically involve a hospital stay.

How is it treated?

Unfortunately, there is no quick fix by using medication for celiac disease. The treatment your health care provider recommends will be a lifestyle change by removing gluten from your diet. Making this lifestyle change usually helps people feel significantly better and will have to be continued for the rest of the patient's life. As a side note, feeling better on a gluten-free diet does not mean you have celiac disease!

Which foods have gluten in them?

Gluten is found in wheat, barley and rye. Many common gluten-heavy foods include bread, pasta, cereal, crackers, cakes, cookies and pies. People with celiac disease are not typically affected by rice, oats or corn. Luckily, there are many options these days in the local grocery stores and restaurants that have gluten-free options. A gluten-free diet can also be considered healthy for the average person in case a patient's family would like to support them by following the diet too!

For more information about celiac disease or to schedule an appointment, Dr. Ashley Beckum can be reached by calling MUSC Health – Primary Care – Hoffmeyer at 843-679-4214, or by visiting [MUSCHealth.org](https://www.MUSCHealth.org).



Removing the bread is not enough.



Food preparation matters.

Cross contact in kitchens and shared fryers will cause intestinal damage to a person with celiac disease.

MUSC HEALTH HOLDS SIGNING DAY FOR NEW APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Submitted by MUSC Health Florence Division



Apprentice Group

MUSC Health Florence Medical Center held its official Signing Day for eight apprentices who were selected in partnership with Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC), Florence School District 3, Florence Adult Education and Pee Dee AHEC.

MUSC Health's mission is to preserve and optimize human life in South Carolina and beyond through education, research and patient care. This new apprenticeship is a demonstration of a commitment to training future clinicians and leaders in healthcare. During their program, apprentices will be engaged in a comprehensive experience that will include state certification as a Certified Nursing Assistant and on-the-job training hours with a knowledgeable preceptor who will provide guidance and support.

Since recruitment began in April 2023, there has been an outpour of interest from the community. MUSC Health Florence Division is hopeful that interest in the program will continue, and more community partners and local school districts will join the effort to add apprenticeships across the division.

The goal of the Patient Care Technician Apprenticeship is to introduce young people to all of the many facets of healthcare and develop the next generation of clinicians in healthcare. The healthcare industry has seen drastic changes in the workforce over the last three years. This apprenticeship is just one-way MUSC Health is working to develop and retain new care team members while making a positive impact on the workforce challenges of today.

MAKING HER DREAM A REALITY BY MEETING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS By Jennifer Robinson



Dr. Jennifer Scott

wound care, personal injury, rehabilitation, regenerative & functional medicine, advanced alternative cosmetic options, healthy weight optimization program, guided & advanced injections, IV vitamin therapy/vitamin injections and DOT & sports physicals.

One Source is a medical forerunner in the Pee Dee because of its all-inclusive services and one-stop for health management needs and wellness maintenance. This massive facility houses an infrared sauna room, cryotherapy chamber, complete fitness studio and training room in addition to treatment quarters. Providers at One Source were intentionally selected by Scott who shared her vision and had a desire for revolutionary healthcare. Committed medical practitioners are on site to address patients' concerns with holistic care to achieve optimal wellness and overall health. Holistic care is an attitudinal approach to care, which employs a more personalized, whole-person approach to healthcare, rather than a conventional, one-size-fits-all, disease-oriented focus.

Scott firmly believes that her professional accomplishments have led her to meet the needs of others. She helps people have better lifestyles by discovering the root cause of their ailments and proactively educates and empowers them to obtain optimal health. She values building community

partnerships with other providers, businesses and resources to assist her patients in getting the best care and outcomes.

Scott's journey to building One Source did not come without challenges, however, she insists, "I remained focused on the mission, vision and the purpose." She continued to remind herself that this facility was bigger than her and selflessly professed, "You must keep your eyes on the purpose and the lives that will be changed," to encourage herself and potential entrepreneurs. Her success came from listening to her patients' needs and her ambition is why she chose to pursue her dream. When Scott listened to the desires and needs of her patients, she was blessed with the concept, vision and resources to create this patient-focused, holistic one-stop facility, and One Source Integrative Medicine was born. Scott says, we all have a responsibility to encourage others to reclaim their health. Every individual, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, unique experiences and background, deserves access to quality healthcare.

Scott, with the assistance of Nurse Practitioner, Tasha Broach and Acupuncturist Dr. Brittney Epps, together with a team of administrative assistants, massage therapists, rehab techs and medical assistants, have made an immense impact on the lives of those they are honored to serve. They maintain the highest levels of accreditation and pursue ongoing education and training, to stay abreast of the latest medical trends.



From left to right Tasha (FNP-C), Sanetra, Stephanie, Dr. Jen, Christy, Gracie (not pictured: Alfred and Brandi)

Scott used two words to describe how she views all she has been able to achieve in bringing One Source Integrative Medicine to Florence and the community, "All God." One Source Integrative Medicine is located at 1601-A West Lucas Street, Florence, SC 29501.

EXCITING NEWS!



Dr. Jennifer Evans Scott is proud to announce that she has been **VOTED** Best Chiropractic Practice/Best Chiropractor and Best Acupuncturist in the Pee Dee Region for 2023!!! It's a honor & privileged to be recognized for the 6th year consecutively by my clients and community.

Thank You! And Much Appreciation...

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.



ONESOURCE
INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

Dr. Jennifer Evans Scott



FROM BURNOUT TO BALANCE



(BPT) - In honor of World Caring Day, a global celebration of compassion and support, we delve into the vital role of caregivers and the significance of self-care in their lives.

Whether you're a parent, spouse, sibling, grandparent, other relative or friend caring for a loved one, you play a vital role in their well-being. Caring Bridge - a nonprofit that provides no-cost dedicated, private, ad-free space for communication, support and connection for a loved one's health journey - is bringing awareness to the role of family caregivers and how they can care for themselves. Read on to learn about the three signs that you may be in a caring role and tips on nurturing yourself today and beyond.

Do you care for a loved one?

Often, family carers don't realize they're in a caregiving situation. For example, a husband may temporarily take care of his wife, who's broken her leg and help with activities and tasks she can't do independently because of her injury. Or perhaps an adult child finds that their mother increasingly relies on them for care after a dementia diagnosis.

Whether a medical condition is temporary or permanent, many family members become care participants in their loved ones' lives without knowing it or meaning to. Here are three signs that you may have transitioned into a care role.

- * You have increased responsibilities for the well-being and care of a loved one. This may include providing emotional support, managing medical appointments, assisting with daily activities or coordinating care services.

- * You've had lifestyle adjustments, such as changes in routines, living arrangements or career choices, to care for your loved one.

- * Your relationship with the person who receives your care and others in your life has changed. You may feel stronger bonds with the person you care about and experience strain or tension in your relationships because of your

responsibilities.

Not all of these signs may apply to everyone. Family care participants have a variety of experiences. Whether they identify as a caregiver, carer, care participant, care partner or avoid labels altogether, they provide invaluable support to their loved ones.

However, to care for others, it's critical that you also care for yourself. Your well-being should also be as much of a priority as that of your loved one. Here are five ways you can care for yourself while participating in care for others.

1. Practice stress management

The extra responsibilities of being a care partner can be stressful, especially if you have no or minimal help and support. It's important to take breaks from caring and focus on your needs.

Consider engaging in activities that can help reduce stress to maintain your well-being. Some healthy ways to manage stress include deep breathing exercises, meditation, yoga, walking, and running, spending time with friends or any activity you enjoy.

2. Care for yourself

You work hard, and it's important to remember that you deserve care too. Set time aside every day to take care of you! Take a walk, read a book, watch a movie, paint or write. Anything that makes you feel happy and relaxed is worth doing so you can prioritize yourself while still helping others.

If your financial situation allows, enjoy a spa day, get a manicure and pedicure or book a massage. These forms of self-care can get you out of the house and allow you space and time to focus on nourishing yourself.

Don't wait until you feel burnt out to enjoy some self-care. If your schedule and budget allow, set regular weekly or monthly appointments that you can look forward to and know that you can also receive care.

3. Prioritize your health

It's easy for carers to ignore their health when they're busy helping others with daily tasks. However, you can't neglect your health. Just like airplane safety videos remind you, it's important to put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others.

Take stock of your health. If it's been a while since you've had a preventative care visit or need another medical appointment, it's a good idea to book now

so you can work it into your schedule. You can also care for your physical and mental health by eating a balanced diet, exercising, journaling and sleeping well.

4. Maintain relationships

Many people who care for their loved ones say they feel overwhelmed, isolated and lonely as they support their family member's health journey. These feelings aren't just emotional burdens.

According to findings by the U.S. Surgeon General, prolonged loneliness is akin to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. Also, poor social relationships, social isolation and loneliness can increase your risk of heart disease by 29 percent and stroke by 32 percent.

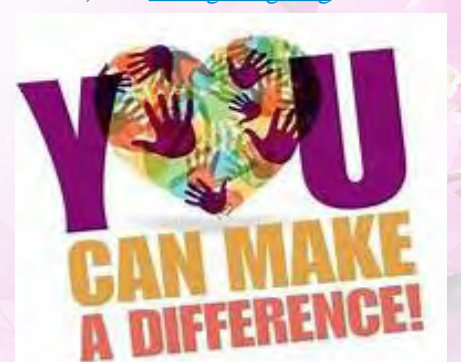
To improve your stress response and minimize the negative health effects of stress, it's important that you stay socially connected. Schedule regular get-togethers with friends, pursue hobbies or interests with others and reach out for help when needed.

5. Find community

Not everyone understands what you're going through in your specific caring situations. Still, many people provide care to family members just like you. You can feel less alone, ask for advice and find community with other family caregivers through support groups.

One way you can share your experiences, build connections, find comfort and receive valuable insight from others who understand is by visiting [CaringBridge.com](https://www.CaringBridge.com). Here, you'll find resources and communities that can help you feel less alone and overwhelmed in your role as a carer.

You can also create a CaringBridge site to easily communicate health updates to a group of loved ones. The nonprofit solution is no cost, easy to use and designed to share your family member's health journeys all on a private communication platform with no ads. To learn more or donate, visit [CaringBridge.org](https://www.CaringBridge.org).



ANNUAL DOROTHY BLACKWELL MEALS ON WHEELS OF FLORENCE COUNTY FUNDRAISER

Submitted by The Senior Citizens Association



SCA Executive Director Linda Mitchell Johnson, Mr. & Mrs. Brockington, Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church and SCA Board President Patricia Parr.

The Senior Citizens Association (SCA) in Florence County celebrated its 19th year of the Annual Dorothy Blackwell Meals on Wheels Fundraiser. The event was a success as numerous churches, businesses, sororities and corporations supported the annual event. It takes a village to operate the Meals on Wheels program that covers Florence County. We could not do this program without our volunteers and financial supporters. This year SCA wanted to acknowledge the churches and couples who deliver meals to our homebound seniors. We salute the following churches and couples.

Churches

Highland Park United Methodist Church
Maxwell Baptist Church
Mizpah Baptist Church
Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church
New Ebenezer Baptist Church
Savannah Grove Baptist Church
St. Anthony Catholic Church

St. John's Church
St. Paul United Methodist Church

Couples

Bill & Susan Pickle
Michael & Linda Williams
Brad & Paula Crum

In FY 22/23 with our Dorothy Blackwell sponsors and corporate sponsors, we were able to:

- Deliver over 69,319 hot, frozen and shelf-stable meals to homebound senior citizens in Florence County.
- Provide 7919 hours of housekeeping, personal care and companionship to our seniors.
- Provide over 10, 548 group dining site meals to Johnsonville, Pamplico and Lake City.
- Provide over 10,053 miles of transportation to seniors for medical and other essential appointments.
- Establish a senior digital literacy center and provide computer training for seniors.
- Provide light home repairs for 11 seniors.

SCA thanks our Dorothy Blackwell Sponsors

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The Master's Choice
Toledo Carolina, Inc.
Victors

We are also grateful to the State of SC, Vantage Point, Florence County, the City of Florence, the City of Lake City, the City of Timmonsville, The United Way of Florence County, Assurant, AARP Foundation, Duke Energy, St. Luke Foundation, Pee Dee Electric and Spectrum for their continuous corporate support.

For more information on how to be a Meals on Wheels Florence community partner or how to volunteer or donate to this cause, visit us at www.SCAFlorence.org. Senior Citizens Association in Florence County, 600 Senior Way, Florence, SC 29505. We can be reached at 843.669.6761 or info@scaflorence.org.

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With over 3,500 sq. miles of territory, PDRTA covers the largest area in the state and is the 3rd largest territory in the United States.

Providing transportation to many rural communities, spanning over 6 counties, provides vital connections to jobs, healthcare and educational opportunities.

From our recent passenger survey data, we found that 40% of our dedicated passengers use the bus to commute to and from work, 12% are commuting to educational opportunities, while the remainder are using the bus to get around, eat, shop and go to medical appointments.

67% of our riders answered that they rely on public transit because they do not have access to a car.

These results show the huge barrier that transportation can have in our communities. For many, rural transportation is a lifeline, but for everyone it is a benefit.

We are dedicated to working together to find creative solutions for mobility and to connect the people of the Pee Dee. To support and partner with us in connecting the dots with rural transportation, reach out to info@pdrt.org

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I WANT IT ALL Submitted by Coach Temple Robinson



Coach Temple Robinson

In the words of the great rap artist, Warren G, “I want it all. Money, fast cars, diamond rings, gold chains, champagne.” He goes on to mention houses, cars, clothes and businesses. However, what does it mean to have it all?

It is common to want to own material things because they are a product of our focus, determination and hard work. And, as much as we may enjoy these items, the joy we receive from them is limited. It is due to several reasons, such as brand-new

items losing their appeal, people’s interests changing over time or simply the thrill of buying something. So, the question remains, if it’s not about possessions, what does it mean to have it “all”?

Having it all signals an abundant life. Everyone can achieve it, regardless of their economic background. Abundance is when you are completely present in everything in your life. It includes the good and bad times, and when we are indifferent or maybe confused. When we acknowledge all that life has to offer, we are alive. The outcome of this decision is a greater appreciation of life.

If you want to achieve abundance in your life now, here is a simple activity that you can do. Get paper and a pencil. Draw a circle and write in it all your life experiences. It should include the wonderful and difficult times and middle-of-the-road, redundant moments. If you are like most people, your circle is full, and you can continue writing.

This is an example of how abundance shows up in your life.

Next, to deepen this exercise, couple your abundance exercise with gratitude. Take the time to examine your experiences. Write how they contributed to you becoming the person that you are today. By reflecting on your life through these lenses, you can see that you have a prosperous life. As a result, you acknowledge life’s blessings. It builds authentic internal contentment and peace.

So, is it possible to have it all? Yes, if you believe personal development is more important than material things. Developing your internal self deepens your understanding of your purpose in life, which can promote additional financial freedom. Through this understanding, when you purchase an item, you will have more appreciation for it because your actions align with your life’s purpose.

The person you desire to become and the life you aspire to create are waiting for you. Living your life abundantly with gratitude will guide you in the right direction. If you are interested in discovering more about your purpose, experiencing greater abundance and having a confidential partner that is 100 percent committed to your success, visit templerobinson.com or email me at coachtemple@templerobinson.com.

Abundance





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FLORENCE NATIVE RECEIVES FEDERAL GRANT By Glaciera Brown Mason



Future Home



The practice of farming is a vital part of our local economy. In the Savannah Grove community President and CEO Harold Ellerbe, proudly announces the opening of Ellerbe Farmers Market located in Effingham, SC.

Much like the federal land grants of the 20th century, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to assist southern farmers and communities with grants to improve the social, financial and economic climate in southern states. USDA has designated some rural areas as food deserts, areas with a minimum of 500 people living within ten miles from the nearest grocery store, often limited in retailers that provide healthy fresh produce at affordable prices. The Ellerbe Farmers Market will serve the residents of Savannah Grove, Florence and surrounding counties.

Under the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) through the Reinvestment Fund, Ellerbe was the sole recipient in South Carolina to receive the grant. "Everything was inspired by God," Ellerbe said modestly. He credits the assistance of Quin Knox, founder and CEO of the Ridgeway, SC based Foundation for Community Impact & Health Equity, who helped this process come to fruition. Ellerbe is a participant in their Cultiv8 Agribusiness Incubator, designed to develop, equip and provide technical assistance to farmers and entrepreneurs to improve the local food ecosystem. The incubator increases the access of healthy food in underserved areas by providing support to farmers and local food entrepreneurs through eight approaches: education, branding & marketing, networking, business opportunities, technical assistance, business development, sourcing funding and project /grant management.

The HFFI grant allows Ellerbe to use federal funds to build the market, support job creation, sell fresh produce and staple foods for the community to obtain healthy food at affordable prices.

The new market will be located on Alligator Road at the intersection of Walker Swinton and Knollwood Roads. Plans are underway and the soft launch for outdoor sales began July 1st. The market will sell a variety of seasonal and some organic, fruits and vegetables year-round, in its 4,160 sq ft enclosed store. Fresh produce includes watermelon, cantaloupe, honey dew melons, tomatoes, corn, green beans, cucumbers, rutabaga, turnips, collards, varieties of kale, Swiss chard, carrots, butter beans, peas, peppers, onion and okra. The market will also sell staple foods, meat and dairy products.

A famous quote says, "If you build it, they will come." The community and supporters of Ellerbe are excited about the imminent

opening of the new market. The Savannah Grove Community Action League first Vice President and local Entrepreneur, Nathaniel Lockhart reflected on the impact to community. "The arrival of the new market is an important addition. I commend Harold for this fine undertaking. This new small business will be invaluable to all who live in and around the area and provide healthy produce in close proximity for seniors, children, families and those with limited transportation."

Ellerbe, a native of Florence is the youngest son, one of 16 children of the late Isadore Jones Ellerbe and Eugene 'Chang' Ellerbe, Sr. Ellerbe grew up in the Savannah Grove community, attended West Florence HS and relocated seven years ago, to care for his mother and revitalize his father's farming legacy. For Ellerbe, this journey is spiritual, sentimental and generational. He says, "farming is in my DNA." Ellerbe absorbed the lessons from his father, also a farmer. The dignity and pride of doing something with your hands, touching the earth, resonates with him, and makes him happy.

Ellerbe is no stranger to entrepreneurship. With a background in restaurant management, this chef and business owner's experience provides the foundation that has prepared him for this next phase. Ellerbe understands the value of hard work, great moral character and high integrity. The entrepreneur gene can also be found in other Ellerbe siblings as his brother, Larry Ellerbe owns Northside Seafood on Oakland Avenue in Florence.

Behind every great man, is an even greater woman. Ellerbe is married to Jessica Ellerbe and together, they share seven beautiful children ranging in ages from two to twenty-five. The Indiana Hoosier is Ellerbe's help mate and love of his life who supports her husband in all of his endeavors.



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 3. Add your prepared fruit.
 4. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.
 5. Pour in glass & be sure to allow some fruit into your glass
- Enjoy!



DON'T SWEAT IT - HOW TO KEEP YOUR COOL EVEN UNDER HEAT AND STRESS!

(BPT) - Plenty of things can make you sweat - hot weather on a summer day, strenuous physical activity or feeling stressed out. But why do you smell worse when you're stressed compared to after a workout or an afternoon in the sun? What you may not know is that there are three different kinds of sweat - stress, heat and activity - and they come from different glands in your body.

"Compared to heat and activity sweat (salt water that comes from eccrine glands), odor from stress sweat from the apocrine glands smells worse because it contains food for the bacteria on our skin," said Dr. Maiysha D. Jones, principal scientist, North America Personal Care at Procter and Gamble. "When bacteria consume the fat and proteins in stress sweat, they produce foul-smelling gases that we perceive as body odor."

So, what can you do to cut down on all three types of sweat, especially the smelliest stress sweat? Here are some tips to help you stay cool in the summer heat and conquer your stress so you can be at your best, no matter what you're doing:

* Keep your cool while outside in the summer sun: As the temperatures start heating up, make sure not to overdo it, especially if you're outdoors for a long period of time. Remember to stay hydrated and keep water handy. If possible, cool your body down with a dip in the pool - even running cold water on your face can help you feel cooler.

* Be careful when exercising in the heat: It's easy to get overheated when you're working out, playing sports or doing yard work during the warmer months, so it's important to safeguard your health while doing activities outside. Try to work out in the early morning or late evening to avoid the hottest times of the day and choose moisture-wicking clothing to keep you cool.

* Protect against sweat and odor: No matter the type of sweat you experience the most, Secret Clinical antiperspirant/deodorant has you covered. It's made with advanced odor fighters, provides 72-hour sweat protection, it's clinically proven to fight sweat from stress, heat and activity and it comes in several delightful scents.

* Take mindful steps to reduce stress: Everyone experiences stress sometimes, whether due to work demands, unexpected events or everyday obligations. Take the time to replenish your energy and try stress-relieving activities such as deep breathing, unplugging from social media or computer screens, listening to music or spending time outdoors to enjoy nature. "While most of us can't avoid sweating altogether, we can stay protected with products that keep us feeling confident," added Jones. "Secret Clinical fights sweat from stress, heat and activity, so no matter what the day brings, you'll be ready to take it on."

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