

JULY 2016

DEFINING QUALITY & SETTING THE PACE FOR EXCELLENCE IN HEALTHCARE

NC DHSS Secretary Rick Brajer On Hand For Official Ribbon Cutting Ceremony



HSS Secretary, Rick Brajer; RHA CEO, Gordon Simmons; RHA President, Jeanne Duncan and local officials gather for the ceremony.

Residents of Buncombe and surrounding counties now have access to a state-of-the-art mental health and addiction treatment center that offers seven-day-a-week behavioral health urgent care, weekday walk-in appointments, pharmacy services, and a “peer living room” to support and encourage individuals in recovery.

N.C. Health and Human Services Secretary, Rick Brajer, gathered with local officials Thursday April 22 for a ribbon-cutting at the center. Brajer praised the work of community partners who were able to turn their vision of a new center into reality in only two years. Brian Ingraham, CEO of Smoky Mountain MCO, a public managed care organization, said that a recent center tour left him amazed. “It is such an inviting, wonderful environment,” he said. “To be part of a group that is able to offer this for the community, personally and professionally, it’s extremely rewarding, and we can provide the immediate attention that people need, as well as provide, what I hope will be, a real path to recovery.”

Operated by RHA Health Services, **C3356** serves all individuals in crisis, regardless of insurance coverage or county of residence, and is guided by a focus on recovery and peer support. It offers a welcoming environment and an alternative to skyrocketing levels of visits to hospital emergency departments, which are often more expensive, involve longer wait times and offer less specialized care. Additionally, RHA’s mobile crisis services will dispatch from **C3356**. RHA operates its existing 16-bed crisis facility for adults at the nearby Neil Dobbins Center. Once the adult program transfers to **C3356**, that facility will be converted into the region’s first crisis facility for children.

Center funding comes through a \$2 million grant from the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services’ (DHHS) Crisis Solutions Initiative, a statewide effort to improve mental health and substance use crisis services. Additional funding sources include \$2.2 million in-kind contributions and operations expenses from Smoky; more than \$1 million in funds and in-kind investments from Buncombe County Health and Human Services, which owns the building; and \$1 million from Mission Health.

For more information on C3356 services, call 828-254-2700 or visit www.c3356.org. Excerpts from Smoky Mountain release: rachel.leonard-spencer@smokymountaincenter.com

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Down Syndrome Link Seen As Key To Understanding Alzheimer's



Gerard Fobes, 45, of Newport Beach, California, plans to volunteer for Lott's study after losing two childhood friends to Alzheimer's as well as his maternal grandmother. He doesn't mind giving blood or remaining still in a confined imaging machine.

"I just like being a part of it," he said. "I do know my grandma had dementia. A lot of European elderly have it."

Fobes, who works every Saturday at Ralphs, starred in Garth Brooks' 1993 music video "Standing Outside the Fire." He loves researching academic topics on his computer and volunteering with his dad at a local food bank.

What our expert has to say.



Eric Gabriel MA, LPA, Psychologist
RHA Health Services



I'm really encouraged to know that the National Institute on Aging provided this generous grant to Dr. Lott and his team at UC-Irvine. We know so little about Alzheimer's disease and what causes it within the population as a whole.

When a person has a pre-existing intellectual disability, it's often more difficult to identify in its early stages. I believe we all share the hope that research like this will offer valuable insight into this condition that we'll all be encountering a lot more, given our aging population.

When Ruth Russi was born with Down syndrome in 1959, her parents were told she would die before her fifth birthday. By the time Ruth turned 50, John and June Russi of Costa Mesa, California, began to prepare for her outliving them.

But as she aged, Ruth's behavior changed. She would stare at her colored pencils, unable to color, or walk out of church still clutching a dollar bill for the offering.

John, 85, and June, 79, were devastated to learn that Alzheimer's disease, a condition they worried about for themselves, had inhabited their daughter's brain. Ruth died last fall, a week before her 56th birthday.

For Ruth, the oldest of three, Alzheimer's eventually stole her cheerful disposition and enjoyment of the simple pleasures in life. Her favorite place was Disneyland, where she would ask to ride It's a Small World over and over again.

"The things she liked made her really happy and joyous," John Russi recalled. "You don't see that in all people. Nobody smiles all the time, but she did."

But as her illness progressed she lost her limited vocabulary, even her favorite word, bird. She could no longer live in her group home and moved to a long-term care facility. She stopped erupting in excitement when she saw her parents and would ignore them when they visited.

After she died, her parents donated her brain to The University of California (UCI).

UCI has received \$4.7 million from the National Institute on Aging to launch a five-year study this summer aimed at identifying who with Down Syndrome is most at risk for developing dementia.

"I think the urgency in part reflects the urgency of Alzheimer's research," said Dr. Ira Lott, a pediatric neurologist and lead researcher. "Alzheimer's is a tremendous national problem. Many people with Down Syndrome live productive and happy lives. To have that cut off prematurely by Alzheimer's disease is a tragedy that we're trying to prevent."

The findings could result in better treatment options and yield discoveries that would also benefit the general population.

"Anytime we can shine a light on any aspect of this disease, that is massively important," said Jim McAleer, CEO of Alzheimer's Orange County. "It's vitally important for those people and their families that we learn how to treat this disease and cure it for that population. Science might learn more about the disease because of the genetic difference in that population. I think it actually can move science forward."

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Picture of Gerard Fobes by Sam Gangwer/
Orange County Register/TNS

To read the entire article visit
disabilityscoop.com

Thought Leaders

Behavioral Health Urgent Care

Submitted by Krista Engels

Colleen Barcus

Buncombe County NC



BHUC clinical staff, L-R: Amy Miller, Colleen, and Patrick Casale in clinical consultation

Colleen Barcus has been an employee with RHA for the past two years and began working as an Intensive In Home Team Lead. In February 2016, she transitioned to the Team Lead position at RHA's Behavioral Health Urgent Care. Colleen's desire to be a part of a ground breaking new program motivated her transition to the unit. She recently completed a 13 hour training program and clinical exam to complete first evaluations for individuals involved in an Involuntary Commitment. Colleen is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with experience in providing crisis services, working residential treatment and teaching at the University level. She is thrilled to utilize her skill set to help create a successful and impactful program at Behavioral Health Urgent Care.

What is a Thought Leader?

We are introducing an exciting new column called "Thought Leaders" which will feature our "best and brightest" and our up-and-coming experts in various areas of IDD and BH supports! These are employees who are leaders of evidenced based or best practices, and are working on unique and ground breaking ideas and programs in your area.. So please send us an article on your shining stars!

Contact dvalentine@rhanet.org

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Behavioral Health Peer Bridger Program

The Alamance Team

Burlington, NC

The Peer Bridger Program started on November 1, 2013 with the mission of decreasing hospitalizations by 25%. The vision was to imbed a Peer Support Specialist into the Behavioral Medicine Unit and the Emergency Department in order to connect individuals with support at the time of discharge until the routine treatment begins.

Peer Support in the hospital setting is a unique utilization of this role. We have found that consumers stepping down from hospitalization have experienced greater success with positive linkage and active engagement when a Peer Support Specialist aids in this process. Our staff help instill hope and recovery while breaking down barriers to receiving treatment. Our Peer Support Specialists add support towards an individual's resiliency in coping.

Peer Support specialists assist and encourage consumers to engage in much needed clinical services such as outpatient therapy and psychiatric services. In addition, they assist with linking to services that help establish employment.

As a result of our Peer Specialists' involvement, people experience fewer crisis situations and are hospitalized far less often. *We have a great team in Alamance! Most importantly each staff member is highly motivated and dedicated in offering HOPE to the people we serve!*

Submitted by Thomas Lesniak



The Alamance Peer Bridger Team

Jon Fields, Tonda Osteen, Cole Shaughnessy, Vanessa Tribble (Manager), Regina Stanfield, Stephanie Pinnix, Nancy Parham, and Sean O'Hare; Not pictured- Harvey Bryant, Michael Bryant, Lisa Briscoe

For more information about Peer Bridger contact Thomas Lesniak tlesniak@rhanet.org.
2732 Anne Elizabeth Dr , Burlington NC 27215.
Office : 336-229-5905

First Project Search Class Graduates Ready To Work Thanks To Partnership

After a year of hard work at Vidant Medical Center, Project SEARCH students are graduating Tuesday night — but their time with the project’s staff isn’t over yet. Eight Pitt County Schools students, who are between the ages of 18 and 22 and have disabilities, have spent each day of this academic year at Vidant learning job skills and completing internships in various departments of the hospital. After graduating, their job coach will work with them to find permanent employment.

Reflector.com

“The students may have disabilities, but that doesn’t mean they’re not good workers, said Lisa Lassiter, the administrator of Vidant Health Careers. There’s things they can do, she said. “Actually, there’s a lot of roles they do 100 percent accurate every single time.

This is the inaugural year for the program, which is a partnership between **Vidant Medical Center, Pitt County Schools, RHA Health Services and the N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**. It is part of a national program that was created in Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center in 1996 and has since grown to 300 sites across six countries.



Lisa Lassiter of Vidant having fun with students during graduation practice.

Program-wide, 65 percent of graduates are able to get jobs and 90 percent retain them once they’re hired. Pitt County’s program is funded through a grant from the N.C. Council on Developmental Disabilities. During their internships at Vidant, students rotate through different tasks and areas of the hospital to prepare them for a wide variety of jobs. Department managers and the program’s job coach, RHA’s Employment Coordinator, S.J. Parker, work together to identify tasks for the interns to work on.

“They do entry-level position work such as food services, sterile processing, laundry, environmental services, stocking, receiving, that kind of stuff,” Lassiter said.



Pictured L-R Thomas Woods and Tymir Smith



Pictured L-R Denzel Smith, Isaiah Houston, Ashley Harris

Photography-Rhett Butler, The Daily Reflector

Student Thomas Wood, 22, worked in various parts of the cafeteria and surgical intensive care unit, doing a variety of tasks from wiping down the counters to putting out silverware to restocking supplies. His favorite part of the experience? “Everything!” Wood and his fellow interns received on-site training from Parker throughout the year to help them develop their skills.

“I am primarily responsible for providing the vocational training, making sure they learn the expectations of their internships and that they adjust and acclimate well,” Parker said. Parker is already working with local employers to secure job opportunities for each of the eight students. Once they obtain a job, she will continue working with them through the orientation and training process.

The students spent about an hour each day in a classroom at Vidant with their teacher, Sara Graves, who taught them how to be successful in their future careers. “Vocational life skills lessons, interviewing, how to keep a job, filling in your applications, those types of skills,” she said. And it’s not just the students who benefit from the program, it’s good for Vidant’s employees, who could potentially become some of the students’ coworkers. It exposes our staff to a diverse population, and it helps tear down that stigma of a disability.”

Written by Holly West, reporter for The Daily Reflector hwest@reflector.com or 252-329-9585.



Tennessee first state to gain CMS approval for its HCBS 'waiver.

CMS granted Tennessee final approval of their Statewide Transition Plan (STP). Final approval was granted because the state completed both its systemic assessment and its site-specific assessment, included the outcomes of both assessments in the STP, outlined remediation strategies to rectify issues that both assessments uncovered, and laid out its heightened scrutiny, ongoing monitoring and relocation processes.

Tennessee will need to provide quarterly written updates, and participate in quarterly phone discussions with the CMS team to review the state's progress in implementing the STP. In addition, the state must work collaboratively with CMS to identify any areas that may need strengthening with respect to the state's remediation, relocation, and heightened scrutiny processes as they implement each of the key elements of their state transition plan.

CMS appreciates Tennessee's effort in completing this work and congratulates the state for continuing to make progress on its transition to ensure all settings are in compliance with the federal requirements for home and community-based services.

To review Tennessee's HCBS STP, visit Medicaid.gov at [www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-chip-program-information/...](http://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-chip-program-information/)

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Officials break ground on new mental health, addiction crisis center in Lenoir

April 12, 2016 – State and local dignitaries broke ground Tuesday on a comprehensive care center that will offer 24-hour mental health and addiction urgent care, outpatient behavioral health treatment and 12 beds for people in crisis who live in Caldwell, McDowell and Alexander counties.

The CaldwellC3 Comprehensive Care Center will be located 2415 Morganton Blvd. SW in Lenoir and be operated by RHA Health Services, Inc. That location currently houses RHA's Caldwell County outpatient services and will undergo a \$1.2 million renovation and expansion to provide space for the new services, additional staff and extended operating hours.

"This plan, to co-locate the entire continuum of services in one comprehensive care center, has become the gold standard model for the far western counties of North Carolina," said Brian Ingraham, CEO of project partner Smoky Mountain MCO, a public managed care organization. "In this setting, at Caldwell C3, individuals and families can access the full range of behavioral health services, from prevention to outpatient to robust crisis services."

Gordon Simmons, RHA CEO, noted of the facility, "This gives a person an opportunity to know the place to come and that their needs will be met one way or another."

Alexander County Manager and Smoky Board Chairman Rick French said the facility represented a "brighter, better future" for all three counties. "The Smoky Board is committed to expanding crisis services in every region, and this ground breaking is evidence of this commitment," he said.

Excerpts from a press release issued by: Media contact: Rachel E. Leonard-Spencer Marketing and Communications Coordinator rachel.leonard-spencer@smokymountaincenter.com 828-225-2785, ext. 5197

For more information about RHA Health Services contact: Derrick Jordan, djordan@rhanet.org or 828-394-5563 (office)

AROUND THE COMPANY



For more information about this great program please contact: John Gibbons
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TOP SHOTS

Water Day at Anson
Children's Center



Kaiyah Harrington
having a great time!



Summertime fun
with Preschool 2 & 3



Morgan Graduates High School

Community Alternative Program for Children CAP/C

Winston Salem, NC

Morgan Sagerman is one of my Forsyth County clients, who I have worked with for the last 3+ years. He was born with a rare disorder of development, Lumbosacral Agenesis. He also has Syringomyelia, which is a fluid-filled cavity within the spinal cord that can cause further problems. And if that weren't enough, he has Scoliosis. His condition is so rare and unique, that his orthopedist at Wake Forest Baptist Health received his permission to discuss his case at a national conference this year, in the hopes of coming up with more ideas for assisting Morgan. Dr. Frino made a model in plaster cast of his spine, which he presented at the conference.

Morgan attended high school despite chronic pain and complications, missing several months last year. But with the love and support of his family and medical team, and his winning personality, he still managed to graduate with his class at West Forsyth High School on Saturday, June 6th. He will begin classes at Forsyth Technical Community College in the fall, with plans to be a graphic designer. Congratulations Morgan!

Submitted by Caroline Lawson, RN
CAP/C Case Manager



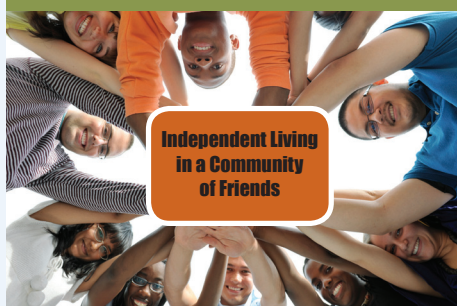
Morgan has been with the CAP/C program since 2009. In August that year, he was able to meet President Obama along with other kids from Victory Junction Gang Camp.

Union House PSR

Serves their Community

Monroe, NC

PSYCHOSOCIAL REHABILITATION FOR ADULTS



Eight members and staff volunteered to assist the mobile food pantry give away for the city and county area. Here is a letter of appreciation to the program members.

PSR's Psychosocial Rehabilitation Programs are designed to help adults with behavioral health challenges increase their ability to live independently, and minimize their need for ongoing professional intervention.



Friendship Missionary Baptist Church

Dear Mrs. Dilworth,

On behalf of the Mobile Food Ministry of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, I would like to express our appreciation to you for allowing the volunteers from RHA Union House to assist us with the distribution of food at the Mobile Food Pantry last Wednesday. The volunteers worked diligently from the time they arrived until the last person was served.

Please express our gratitude to the volunteers for their community service. Without their assistance, we would not be able to accomplish our goal of serving all of the applicants during the allotted time.

Very truly yours,

For more information on this program contact:
Barbara Dilworth, bdilworth@rhanet.org 704 226-1517

AROUND THE COMPANY

Hunter McNelly School Brings Home the Gold

Clear Creek Charlotte, NC



Megan B. Jowon F.
Eric B. Quinn H.
Andrew C. Noelia H.
Isaiah C. Jonathan L.
Austin D. Lyndsay M.
Greg D. Sammy W.
Nate D. Pong X.
Kendall F.

Submitted by Gillette Johnson

The Hunter McNelly School (HMS) at RHA Health Services' Clear Creek had the privilege of participating for the second consecutive year in the 2016 Mecklenburg County Special Olympics Spring Games. The Spring Games were held April 26th – April 29th in Charlotte N.C. All 15 HMS students, accompanied by teachers, staff and volunteers, attended the Opening Ceremonies held at the Bojangles Coliseum on Tuesday, April 26th. The Opening Ceremonies were pretty exciting. It commenced with a Parade of Athletes into the coliseum, consisting of over 1,100 Special Olympic athletes, representing 57 schools in the Charlotte/Mecklenburg County region. The Coaches and Athletes Oaths were administered, followed by the lighting of the Olympic flame, which signaled the official start of the 2016 Spring Games.



On Tuesday April 27th, our students traveled to *Charlotte Country Day School* to participate in the Motor Activities portion of the 2016 Spring Games. Since 1983, Charlotte Country Day has played a major role in providing volunteers and facilities for the games. A note of thanks goes out to these students who assisted us cheerfully in their role as “buddies” to the athletes. All of our students were able to compete in the Motor Activities games, amassing a total of **13 gold medals, double our haul from the 2015 Games. Woo Hoo and way to go Team McNelly!!**

We would like to extend a special note of thanks to our Administrator, Program Director, Nursing, Dietary, Building Charge, Transportation and all the people who volunteered their time and energies to ensure we were able to safely and successfully participate in the 2016 Games. THANK YOU. See you in 2017!



To learn more about the Hunter McNelly School please contact: Jim Focht, jfocht@rhanet.org 704-545-7200, X 1160



(L-R) CCD Volunteers
with Noelia aka
“Ms. Sunshine”

Carter House PSR

Salisbury, NC

aLL 4 aRTS

Submitted by Karenda Harris

On May 21, 2016 the members of the Carter House PSR participated in their first ever May Menagerie Stage Production sponsored by *Rowan County*



Parks and Recreation Therapeutic Recreation aLL 4aRTS Theatre Program. The play was entitled “*Falling Stars*” and directed by Rowan Parks and Rec volunteer Peggy Harris.

Our members embarked on an endeavor that they have never been a part of, many had never even *seen* a play. This story takes us on a journey with storybook characters who are concerned that children are no longer reading books, but instead spending their free time playing video games, and watching television.



The actors discuss how children are bored with storybooks and do not want to be bothered with characters like *Snow White, Captain Hook, Tinkerbell, Peter Pan, Big Bad Wolf, Alice*

in Wonderland, Wicked Queen, Lancelot, White Rabbit, and Noddy unless they are on an Xbox or Playstation.

The play encourages children to begin reading again, using their imagination and getting lost for hours while reading a book. Our actors from Carter House worked very hard to learn their lines and recite them on stage with support from the drama club at Carson High School. At curtain call, the members received certificates praising their efforts and received a “bravo” from the audience!

For more information about this program contact:

704- 633-1835 Office or kharris@rhanet.org



Employment is Key

In 2014, Bruce Ransom was referred to Vocational Rehabilitation for an assessment and assistance in finding employment. With the help of his sister he called the Concord VR office to make an appointment. That's where he met his VR counselor Tony

Cunningham, *RHA Employment Coordinator, Stuart Barrett, and RHA Employment Specialist Katie Cain*. Little did he know that his life was about to change.

During the initial meeting with VR he was a very quiet, meek, and reserved man. He spoke of his inability to read and understand simple math concepts and was extremely worried that he would never be able to obtain employment due to his disability. His confidence and self-esteem were very low. But as Katie Cain, his employment specialist, began to work with Bruce during the community based assessment, she realized that he had a very strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. Bruce arrived to all job shadowing opportunities thirty minutes ahead of time. He was always courteous, pleasant and willing to give his best.

Katie eventually started interview skills training and Bruce became very hesitant in his ability to express himself verbally. With continued coaching and support, Bruce was finally able to gain confidence.

Bruce initially wanted to pursue employment in car detailing or gardening, both activities he enjoyed doing in his spare time. But Katie heard about a new Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market opening in the Concord, NC area and told Bruce about this possible opportunity. He was ecstatic, so they began preparing for the Neighborhood Market Job Fair.

He interviewed with *Store Manager Brekke Brown* and there was an immediate connection. Brekke says, I sensed his strong work ethic and his strong values and hired him on the spot. Bruce has become a valued employee and can always be counted on. I love Bruce!

“I sensed his strong work ethic and his strong values and hired him on the spot. Bruce has become a valued employee and can always be counted on. I love Bruce!”



Bruce has been able to maintain the confidence necessary to gain recognition on many levels during his employment at Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market. He has received the *Employee of the Month Award* and has served as a trainer at other Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market stores.



Walmart Assistant Manager, Michael Cullen pictured with Bruce says,

“Bruce is a hard worker and a very dependable employee.”

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