

JULY 2018

Life. Journey.  
Recovery.  
Hope.

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DEFINING QUALITY & SETTING THE PACE FOR EXCELLENCE IN HEALTHCARE

## RHA Hilltop to Address the Opioid and Substance Abuse Crisis

**R**HA Health Services is opening a new service line, RHA Hilltop, to provide long term treatment and a full continuum of care to address the opioid and substance abuse crisis. Our goal is to help each person we support to understand their addictive disease and to establish a commitment to recovery. The program was designed with SAMHSA's *Clinical Guidelines for the Use of Buprenorphine in the Treatment of Opioid Addiction*. RHA Hilltop is committed to providing this service with excellence and with the highest quality of clinical care in our treatment programs. We hope to expand coverage to more communities in the near future.

"From 1999 to 2016 more than 12,000 North Carolinians died from opioid-related overdoses" according to the NC Department of Health and Human Services. Nick Sulaiman, President of RHA says, "The need is great and we are prepared through RHA Hilltop to provide enhanced services across the state. We see treatment as a gateway to recovery and a successful personal path to healthy living for all communities."

RHA partners with local hospitals, ED's, Acute Care Units, private clinicians, physicians in family practice and OB-GYN, and law enforcement and government officials.

We are providing a variety of evidence-based practices including *crisis services, specialized opioid treatment including Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), outpatient programs including Substance Abuse Intensive Outpatient(SAIOP), Substance Abuse Comprehensive Outpatient Treatment (SACOT), and non-hospital detox.*

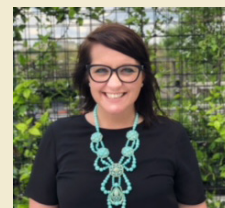
### Pam Stalls, LCAS, CCS, LMFT



Leading the RHA Hilltop effort is Pam Stalls, Executive Senior Director of Substance Abuse Services. Pam has spent her career focused on helping those suffering from addiction to find hope for recovery. She holds a Master's Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy, is a Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist, and Certified Clinical Supervisor. Pam's background in direct care, administration and business development provides RHA Hilltop with a strong foundation.

"I truly believe developing relationships is the key to a successful program. I look forward to working with all of our stakeholders in providing these much needed services to the community."

**Sara Huffman, LCSW**, is our new Substance Abuse Services Program Manager. She has worked in clinical and community programming since 2007 and has been with RHA since 2014. She serves on the State Stepping Up Task Force and represents The NC Providers Council on the NC Substance Use Disorder Federation.



"I am so excited and honored to be a part of this team. I truly believe that with our exceptional staff and leadership teams we will be able to touch those individuals who thought there wasn't an option before."

For more information please contact: [pam.stalls@rhanet.org](mailto:pam.stalls@rhanet.org) or [sara.huffman@rhanet.org](mailto:sara.huffman@rhanet.org)

# WILMA

WILMINGTON'S SUCCESSFUL WOMAN

## Taking a Holistic Approach to the Opioid Epidemic

by EMILY FEATHERSTON | photos by TERAH WILSON

On July 4, 2015, while much of the nation was celebrating Independence Day with fireworks or a cookout, DONNA FULFORD was facing the most painful reality a parent can possibly experience.

The previous day, Fulford had found her son Trey unresponsive in the bathroom, along with a needle and signs pointing to a drug overdose. While first responders were able to get a pulse and transported Trey to New Hanover Regional Medical Center, his brain had been deprived of oxygen for too long, and Fulford and her family said goodbye to the 28 year old.

Trey Fulford's death was one of 401 heroin-related deaths in North Carolina in 2015. In 2016, that number climbed to 573. From 2010 to 2016, the number of heroin-related deaths in the state grew by 1119 percent — but those statistics are not unfamiliar to many in the Cape Fear region. New Hanover County, and Wilmington in particular, led the state in opiate and opioid-related deaths, and was the No. 1 city in the country for opioid abuse.

"Wilmington got a lot of bad press when we were named No. 1," says Olivia Herndon, Director of Continuing Education, mental health and public health for the South East Area Health Education Center (SEAHEC). "But what people don't always hear about is what Wilmington's done about it." Herndon says the distinction was like the city getting an "ugly gold star," but that it was a major wake-up call and ended up galvanizing efforts to address the problem.

Herndon is a member of the New Hanover County Opioid Task Force, a group that includes representatives from SEAHEC, RHA Health Services, first responders, law enforcement, local elected officials and other community groups. "[The task force] is just wonderful because everybody can just bring their expertise to the table, their thoughts, their experiences," Herndon says.



Debra Vuolco pictured at the Harbor in Wilmington

Donna Fulford with a picture of her son Trey

RHA Health Services worked with other task force members to seek funding for and implement the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program (LEAD), explains regional vice president Debra Vuocolo. It is a program that attempts to intervene and get those with addiction into treatment rather than jumping straight to an arrest. Vuocolo explains that the goal of LEAD, and the area's Quick Response Team pilot project, is to break down some of the barriers to treatment that many mired in addiction face. "It's a holistic approach," she says, that includes finding safe housing and transportation to treatment, two things that are critical to someone successfully overcoming addiction.

The task force has pursued efforts to arm citizens with naloxone, the overdose-reversal medication that has seen wide adoption as a means to help combat the rising death toll. In 2013, North Carolina lawmakers passed a measure that allowed first responders to administer naloxone, and in 2016 passed a law allowing anyone to purchase the medication. To Donna Fulford that was a major step in the right direction.

After losing her son and struggling to find people to talk to about it, Fulford became one of the founders of B.A.C.K.O.F.F., which stands for "Bringing Addiction Crisis Knowledge, Offering Families Focus," in Brunswick County. Fulford says she and other members are advocates that everyone should have a naloxone kit with them at all times, just in case. "We're doing everything we can to get it out there," she says. Looking back, she says, if she had had a kit in her home at the time, she might have been able to give her son a fighting chance while she waited for first responders. While she says she knows it won't bring her son back, Fulford is thankful for the efforts of the task forces to provide as much access as possible to treatment and support for those facing their own addiction or that of a loved one.

<http://www.wilmaontheweb.com/May-2018/Taking-a-Holistic-Approach-to-the-Opioid-Epidemic/>



Service Providers Association  
for Developmental Disabilities

## Direct Support Champion Erma Jean Lowery

# 2018 AWARDS

Submitted by Tonya Self Augusta, Ga

“Erma Jean Lowery is from Thomson, Georgia. She knew her destiny was in the field of mental health and developmental disabilities after attending a school field trip to Gracewood State Mental hospital. Ten years later she began her career.



Ms. Lowery is currently a Home Manager for RHA Health Services in the Augusta area. The standard of her professional integrity is outstanding by all accounts. The group home where she works wins numerous awards. She’s been recognized by the Department of Behavioral Health Developmental Disability regional nursing staff, licensing staff from the Healthcare Facility Regulation Division, and the Department of Justice.

She also has a wonderful way of getting the people she supports involved in their community. Her outstanding service and accomplishments are a wonderful testimony to what a difference we can make in the world if we hold the service of others as a passion. SPADD is proud to name Erma Lowery as the 2018 Direct Support Champion. “

*-Excerpt from SPADD*

“ RHA Health Services programs in Georgia are inspected by the Department of Behavioral Health Developmental Disability (DBHDD) and the Healthcare Facility Regulation Division. (HFR) To get a perfect score from them is a real accomplishment and Erma has made perfect scores on her last two inspections. Congratulations Erma!

*Tonya Self Augusta Administrator*

*For more information on our Georgia programs contact: Frank Kirkland, Director of Operations, Georgia [frank.kirkland@rhanet.org](mailto:frank.kirkland@rhanet.org)*

## DSP Courtney Williams Team player to team leader!

Submitted by Jackie Pipes  
Springfield, TN

Courtney Williams has been with our Tennessee program for over six years. The program recently joined the RHA Health Services family and Courtney was exemplary in her versatility and willingness to adapt to the changes during that transition.

With the changes, she was assigned to the West Hillcrest Home program. She stepped into a new environment and took on the challenge of becoming a mentor to all new staff. She brought a fresh set of eyes into the home and sought out ways to improve the quality of life for the people we support. She encourages the women living in the group home to try new things and to seek out new opportunities that they never knew existed. We frequently hear back from the clients and staff about the dignity and respect they receive from her. Courtney has always been a team player, but she has now gone from being a *team player to a team leader!*

As managers, we have seen positive outcomes such as a decrease in turn-over due to her new employee mentoring program. She has already begun to discuss new ideas such as: cookouts with other homes, hosting themed dinner party nights, and exciting new adventures on outings. Courtney brings a new level of professionalism and respect to this home. She is a wonderful example of what being a **Direct Support Professional** is all about.



Courtney Williams

*For more information about our Tennessee programs contact Lori Wooten [lwooten@rhanet.org](mailto:lwooten@rhanet.org)*



## ProAct RHA Creates New Intervention Curriculum for New Employees



Pictured here are Instructor Trainers for RHA ProAct. This group is certified to teach, mentor, and certify ProAct Instructors.

L-R Erika Odom, Cristin Parrish, Kenneth Martin, Genny Pugh, Benedetta Kelly, and Kenya Kelly. Also an Instructor Trainer, but not pictured, is Ron Hawkins.

ProAct is a proprietary preventive intervention curriculum created by RHA for new employee orientation training and annual refresher/recertification. The curriculum emphasizes evidence based practices and a cross disabilities focus and received approval from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

“RHA Leadership wanted ProAct to reflect the principles, values and mission of the organization and with their commitment and support, we achieved that goal,” says Consultant Genny Pugh.

Kenneth Martin has taken a lead role in working with the Instructor Trainers to implement the new curriculum which focuses on prevention and de-escalation of crisis behavior and contains physical techniques in addition to other strategies for crisis management. The curriculum has measurable learning objectives for each unit and requires written and practical testing for competence.

Since the ProAct Curriculum received state approval, we have accomplished the following in developing the RHA ProAct Instructor Team: 7 Certified Instructor Trainers, 22 Certified Instructors (one in FL), and 29 Total Certified ProAct Instructors. 24 additional Instructor Trainees have completed their training and are in the Coaching Phase leading to certification. We project a total of 53 certified RHA ProAct Instructors when everyone in the 2018 Instructor Class finishes observation/coaching.

Congrats to everyone at RHA who has worked so hard to make this possible during the first 6 months of 2018!

*Genny Pugh of the Genevieve Group is a Behavioral Health consultant with focus on change management, leadership and workforce development. RHA is grateful to her expertise and hard work in creating this excellent program. [www.thegenevievegroup.com](http://www.thegenevievegroup.com)*

## RHA Behavioral Health Seeks CARF Accreditation

*Submitted by Carmela E. Phillips, MBA, CCP  
Executive Director of Compliance & Quality Assurance*

“CARF provides us another benchmark for excellence while expanding our ability to serve those in need.”

— Jeanne Duncan, RHA CEO



As a continuation of RHA’s pursuit of excellence, selected RHA behavioral health services in North Carolina are pursuing accreditation by CARF International. As an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services, CARF accredits more than 50,000 programs and services at more than 25,000 locations internationally. More than 7,000 CARF-accredited service providers and more than 10 million individuals of all ages are benefitting each year from association with CARF.

RHA has established a CARF Readiness Team to take the lead in preparing for the survey of 19 local service locations. The CARF Readiness Project Plan involves categories of work including: policy writing and revision, forms and systems change, staff education and practice implementation. The Readiness Team has completed a comprehensive self assessment and is in the early stages of readiness implementation. CARF Survey teams will review NC RHA sites offering routine outpatient, facility based crisis, detox, SAIOP, and SACOT services.

### Quick Facts:

**Mission:** The mission of CARF is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process and continuous improvement services that center on enhancing the lives of persons served.

**Moral owners:** Persons served are the primary consumers of services. When these persons are unable to exercise self-representation at any point in the decision-making process, persons served is interpreted to also refer to those persons willing, able, and legally authorized to make decisions on behalf of the primary consumer.

## Honoring Our Nurses

“

*Our job is to help people; to love people; to stand together; to make a difference in the lives of the people and families we serve. RHA is a community of these people...these nurses that you are proud to call your co-workers, family, and friends.*

*-Alena Davis, Director of Corporate Nursing*



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*Pictured L-R Kelly Pickard, Gregory Jean-Pierre, and Jennifer Myers*



National Nurses Week begins each year on May 6th and ends on May 12th, **Florence Nightingale's birthday!** It features a host of events across the U.S. to honor nurses for the work they do, and educates the public about nurses' role in health care.

Therefore, it is only fitting that we take one week each year to celebrate our profession and the vital roles nurses play in health care. Here are three of our finest from High Point, NC.

We thank you for all you do!

## Opioids: The epidemic, abuse and misuse, hope, and solutions

*Submitted by Heather Daniels, Prevention Specialist I*



At the inaugural Student Summit, teens from Buncombe and surrounding counties gathered to talk opioids: the epidemic, abuse and misuse, hope, and solutions. They took an unflinching look at the opioid epidemic that has swept the nation.

RHA's Prevention Coordinators, Basil Savitsky and Michèle Barkett, along with Prevention Specialist Sherry Holder were at the forefront of planning the first ever Student Summit held at Western Carolina's Biltmore Park Campus in April.

Teens from local schools spent the day engaged in conversation about the opioid epidemic. In different sessions throughout the day students had the opportunity to learn about prescription drug abuse and hear from a guest speaker in recovery.



Knowledge is power and this is something we consistently heard from students post-summit. Understanding the physiological and psychological impacts of opioid use and misuse has a much more profound impact than simply stating "drugs are bad."

Students were moved by the summit's guest speaker who bravely shared his story of addiction and recovery. Solutions, action plans, and next steps were strategized by students and community advocates. Next year's summit is already being planned.

## Ryan S. Wins VSA Award

Submitted by Laura Marcum

River Bend New Bern NC

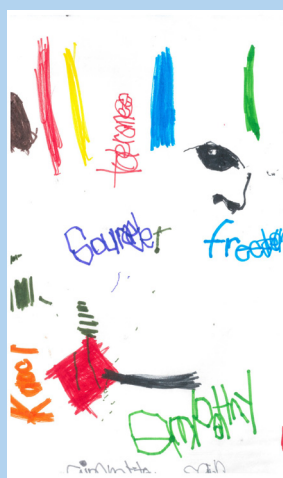
Ryan S. is eight years old and a talented young student living at the RHA River Bend Center in New Bern, NC. He attends public school and has a special interest in the world as well as "all things art". His art teacher at RHA, Beth Gosnell, quickly realized that Ryan had a special gift and encouraged his artistic expressions by way of stimulating art media and content to help inspire his creations.



Ryan's class had a lesson based on the biography of **Amnesty International founder, Gianetta Sagan**. He was fascinated with the concepts of tolerance, empathy and freedom that were showcased in that lesson and created artwork reflecting his feelings.

This work was so outstanding that Ms. Gosnell was determined to help Ryan share his accomplishment.

She submitted his work to **VSA or "Very Special Arts"**, which is an international organization that was founded more than 35 years ago by **Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith**. VSA's mission is to provide arts and educational opportunities to people with disabilities and to increase access to the arts for all. They are a part of the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**.



Ryan's work was soon accepted into the contest for art based on the theme word Ubuntu: which means "human-ness" or "humanity towards others." Colloquially, this philosophy translates to "I am because you are. My humanity is connected to yours." The UBUNTU exhibit will showcase student artwork from the United States, Argentina, Korea, Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

Ryan's artwork was later selected as a winning entry from those submitted from around the globe. RHA River Bend is so proud of Ryan and his accomplishments and delighted to have Ms. Gosnell working with us as she continues to seek out new opportunities for our students to connect around the world.

## Nick A Takes Gold Medal

Submitted by Laura Marcum

River Bend New Bern NC

Nick joined the RHA River Bend family on January 12, 2018 and quickly made his desire and love of water sports and swimming very clear, attending pool activities at every opportunity!



Nick's swimming instructor, Mary Dwyer, instantly recognized Nick's abilities and signed him up to compete in the Craven County *April Showers Special Olympics Invitational Swim Meet*. On April 14, 2018 Nick competed in his first competition in New Bern, NC.

He was accompanied by his Mother, Father and Grandmother. The competition hosted avid swimmers from seven different counties at the Twin Rivers YMCA. Nick was fearless in his event and never looked back, putting forth every effort to be the first to reach the finish line.

We are all very excited and proud of Nick for bringing home the Gold Medal in the *Ten Meter Assisted Freestyle Swimming Event*.



Congratulations Nick!  
From your Family and Friends  
@ RHA River Bend



Nick with Dad and Grandmother

RHA River Bend is home to 125 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who require 24 hour supervision and supports. The staff provides a warm and nurturing atmosphere to all ages from infants to adults. River Bend is located in New Bern, NC.

For information, contact Tina Stewart, Administrator  
252-638-6519 [tstewart@rhanet.org](mailto:tstewart@rhanet.org)





Benson, NC

## Benson Museum Selects Fred Nelson As Black History Honoree

The votes have been tallied! The Board of Directors of the Benson Museum of Local History has selected the 2018 Black History Month honoree — former Benson commissioner Frederick D. Nelson, Jr.

Fred is the Administrator of our Benson, NC unit and has been with RHA for 15 years. We are so proud!

A native of New York, Mr. Nelson moved to Benson in 1989 and married Hazel Peacock. He served as a Town of Benson commissioner from 1997 till 2017 — a large portion of those years, from 2007, he acted as Benson's Mayor Pro-Tem. Mr. Nelson is also a Deacon at St. Marks Christian Church in Dunn.



He was quite shocked to find out he had been chosen.

"He said he couldn't believe it," said Cultural Arts Director Terry Hobgood. "But he happily accepted the nomination. We were thrilled to honor Fred and had a packed house at the museum in February."

After announcing he would not seek re-election as a Benson commissioner, Mr. Nelson was honored with an official town proclamation in October for his two decades of dedication to Benson and its residents.

*An excerpt from that proclamation exemplifies why the Museum Board sought to honor Mr. Nelson at the upcoming Black History celebration.*

*"(Mr. Nelson) bears part of the responsibility for the progress that has been made in Benson over the past two decades. He has served as a faithful servant for the citizens of Benson. Always present, always prepared and always engaged," it reads.*

*"Slow to anger but quick to address issues that affect the people of Benson, particularly those who may be overlooked and their concerns not represented. He is a man whom God has blessed with wisdom."*

*The Benson museum is located at 102 West Main Street.*

## Psychosocial Rehabilitation

### Passageways PSR

Lexington, NC

*"To all members and supports, continue to be supportive and understanding with one another as at times it can be very difficult. The journey to full recovery can take a lot of time, but remember positive changes can happen all along the way. The more active we are in understanding our condition, taking responsibility for our own care, and reaching out for help, the more chances we have of making gains that give us greater reason to hope and not be hopeless." The Passageways Staff*

Passageways members teach one another how to prepare a simple meal and learn all kinds of life skills when they hang out in the kitchen!



*Teaches planning and patience.  
Introduces concepts related to science and math.  
Great way to learn about nutrition.  
Reinforces important lessons about staying safe.  
A great way for the members to bond and have fun!*



Members participate in all sorts fun and educational activities. Here they got their TBT opportunity to tie dye shirts instructed by a fellow member and express their creativity through choice of color and design.

Planting seeds for an easy gardening activity: When the first sign of green popped through the soil, the biggest smiles erupted from their faces. Once they take their plants home, they were encouraged to continue to nurture them, making sure they get plenty of water and light. What a valuable life lesson!



Carlo Black BS QP, Psychosocial Rehabilitation Team Leader  
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Submitted by Sara Huffman, Program Manager  
RHA Behavioral Health - Burlington, NC  
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## Changing Futures ● ● ● ●



*"I believe in myself today"*

" Saiop groups has had a big impact on my life. Through out my journey here I was able to learn a lot about my disease and the impact drugs had on me and others. I learned to identify triggers, learned about my character defects, and learned how to change my negative thinking. I learned to stop, look, and listen, and to recognize feelings are just that—feelings!

I have learned that NA and STEPS will help me stay clean and have a manageable life. Cole, Nancy, and Harvey, taught me how to express myself openly and feel safe. I know that I will be successful and will have a real life; happy without drugs. A 360 from when I first started. I was scared, confused, and felt worthless and hopeless. I am now happy and enjoy all the blessings this process has given and continues to give me. I am truly grateful for Nancy, Cole, and Harvey and the people from Supportive Employment. Along with them, RHA has hooked me right up with hope and motivation to begin this new journey in life. I believe in myself today.

Sincerely, Linda F.

An open letter of love, hope, and support in recovery. Linda F. reveals her touching and courageous journey with the help of the SAIOP program and her counselors, **Nancy, Cole, and Harvey**. SAIOP, Substance Abuse Intensive Outpatient Program, consists of structured Individual, group and family therapy, case management support, substance use/addiction education, and relapse prevention planning. This program helps participants learn healthy coping skills and develop an individualized recovery plan.

-Nancy, LCSW, LCAS, CSI SAIOP Team Lead



The value of what we do for me is without measure. It is serving from the heart and spirit with the backing of our professional training and ethics. I serve in this capacity knowing that hope is eternal. The joy of seeing the growth and progress of an individual in recovery speaks to what hope coupled with a strong treatment program can provide as the recovery journey begins. As we remind those we serve, treatment is here at RHA and recovery is out there in an individual's recovery community.

-Cole, CSAC, QP, CPSS SAIOP/MATT Facilitator



People come in broken, and I have the honor of watching them put back the pieces in order for them to become whole again. Recovery is filled with challenges, difficulty, frustration and obstacles. Our team encourages them to have hope. Hope allows people to approach the challenges of life with a positive mindset and a feeling of desire for change. By the time our consumers graduate they have the essential tools to thrive in recovery and live life to the fullest.

-Harvey, CPSS, CSACI



As Peer Bridger for Alamance County Medical Center, I transition (a warm handoff) individuals from ARMC Behavior & Emergency Departments (post discharge) to RHA's SAIOP/ MATT program. As a person in recovery, I continue to reach individuals "Where They Are" with my own personal story of successful recovery. My hope is that they can find their way back into society and maintain a lifestyle that they truly deserve to have.

### Contributing Writers

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