

DEC 2020

GHAzette

Official Newsletter of GHA Autism Supports

Searching for Opportunities in the Face of COVID-19



The pandemic has brought enormous challenges, while also presenting some opportunities to examine our internal operations. First and foremost, keeping our staff and the individuals that we support safe has been the core of all decision making. Shortly after the start of COVID-19, Second Street Sundries, the cafe and coffee shop owned and operated by GHA in

downtown Albemarle, was closed to indoor dining. To provide seamless service to the loyal customer base, a new online ordering system was implemented at www.secondstreetsundries.com, outdoor seating was expanded and curbside pick-up options were provided. In addition, work began on ways to reduce exposure for our staff that had shopping duties on a weekly basis to stock their respective sites. Shortly thereafter, the rear conference room inside Second Street Sundries was transformed into an internal grocery store of sorts. All ordering of groceries, cleaning supplies, paper products and some hygiene supplies has shifted under the direction of Brittany Blalock, with assistance from Sandy Hinson, Sharika Watkins and Nick.

With consultation from a dietician, menus are designed and food is ordered. Supplies are transported to the Wilmington programs as well. The program has also provided an opportunity to employ one of the GHA individuals, along with a job coach. "It has been rewarding to create a new program that supports our people on a daily basis, while protecting our staff," shared Brittany.



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You've got mail!

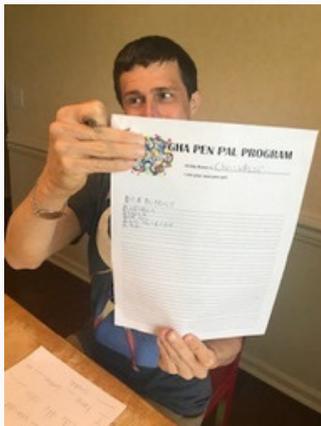
Life in a pandemic has presented countless challenges, especially for members of the autism community. GHA Creative Arts Coordinator Kyoko Rorie-Bruton has worked diligently during this time to develop a plethora of activities to keep the individuals we serve involved and engaged.

Most recently, Kyoko developed a pen pal program that began in June and has provided a level of connectiveness for its 48 participants, including some GHA staffers. Not only has the effort facilitated communication between individuals that live in the residential facilities, but the program has also engaged those living in other community settings. In addition, residents in Albemarle have had the opportunity to forge relationships with pen pals in our sister program in Wilmington. Letters using theme-made stationery have been exchanged on a monthly basis, and many individuals have incorporated pictures of themselves, along with other pictures that capture their interests. Hats off to Kyoko and the countless staff that have assisted in facilitating a phenomenal opportunity for the people that GHA serves!

Kyoko Rorie-Bruton has been employed with GHA for 7 years, and served previously as the Day Program Coordinator in Albemarle and as a direct support professional at Carolina Farms Home #3 and at the Locust Home. She is an accomplished artist, and she donates her time and talents regularly in the Stanly County arts community.

"The GHA Autism Supports pen pal program has provided a wonderful outlet to connect many of the individuals we support during a very challenging time."

Kyoko Rorie-Bruton,
GHA Autism Supports
Creative Arts
Coordinator



GHA Autism Supports gratefully acknowledges the following individuals who made memorials and honorary gifts between August 1, 2020 and December 11, 2020. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you feel an error has been made, please contact Beth Olivieri at 704-982-9600, x 125.

In Honor of Aaron Andrews
Anthony & Theresa Andrews

In Honor of Maureen Morrell
Mr. & Mrs. Mike Riley

**In Honor of
Thomas & Marie Southerland**
Paul Gerald

In Honor of Lee Boyd
Steve Boyd

**In Memory of
Dr. Rob Morrell**
Robert & Taliaferro Denton

**In Honor of Staff at
Carolina Farms Home #3**
Rich & Lyda Mihalyi

In Honor of Iris Coggins
Vicki Coggins

George Edens
Larry & Thea Gardner
Mr. & Mrs. Scott Jones
Phil & Brenda Julian
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Kelly
Hargrave S. McElroy
Laura Perrino

**In Honor of Staff at
Tanglewood Home**
Dr. Linda & Mr. Eric Lawrence

In Honor of James Ferguson
Peggy Baucom

In Memory of Nicholas Finch
Mrs. Parker Lindsay
Michael & Brenda Teague

Mr. & Mrs. Mike Riley
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Schwerdt
Craig & Ulla Skeffington
Mr. & Mrs. W. E. Stevenson

**In Honor of
Ron & Beth Swanner**
Doug & Susan Stokes

**In Honor of Dr. Eric & Mrs.
Judy Johnsen**
Doug & Susan Stokes

**In Honor of Dr. & Mrs.
Tom Norwood**
Doug & Susan Stokes

**In Memory of
Kathrina Townsend**
Nick & Bobbilynne Garner

In Honor of Drew Julian
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Memory of
Mrs. Dickie Olsen**
Maureen Morrell

In Honor of Emily Whichello
Carla Ingram
Amy Whichello

**In Honor of
Jim, Sharon & Ty LaRocco**
Julia S. Ewing

**In Honor of
Lavonne B. Peterson**
Sharon LaRocco

**In Honor of
John & Taryn Williams**
Stan & Annette Leggett

In Memory of Jack Macon
Boyd J. Jordan

In Honor of Adele S.
Steve & Judy Smithmyer

In Memory of Ann Zeller
John Townson & Jane Zeller

In Honor of Dallas Meyers
Ernestine Cofield

In Memory of Mr. Ed Scott
Tom & Sue Jasinski

**In Honor of
Cody Zeller-Townson**
John Townson & Jane Zeller

In Honor of Justin Morrell
Tom FitzGerald
Michael Morrell
Mr. & Mrs. Mike Riley

**In Honor of
Christopher Shinn**
Mike & Carla Shinn

GHA Welcomes Chief of Health Services



**Lori Shue,
Chief of Health Services**

GHA Autism Supports is pleased to welcome Lori Shue as the new Chief of Health Services, joining the GHA Leadership Team in late September. A native of Mt. Pleasant, Lori loves the small town atmosphere and has been there her entire life. After receiving her Associate's Degree in Nursing from the Louise Harkey School of Nursing in 1998 (now Cabarrus College of Health Sciences), she received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Winston Salem State University in 2003 and her Master of Health Administration from Pfeiffer University in 2016.

Lori has spent the last 22 years in the healthcare arena starting at Stanly Memorial Hospital and remaining there her entire career at what is now Atrium Health Stanly. She began in 1998 as a nurse in the Emergency Department, and continued in that role until she became a Clinical Nurse Educator for the Emergency Department, as well as the OB units. Lori was promoted to the Director of Emergency Services, a position

she held from 2007 to the present. In addition, she served as a Stanly County Medical Examiner from 2008 to the present. Lori is a Certified Emergency Nurse and a Certified Management Nursing Leader.

In her role as the Chief of Health Services, Lori will oversee the continuance of quality health services for the individuals that GHA Autism Supports serves. In addition, she will serve as a liaison between administrative and medical personnel, and is responsible for the development and management of clinical systems.

She is married to her husband Jason of 20 years, and they have two children. Austin is a senior and Abby is a freshman, both at Mt. Pleasant High School. In her spare time, Lori enjoys the beauty of the outdoors, especially with friends and family, and she finds fulfillment through service and seeing the impact that sharing grace and kindness has on others.

Medicaid Transformation Moving Ahead

After a delay, NC Medicaid Transformation is now preparing to launch. Medicaid currently operates under a fee-for-service model but will transition to Managed Care. Under Managed Care, the State will contract with insurance companies which are paid a predetermined rate to provide all the services that a person needs. Medicaid will change to Standard Plans for many individuals, such as low-income beneficiaries, in July, 2021. Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental disabilities, such as the individuals served by GHA Autism Supports, will transition to Tailored Plans July 1, 2022. The intent of Transformation is to provide more "whole-person" care that includes physical and behavioral health in a cost-effective way. As Medicaid Transformation progresses, GHA will strive to keep you informed about any changes that may impact your loved one's care.

For more detailed information, see medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/transformation.



Direct Support Professionals--Our Heroes

For over nine months, the entire GHA team of professionals has worked exceedingly hard to craft new approaches to keep the organization running smoothly in the face of a pandemic. We would like to use this edition of the GHAzette to highlight several Direct Support Professionals who have gone above and beyond in delivering exceptional care to the individuals that they support. These superheroes deserve capes for their commitment during the pandemic and beyond!

**Dave Billingsley,
Hollinger Home in
Wilmington**

Dave Billingsley has worked in GHA's Wilmington operations since 2011, having supported the individuals at Hollinger Home for the last seven of those years. A father of two kids, Dave shared that he always wants to know his own children are safe and doing well. He keeps this same approach in mind with the care he provides at the Hollinger Home. When asked about his commitment during these unusual times with COVID-19, Dave shared the need to be more creative in finding physical and social outlets to replace the routine community outlets, most of which have been non-existent during the pandemic. Dave shared a Maya Angelou quote that resonated with him in working with the residents at the Hollinger Home. "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."



**Crystal Wall,
Cowan Home in
Albemarle**



A 13-year veteran, Crystal Wall is currently a direct support professional at the Cowan Home in Albemarle, but has supported individuals at Doby Home, Carolina Farms #2, Martin Apartments, Tanglewood Home and Holbrook Home. Valued for her service throughout her GHA career, Crystal went above and beyond working 24-hour shifts in the Holbrook Home during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. "I was committed to taking all measures to keep myself as healthy as possible during this difficult time so I could remain strong for them," shared Crystal. She loves building relationships with the people she supports, and values the diversity of each person. "There is so much to be learned by observing, and I love knowing that I helped them reach their goals."

**Jarvis Benjamin,
Lowder Home in
New London**

Jarvis Benjamin credits his work at GHA over the last eight years for morphing from being quiet and reserved to a person that has grown and developed into a much better human being all the way around. Jarvis currently serves as a direct support professional at the Lowder Home in New London, but has supported individuals at the Holbrook Home, Tanglewood Home, Taylor Home and Cowan Home. He admits that the challenges the pandemic has presented have been immense, but he has worked to keep the individuals connected with their families through lots of calls and FaceTime opportunities and has tried his best to keep them structured and engaged with lots of activities in the home despite the decline in community activities. Jarvis worked a number of 24-hour shifts at the Holbrook Home alongside Crystal Wall during the height of COVID-19 pandemic. "We knew we had a job to do, and we kept each other strong as a team so we could provide the best care possible," shared Jarvis.



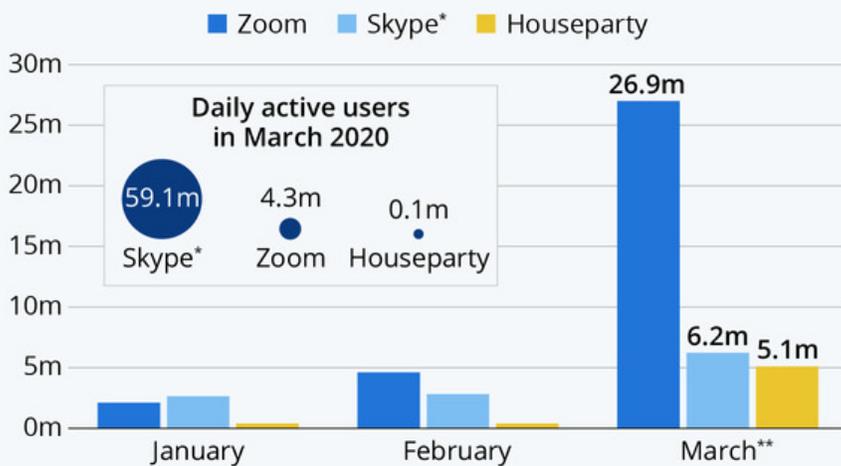
Stay Connected!



With millions of people being forced to stay home to help stop the spread of COVID-19, many have found creative ways to virtually stay social through happy hours, trivia nights and birthday parties. Zoom, one of the dozens of video conferencing services, was used on November 8th for a GHA Autism Supports Family Meeting. Over 60 families connected with GHA staffers to hear the latest organizational updates. Video conferencing usage rates have skyrocketed during the pandemic!

Video Chat Apps Rise to Prominence Amid Pandemic

Global downloads of video chat apps for Android and iOS



* excluding Skype for Business
 ** March data as of March 26
 Source: Priori Data



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[Click here](#)



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GHA Receives Landfall Foundation Grant

GHA Autism Supports recently received a grant in the amount of \$2,500 from the Landfall Foundation to enhance the back yard area of the Hollinger Home with sensory rich activities. This grant marks the fourth grant that GHA Autism Supports has received from the volunteer run foundation.

The Landfall Foundation was formed in 1995 with a mission of providing funds to local non-profits for programs and projects that provide for the arts, education, and health and welfare in the greater Wilmington area. Since its inception, the Foundation has raised and contributed over \$5.1 million to non-profit organizations. The Coronavirus upended the Landfall Foundation's ability to fundraise through their traditional activities during the pandemic, yet the virus greatly increased the needs of the local community. With a goal of \$500,000 to fund all critically needed grant requests, organizers successfully raised over \$540,000 from 330 donors! "With the decline in available community activities during the pandemic, we appreciate the support of community partners like the Landfall Foundation to assist in enhancing our residential programs," shared GHA Chief Development Officer Beth Olivieri.



News from Quality Management Parents and Guardians Pleased with GHA's Pandemic Response

In September 2020, we mailed our annual satisfaction survey to all parents and guardians. This year we included a question about GHA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our parent-guardian responses were overwhelmingly positive—a thank you to all staff who worked tirelessly to keep our program as happy and as safe as possible.

Statement: GHA Autism Supports' COVID-19 pandemic response has been very effective.



Among our positive anonymous comments from parents/guardians:

- "Unprecedented care, communication and management during unprecedented times, heartfelt appreciation for all you do..."
- "GHA continues to provide exceptional care for our son which gives us great comfort in these most challenging times. GHA's detailed and comprehensive plans and policies regarding COVID-19 leave nothing to be desired. All employees are to be commended for their tireless efforts."
- "We appreciate GHA's management of our son's health and social needs. The staff and home manager have helped him adjust better than we expected."

Strongly Agree	42	84%
Agree	7	14%
Disagree	1	2%
Strongly Disagree	—	—

FEELING FESTIVE!

LOTS OF ACTIVITIES CONTINUE TO KEEP THE INDIVIDUALS WE SUPPORT HAPPY AND HEALTHY!





As part of the staff appreciation efforts this December, all employees of GHA Autism Supports received holiday shirts. We urge everyone to "Grow Your Heart with Acceptance" during this holiday season and beyond!



Happy Holidays from our GHA Family to Yours!!

