

MARCH 2023

# GHAzette

Official Newsletter of GHA Autism Supports

## Community Partnership Groups Treat Residents to a Night Out

Individuals we support at GHA Autism Supports danced the night away at both the Night to Shine in Wilmington and the Annual Sweetheart Dance in Albemarle. The Night to Shine is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation in cooperation with local churches and the Sweetheart Dance is hosted by Pine Grove United Methodist Church and other providers that serve individuals with special needs. We appreciate both hosts and their entire network of volunteers for providing such fun and memorable gatherings for the people we support. From selecting the perfect outfit to hair and makeup, individuals were all dolled up for these special events where many danced the night away! A special thank you to the direct support staff that helped our individuals shop and select their finest wear and accompany them to these wonderful events. We also appreciate students at Stanly Community College's Cosmetology Program for providing services for hair and nails. The Night to Shine and the Sweetheart Dance added to the quality of life for many and served as a time to reconnect with old and new friends post pandemic! Check out scenes from events on page two. We look forward to continuing these partnerships in 2024!



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sweetheart dance

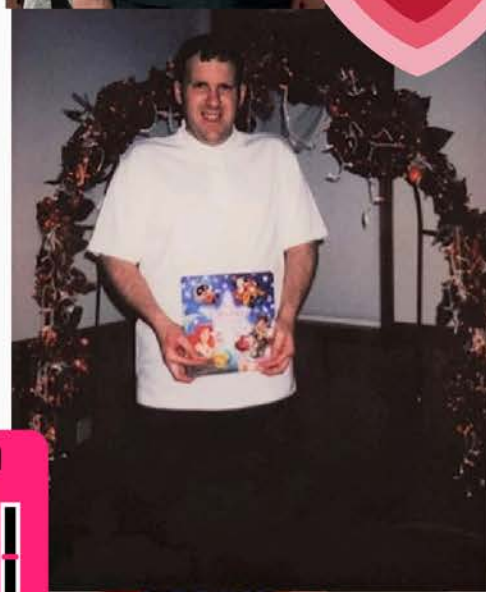
SCENES FROM

# NIGHT to Shine



**"Meaningful partnerships are central between our community and the people we support in creating positive outcomes for all."**

DAWN ALLEN,  
GHA AUTISM SUPPORTS  
CEO



GHA Autism Supports gratefully acknowledges the following individuals who made memorials and honorary gifts between December 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you feel an error has been made, please contact the Development Department at 704-982-9600, x125.



**In Honor of Julian Allard**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Memory of Ellen Brooks**  
Shawnee Sundquist

**In Memory of Linda DeYoung**  
Phil Ponder

**In Honor of Ms. Lynn Allard**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of Johnny Bullis**  
Lori Bullis

**In Memory of Michael Forrest**  
Rick & Penny Brown

**In Honor of Macy Allard**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of  
Carolina Farms Home #3 Staff**  
Craig & Ulla Skeffington

**In Honor of Paula Gates**  
Sue Gates

**In Honor of Dawn Allen**  
Paul & Brooke Childress  
Chet & Elaine Gurski

**In Honor of Jason Cory**  
Steve Cory

**In Honor of  
GHA Autism Supports Staff**  
Mike & Carla Shinn

**In Honor of "Flash" Allen**  
Phil & Susan Hinely

**In Honor of Cannon Cowles**  
Dr. & Mrs. Thomas Norwood, Jr.

**In Honor of Maria Gurski**  
Angela Birchler

**In Honor of Dr. & Mrs.  
Mike Bohnsack**  
Dr. & Mrs. John Kilde

**In Honor of Ange Craft**  
Suzanne S. Surratt

**In Honor of  
Mr. & Mrs. JT Hinton**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of  
Dean & Mindi Bowers**  
Nadine Bowers

**In Honor of Macy Allard**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of Paula Gates**  
Sue Gates

**In Honor of  
Stan & Donna Bowers**  
Nadine Bowers

**In Honor of Day Program Staff**  
Larry & Martha Hupp

**In Honor of  
David & Carroll Holbrook**  
Jessamine Holbrook

**In Honor of Kayleigh Boyd**  
Steve & Susan Boyd

**In Honor of Scott Denton**  
Mimi Denton

**In Honor of Liza K. Howell**  
Thomas S. Kenan, III

**In Memory of Lee Boyd**  
Steve & Susan Boyd

**In Honor of Scott Denton**  
Rusty & Patsy Duke  
Daniel & Donna Harris

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

(Continued from page 3)

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**In Honor of Drew Julian**  
Paul Boileau

**In Honor of  
Mr. J. Henry Julian**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of  
Dr. Jennifer Julian**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Memory of Reuben Klamer**  
Bea Pardo

**In Honor of Ty LaRocco**  
Julia S. Ewing

**In Memory of  
Michael P. Laton, Sr.**  
Neil & Brooke Senter

**In Honor of Charlie Lawrence**  
Winifred Helton

**In Honor of Ashley Lowder**  
Ronnie Michael

**In Honor of Zach Lowder**  
Tony & Martha Lowder

**In Honor of Travis Luxenberg**  
Jim Gibbons, Jr.

**In Memory of Jack Macon**  
Boyd Jordan

**In Honor of  
Wincey Marshall &  
Durrett Home Staff**  
Larry & Thea Gardner

**In Memory of Jan B. Martin**  
Sue Martin

**In Honor of Caleb McElreath**  
Jimmy & Shirley Bayne

**In Memory of Ginny McGee**  
Steve & Susan Boyd

**In Memory of Roger Moore**  
Brian & Beth Farmer

**In Honor of Justin Morrell**  
Clare Casale  
Janie FitzGerald  
Diane Hartill  
Patrick & Clay Morrell  
Mary Ragsdale  
Ray Rockwell

**In Honor of Maureen Morrell**  
Janie FitzGerald  
Martha Webb

**In Memory of Rob Morrell**  
Mike & Linda Riley

**In Memory of  
E.H. & Joanne Morton**  
Mary Russell

**In Honor of  
Dr. & Mrs. Thomas Norwood, Jr.**  
Doug & Susan Stokes

**In Honor of Beth Olivieri**  
Gina Martin

**In Honor of Alexandra Phillips**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of Claire Phillips**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of  
Mr. & Mrs. Matt Phillips**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of Will Phillips**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of Braden Poplin**  
Dr. & Mrs. Thomas Norwood, Jr.

**In Memory of Eric Roberts**  
Beverly Roberts

**In Memory of Florence Rorie**  
Maureen Morrell

**In Honor of Kyoko Rorie-Bruton**  
Gina Martin

**In Memory of David Sadowsky**  
Bea Pardo

(Continued from page 4)

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**In Honor of Ryan Sadowsky**  
Gwen Roberts

**In Honor of**  
**Mr. & Mrs. Ron Swanner**  
Kay Cochran  
Doug & Susan Stokes  
Suzanne S. Surratt

**In Memory of Edward G. Scott**  
Tom & Sue Jasinski

**In Honor of Lake Snyder**  
Margaret Snyder

**In Honor of**  
**Taylor Home Staff**  
Larry & Martha Hupp

**In Honor of**  
**Mrs. Margaret Snyder**  
E. Lake I. Snyder

**In Honor of Emily Whichello**  
Amy Whichello

**In Honor of**  
**Mike & Karen Snyder**  
Margaret Snyder

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

**In Honor of**  
**Thomas Southerland**  
Paul Gerald, Jr.

**In Honor of**  
**Ms. Heather Stafford**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of**  
**Mr. & Mrs. Phillip Stafford**  
Phil & Brenda Julian

**In Honor of Nicky Sundquist**  
Dick & Mary J. Mason

14  
years of  
service

## Manager Spotlight with Santilena

Celebrating 14 years of service to GHA Autism Supports, Residential Manager Santilena Sturdivant began her career in 2009 as a direct care substitute staff at the Holbrook Home in Albemarle. She was promoted to a Residential Manager of both Taylor and Martin Homes in 2011. During her career, she has also supported individuals and their families at the Morrell Home, Thompson Home, Starr Apartments and Carolina Farms Home #3. Currently, she serves as a Residential Manager of Taylor Home and Martin Apartments.

When asked to reflect upon her time at GHA Autism Supports, Santilena shared, "Having been in this field for over 27 years, I love most making a difference in the daily



lives of the people I support." Santilena resides in Polkton and enjoys family trips with her son, daughter and three grandchildren in her spare time!



## Medicaid Transformation Continues

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has delayed the implementation of the NC Medicaid Managed Care Tailored Plans. The launch was scheduled for April 1 and is now targeted for October 1, 2023. The delayed start of Tailored Plans allows Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), which will operate the Tailored Plans, more time to contract with additional providers to ease the transition for people using the plans and their care providers. Until the Tailored Plans launch, individuals will continue to receive care through their existing plans. Families will continue to receive notifications from their MCO about the transition.

If you receive any Medicaid correspondence or have any additional questions, please contact GHA's Quality Management department at 704-626-2340.




TRANSITIONING  
TO  
TAILORED  
PLANS

For more detailed information, visit [medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/transformation](https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/transformation).



# Applying Results of GHA's Individual Satisfaction Survey

Every fall, Quality Management surveys all persons we serve—asking how happy their lives are. The survey is available in written and picture forms. The Chief Quality Officer, with the involvement of Managers, matched the form with the communication needs of each individual. All individuals supported by GHA had an opportunity to participate or decline to participate in the survey process. For the 2022 Individual Satisfaction Survey, 100 surveys were distributed. The written survey was completed by 48 individuals while 51 individuals completed the picture survey, a combined return rate of 99%. For individuals completing the written format, six questions were presented with Yes, No and No Answer as choices. In all instances, Yes represented the positive response. Emoji accompanied each choice to engage the participant and to add visual appeal to the project. The accompanying table summarizes the results.

2022 Individual Satisfaction Survey Results For Written Survey 48 participants	 Yes	% Yes	 No	 No Answer
1. Are the people you see every day nice to you?	47	98%	1	0
2. Are you happy with what you do every day?	47	98%	1	0
3. Do you feel safe almost all the time?	46	100%	0	2
4. Do you know who to tell if someone is mean to you? If so, who?	47	100%	0	1
5. As a result of services with GHA, is your life better?	46	100%	0	2
6. Overall, are you happy with your life?	47	98%	1	0

The predominant answering pattern reflected a high number of positive responses to all survey questions. After analyzing answers from the picture survey, similar positive patterns emerged. In all cases, Quality Management followed up on individual responses reflecting a need for greater positivity as well as when individuals identified activities they would like to include in their lives. The survey project fulfilled Quality Management's most important roles: gathering vital data and applying that data in a valuable way!





# Residents Benefit from Recent Gifts



Funding was recently received through an Autism Speaks grant that allowed for the installation of a concrete area with a fence for washing and grooming animals, as well as grooming supplies and equipment. Individuals at Morrow Valley Farmstead will be involved in the regular feeding and grooming of animals. Moose, our miniature therapy pony, three Great Pyrenees dogs – Elsa, Riley & Brea, and goats - Bonnie & Clyde, are loved by all and are sure to be a highlight with the individuals supported.

Summers in North Carolina can be hot and humid, and it was quickly realized that there was a need for shade on the back patio area at Morrow Valley Farmstead. Through generous donations made by parents and grants received, we were able to secure funding to install a permanent sunshade recently. The Superior Shade hanging cantilever sunshade measuring 24 ft. by 12 ft. will cover much of the back patio providing substantial shade and blocking 98% of the sun's harmful UV rays. The shade can also reduce the temperature of our outdoor space by as much as 25-30 degrees, allowing residents of Morrow Valley Farmstead to enjoy the back patio during hot summer months.



The West Stanly High School Woodworking Department recently built two wheelchair-accessible raised beds to be used in the new sensory garden at Morrow Valley Farmstead. The students did a fabulous job building the beds from plans developed and provided by Gardens for Humanity ([www.gardensforhumanity.org](http://www.gardensforhumanity.org)). Extension Master Gardener Volunteers designed the native plant sensory garden plan. Look for future updates on the sensory garden coming soon!



# Whole-Person Care Approach Kicks Off With Yoga

Through grant support provided by the Duke Endowment, Morrow Valley Farmstead was recently the first site to kick off a whole-person integrative care approach. The focus is to integrate physical, behavioral, and social health in an effort to maintain health and prevent and treat chronic diseases. On March 2nd, residents participated in their first chair yoga session with Cindy Brewer Purser of Mindful Yoga, Pilates & Art. One participant shared that it was “the best day”, and she couldn't wait until the following week's yoga activity! Through sessions at Morrow Valley Farmstead, Cindy will develop training videos that can be used throughout the organization during the two-year grant span, as well as for use during many years to come with the individuals we serve at GHA Autism Supports.



**NAMASTE!**

## Special Olympians Representing GHA Soar In Competitions

Stanly County Special Olympics athletes have hit the ground running this spring in a variety of sporting events! Individuals supported at GHA have been active participants with Special Olympics for a number of years, as many GHA staff have cheered them across the finish line.

The Stanly County Aquamen, coached by Volunteer Coach LaRhonda Watkins, participated in the Swim Invitational held at the Huntersville Aquatics Center on March 18, 2023. Three of the ten swimmers are residents of GHA, and all three men medaled in all of their heats!

Congratulations to Michael Francis:  
Mixed Open 50 yd. and 100 yd. Freestyle - Level 3

Congratulations to Adam Hupp:  
Mixed Open 25 yd. and 50 yd. Freestyle - Level 2

Congratulations to Jonathan Martin:  
Mixed Open 25 yd. Backstroke - Level 2  
Mixed Open 50 yd. Freestyle - Level 2



Sam Poplin has perfected his skills on the basketball court!



## Don't "Duck" a Chance to Win \$3,000!

Make plans to join the fun at the 15th Annual GHA Autism Supports Rubber Duck Derby presented in memory of Ellen Books on Saturday, May 20th at the Stanly County Family YMCA Park in Albemarle! Most importantly, adopt your rubber ducks now for a chance to win \$3,000 and numerous other exciting prizes. All ducks sold will plunge into the YMCA pool on event day at 1:00 pm. A complete list of prizes and event rules can be found at [www.ghautismsupports.org](http://www.ghautismsupports.org). Purchase your ducks by visiting the website or by calling (704) 982-9600, ext. 125. Grab a duck nest, flock, flotilla or invasion now before they are going, going gone!



## Speedway Children's Charities Continues Support

Many of us looked forward to a summer camp experience while growing up, and at GHA Autism Supports, our children and youth had a jam-packed 2022 summer filled with lots of fun and educational activities. Adolescents and youth participated in art activities, field trips to Dan Nicholas Park & NC Zoo, yoga and meditation at local parks, scavenger hunts, picking a variety of yummy fruits, and swimming at Carolina Farms just to name a few. Themed weeks planned by Kyoko Rorie-Bruton, Creative Arts Director, kept them busy all summer long. Summer 2022 was a blast, and we look forward to many new adventures in 2023. Funding through the Charlotte Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities Grant Program helps support "Camp Puzzle Piece", and we were fortunate to receive funding once again for the 2023 Summer Camp. Development Coordinator Lori Ivey (left) and Chief Development Officer Beth Olivieri (right) attended the Speedway Children's Charities Awards Ceremony in December to receive a \$2,000 check for this summer's camp fun!



Development Coordinator Lori Ivey (left) and Chief Development Officer Beth Olivieri (right) attended the Speedway Children's Charities Awards Ceremony in December to receive a \$2,000 check for this summer's camp fun!



# STAY CONNECTED

Follow our programs on social media outlets including the Facebook and Instagram pages for GHA Autism Supports and Second Street Sundries!



Instagram

Sign up and encourage others to enroll in the electronic delivery of our GHazette newsletter on our website at [ghautismsupports.org](http://ghautismsupports.org). Complete the Constant Contact form at the bottom of the opening page!



## OUR EDITORIAL TEAM

The GHazette Newsletter is released quarterly. For feedback or to share story ideas, contact:

**Lori Ivey, Development Coordinator**  
[loriivey@ghainc.org](mailto:loriivey@ghainc.org)

**Beth Olivieri, Chief Development Officer**  
[betholivieri@ghainc.org](mailto:betholivieri@ghainc.org)

# Creating Memories at



# BINGO!



## Funds Received Additional AEDs

GHA was recently awarded several grants to install automated external defibrillators (AEDs) inside several programs owned and operated by GHA Autism Supports. Grants from both the Landfall Foundation and the Mitchell Foundation allowed for the installation of an AED at both the Hollinger Home and the McGee-Hudson Home in Wilmington, along with the purchase of a new training device for our Wilmington support staff.

In addition, a grant from the First Lutheran Church Endowment Fund in Albemarle funded the installation of an AED at Second Street Sundries. Private donations were also received to install AEDs at Carolina Farms Home #3 and the Day Program in Albemarle. An AED at each of these sites will allow staff to be better equipped should a cardiac arrest emergency occur.

## BCBSNC Executives Visit GHA Autism Supports



## Spring Planting Kicks Off at the Day Program

NC State Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMG) from Stanly County recently visited GHA's Day Services Program. EMG volunteers Ellen and Mark McCarter taught the group about growing and seeding lots of plants!



Executives from Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina made a visit to Stanly County on March 22nd, and GHA Autism Supports had the privilege of highlighting our organization over lunch! Touring GHA and other highlights of Albemarle were the following from Blue Cross Blue Shield: Dr. Tunde Sotunde, President & CEO; Kelly Calabria, Chief Marketing & Corporate Social Responsibility Officer; Dr. John Lumpkin, President, Blue Cross NC Foundation; Angela Boykin, VP Operations, Government Markets; Cheryl Parquet, Director, Community Engagement & Marketing Activation; Fran Gary, SVP Government Markets; Melissa Biediger, Sr. Program Manager, Community & Diversity Engagement; Tom Wallis, Sr., Communications Advisor and John Fulton, Sr., Multimedia Design Analyst.