

# The Insider

July 2023



## UNIVERSAL MH/DD/SAS Mission Statement

Universal MH/DD/SAS is dedicated to helping individuals and families affected by mental illness, developmental disabilities and substance abuse in achieving their full potential to live, work and grow in the community.

**WHY THE NEED FOR THE INSIDER ?** *The purpose of this newsletter is to provide specialized information to all Universal MH/DD/SAS employees. The intent is to develop an informed workforce, to foster a greater sense of community and to build morale.*

**SUCCESS** - submitted by QP, Sarah Gupta

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Hyacinth Hunt is an outstanding AFL provider. She has embraced the true essence of being an "Alternative Family" for the people she has supported. As a former teacher, she is uniquely equipped to have a balance between supporter and educator. She and the person she currently supports have a wonderful relationship. She is always looking out for his best interest and finding ways to help him move towards finding success in his life.

Speaking of family - often families help keep us on track with what's happening with technology. Hyacinth says this is certainly the case for her... as Joe keeps her up to date. 😊

Check out more about this special relationship on the next page. 

Hyacinth also has made it possible for Joe to rekindle long-standing friendships. She makes sure that he spends time with his friends not only locally, but through organizing and supporting them to travel on vacation together. They have gone on family vacations, often frequenting Maryland and New York. They have even visited Aruba. Last year was Myrtle Beach and this year they are soon embarking on a cruise.

Joey says this about Hyacinth. *"She is very nice and caring. She appreciates what I am, and she loves me a lot." On the other hand, Hyacinth says "Joe is the best person that ever lived in our home, including my children. We respect and understand each other. I love him."*

QP Sarah Gupta says, *"Hyacinth is a wonderful AFL provider, and we are fortunate to have her as part of the Raleigh Residential Team."*



Allison Chisley, a licensed AFL provider in the Raleigh office, was able to ensure that one of the people who lives in her home was able to attend his daughter's high school graduation.

Allison initially was unsure that she would be able to provide this support, but made it happen.

*She shared, "I couldn't imagine not being at any of my children's graduations. It is a special moment that he deserves to be at and a special moment his daughter will never forget."*

*CJ's mom expressed her gratitude saying, "My heart is so happy; it was so awesome that the Chisley's were able to take CJ."*



## My goodness, just look at all those medals!

Danny is a lovely young man who simply is enjoyable to be around. "I like to do lots of things like listening to music, working out, traveling internationally, cooking, attending church, and dancing to name a few." Mom says Danny's family is most proud of him for being so responsible to maintain such a busy schedule. He works at Food Lion, and he loves to volunteer. Danny is also an uncle, and his family adores his big hugs.

Danny, who is originally from New York moved to Raleigh when he was 3. He has been participating in Special Olympics of NC since he was 8. He has enjoyed softball, soccer, bocce, basketball, golf, bowling and swimming. Danny graduated from the Beyond Academics program at UNC-G in May 2016.

Once again, Danny participated in Special Olympics this year. He was very proud of his accomplishments, and we are proud of him as well.

50 Yard Butterfly – Gold Medal

25 Yard Freestyle – Gold Medal

4 by 25 Yard Freestyle Relay – Silver Medal



Joshua ('Josh') is one fortunate individual! When he was born, he was left in the hospital by his mother. At the time, former Universal AFL Jonnie Cyrus and current staff Barry Parker took Josh in and raised him as their own.

Unfortunately, Ms. Jonnie has had some health issues lately which has required Josh to be placed with an aunt, Lorraine Cyrus. Since then, Josh has continued to flourish. He has been doing well with his goals with getting assistance from ALL family members.

As you can see from the photos, Josh attends many events and is very involved in the community. This is representative of how an AFL "ought" to be – involved in the community! QP, Alice Nunn says *"All the folks who surround Josh are considered MVPs as they continually look for ways to improve on Josh's quality of life. It certainly does take a village!"*



We are happy to spotlight Raleigh's Office Assistant Audrey Cobb. Audrey has been a dedicated employee Universal for seven years. It has been said that she keeps everyone in line when it comes to getting things done. She cares about her work and will give things back to you without hesitation if it is not correct.

Although she is a stickler about doing things the right way, she will greet you with a smile and lively conversation when you enter the Medical Record Room. She likes to stay busy at work, so she is always fixing, scanning, or filing.

Audrey likes to help others who are in need and often gets her co-workers to join in. She is a mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. She loves to travel and attend events at her church.

Human Resources Director Ingrid Freeman says *"Kudos to Audrey Cobb for being diligent and persistent for all staff and peers in the Raleigh Office. Audrey does an excellent job assisting families, staff, and persons served!"* Administration Director Zsa Zsa Johnson says, *"Audrey does not stop until the job gets done correctly and completely. Thank you so much for your quality and your consistency!"*



You want to know what dedication looks like? Here she is – Ms. Audrey Cobb!

Marilyn Porter was an unforgettable Regional Director for the Eastern Region of Universal Mental Health Services. For her family and those who knew her, she was a dynamic personality with endless dedication to the people that she served. When you worked with Marilyn, you became family.

Marilyn came to Universal in September of 2011 and throughout her time at Universal, impacted countless employees and individuals that Universal supports. Her advocacy and spirit embodied the mission of "Caring People, Caring for People." Marilyn passed away on March 27, 2020, after a courageous fight with cancer. Her loss was one that was felt statewide. Marilyn Porter's legacy will live on through this scholarship.

The Universal Marilyn Porter Scholarship is awarded annually in the amount of \$1000. It is awarded to an hourly direct care staff through an application process. The applicant must commit to attend an accredited college (community college, university, etc.) within the year of the scholarship award.

The scholarship is selected by a 6-person committee made up of Universal employees. The decision is made based primarily on a short essay from the applicant. The scholarship decision is not based on, race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, gender as well as sexual orientation, religious preference, age, disability, or political affiliation.

If you are a direct care hourly staff at Universal, you can apply for the Universal Marilyn Porter Scholarship from July 1st through July 15th. A Scholarship committee will then announce the recipient on August 1, 2023.

You can apply for the scholarship at: <https://umhs.net/scholarship>



A fundraiser to benefit a Burke County school's programming put on by a local law enforcement agency got a special design this year, hand-drawn by the son of an officer. The Morganton Department of Public Safety once again is selling limited edition patches and T-shirts to benefit programming for children with autism at North Liberty School. This year's patch is designed by Gabe Holland, the 6-year-old son of Public Safety Officer Corey Holland. When Gabe was about 2-years-old, he was diagnosed with autism. Officer Tony Paterno, who has helped spearhead the project approached Holland asking if Gabe could draw a design for the patch.

That's how they arrived at this year's design: a police car with red and blue lights atop the car. On the patch, two locked hands sit beneath the car, and both sit atop a yellow background. The sides of the patch have "Autism Awareness" written in Gabe's handwriting, with "Morganton" across the top and "NC" at the bottom.

Officer Holland said, "I've been an officer for nine years now, and my first experience with autism, we would have yearly trainings, just in-service, that would briefly touch on autism and the expected things that come along with that," Holland said. "I had no idea until I had a child of my own that was diagnosed with autism." This isn't the only program the department has to help people with autism and other sensory disorders.

"The service we provide to everyone in the community is very important, especially those that may be a vulnerable population such as children with autism, folks that may be intellectually, developmentally disabled," said MDPS Chief Jason Whisnant. "It's important that we're able to provide a higher level of service to those folks, understanding that there may be sensory impairment or sensory issues when we come."



When I was 10 years old, my homeroom teacher distributed photocopied handouts about depression. I scanned the faded bullet points: Feelings of sadness and hopelessness, loss of interest in usual hobbies and activities, lack of energy, sleep disturbances, reduced appetite, difficulty concentrating, agitation, etc. The handout said if we were experiencing four or more of these symptoms, we should be seeking help for depression.

My first reaction after checking the box next to each symptom was concern about my parents' response. *Would they be disappointed in me? Would they be embarrassed? Or angry? Would they insist I begin therapy? What kind of fourth grader needed a therapist?*

I didn't want to find out. For eight more years, I shoved down every knot in my stomach, every hopeless thought, every pang of guilt, every moment of exhaustion — telling no one and collapsing into my bed every night, crying until all the moisture left my body. I didn't seek help until I reached my freshman year of college, when my struggles simply could not be masked anymore.

When I think about the pain my 10-year-old self was hiding, I wish I could tell her that she was more than enough, just as she was — and she didn't need to be ashamed of her mental health challenges.

### Wanting To Be Perfect

Growing up, I was wracked with guilt over not being the perfect child. I struggled in math class, fumbling hopelessly through textbooks as I tried to make sense of congruent triangles. I was wildly uncoordinated and, as a result, terrible at every sport I tried. My basketball coach's exasperated sigh rang in my ears. I wasn't much better in my creative pursuits; I practiced violin for several hours at a time, but I never seemed to improve. I became hopelessly insecure; any unfamiliar task or critical comment would reduce me to tears. So, when I identified that I might be struggling with depression, I couldn't imagine adding another "flaw," like a mental illness, to the list. How long could this list get before I became unlovable?

So much of my anguish came from the assumption that my parents wouldn't be able to handle another one of my "failures." I worried that they'd lament how their child couldn't be "normal." I sometimes heard them up at night, talking about the ways in which my behavior concerned them. I wondered *how bad would these conversations get if we added a therapist's feedback?* ~ Continued on next page



Looking back, I needed to know that I was more than enough — and that I deserved love, happiness and healing despite my many imperfections. Being a flawed person did not make me inadequate, and having a mental health condition didn't make me a "bad" child. My parents weren't, in fact, expecting their 10-year-old to be perfect. Perhaps, if I had been able to internalize that, I might have admitted my struggles and sought help much earlier.

Embracing The #MoreThanEnough Campaign

When I think about NAMI's #MoreThanEnough campaign, I wonder about the other 10-year-olds in that classroom. *Were they struggling and too scared to say anything or ask for help? Was there anyone else who desperately wanted to please those around them and couldn't fathom revealing their pain? Who else needed the validation that they were adequate and deserving of help and compassion?*

This **Mental Health Awareness Month**, I hope that we can continue to fight the stigma surrounding mental illness and recognize that we are all more than enough. We are inherently worthy of happiness and recovery, regardless of diagnosis, ability or anything else.

Twenty years after reading that handout, I have added plenty of "flaws" to my list. I oversleep, I can't parallel park a car without causing property damage and I cry hysterically at TikTok videos about retired greyhounds.

I am still bad at math and basketball. But these flaws don't (and never have) defined me. Neither does my mental health condition. I live with well-managed anxiety and depression — and I am fully deserving of the life I have, complete with a caring family, an adorable pet, a devoted partner, work I love and access to regular therapy. I am #morethanenough and so are you.



*Margot Harris is a Content Manager with the Marketing & Communications team at NAMI.*

## Protect Your Passwords!

Passwords are a very important part of security at work and in our personal lives. Passwords serve as a first line of defense to protect our sensitive data and information. Many hacking incidents and data breaches are due to weak or stolen passwords. Below are some tips to help keep your passwords secure:

### Keep Your Passwords Unique

If you re-use the same password everywhere, your accounts will fall like dominoes if even one of them is breached. **Never** re-use passwords from one site to another.

### Avoid Common Passwords

Besides using different passwords on each of your accounts, take care to avoid passwords other people typically use. Don't use "password123", "qwerty", or "123456". Anything that is obvious to you is also obvious to everyone else, so you have to dig deeper to come up with something uncommon.

The best approach is to choose passwords that are a random sequence of lower-case letters, capital letters, numbers, and symbols. Make it a minimum of 12 characters long. Strong passwords shouldn't include references to personal information such as names, birthdays, addresses, or phone numbers.

### Keep Written Passwords Secure

If you must write down your passwords on paper, they should not be in plain view on your desk and should not reference the application or website where they are used. Writing down passwords and leaving them on your desk, next to your computer, or, worse, stuck to your computer, makes it easily accessible for someone with physical access to your office. Do not tell anyone your passwords and watch for attackers trying to trick you through phone calls or email messages requesting that you reveal your passwords.

Written logs of passwords should be kept hidden in your wallet, purse, or other secure location. Keep this written log secure! If it were to go missing, the person holding it could access protected health information, take over your company logins, and even your entire life. Only use a written log of your passwords if you have a very secure way to store it.

### Don't recycle your passwords, seriously!

It's worth repeating that reusing passwords across different accounts is a terrible idea. If someone uncovers your reused password for one account, they have the key to every other account you use that password for. The same goes for modifying a root password that changes with the addition of a prefix or suffix. For example, Password1!, Password2!, Password2023! (These are all bad for multiple reasons). By picking a unique password for each account, hackers that crack into one account can't use it to get access to all the rest.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the IT Department.



### Remember these Summer safety tips.

1. Be prepared for anything by checking the weather before you head outside. ...
2. Lather on sunscreen anytime you're outdoors. ...
3. Wear the right clothing and accessories. ...
4. Pack a refillable water bottle and first aid kit. ...
5. Be vigilant about water safety. ...
6. Know the risks and signs of heat exhaustion.



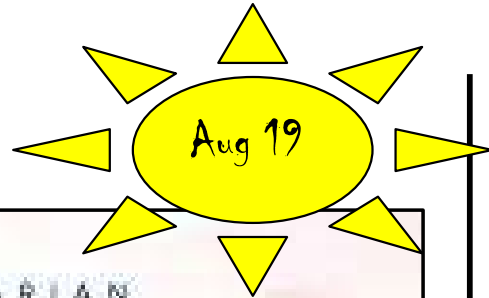
### Think safety as you enjoy the cooler temperatures and vibrant colors:

- Safely warm up by the fire. ...
- Never leave burning candles unattended. ...
- Watch for new roadway hazards. ...
- Be alert for wildlife on roadways. ...
- Share the road with harvesting equipment. ...
- Get the yard ready for winter. ...
- Use ladders safely. ...
- Get your flu shot.



# Universal's Cultural Sensitivity Mission Statement

"Universal MH/DD/SAS strives to develop awareness and respect in order to celebrate the diverse backgrounds of people."



World Humanitarian Day



National Disability Independence Day



Rosh Hashanah



Direct care individuals are to maintain the safety features of vehicles...taillights, turn signals, tire pressure etc.

CEO Brook Phillips started out as a direct care individual. It is nice to be led by someone who has been in our shoes!

Universal has approx. 720 employees and 120 Residential Services individuals.

Universal has a Human Rights Committee that is comprised of volunteers from the community.

Universal writes SMART goals for all persons served.

Universal has been accredited with CARF since 2009 and we always receive the highest accreditation decision, a three-year accreditation.

Universal has been providing awesome services since April of 2003!

Cleaning supplies are kept in each office in a specified locked location.

Universal is currently using "Compression-Only" CPR.

Training Director Terry Bedford is also a Person-Centered Thinking Instructor. He also plays in a band. "Ahhh - a man of many talents!"



Morganton's ITFS,  
**Melissa Dale**



Morganton's OA,  
**Olivia Carroll**



Burlington's QP,  
**Nahama Green**



Raleigh's OA,  
**Casey Finch**



Morganton's IFTS  
**Olivis Evans**



## Check out the Company Store!



The 1- and 5-year longevity coupons are mailed monthly!!

<https://umhs.net/company-store>

## KUDOS

*Ingrid Freeman says “Kudos for Linda Waites and Bonnie Ducker for going the extra mile to attend to the needs of the persons they work with. Also Kudos to Lori Gordon for doing a great job in Forest City!”*

*Monique Simmons says BIG KUDOs to all direct care staff on my caseload. “Thank you for all your hard work and dedication, I appreciate each one of you.”*

*Audrey Cobb says “Kudos to Heather Everhart – always willing to help with my questions. To Anthony Yingling – being an awesome Residential Manager. And to Zsa ZsaZsa Johnson – for all her patience as a supervisor.”*



Zsa Zsa Johnson says "Kudos to Bianca Green. "I appreciate how you took a chance on something new. You have done a great job learning this position. Keep up the good work!" 😊

Audrey Cobb says "Kudos to Sabin Carroll. He is so helpful and always available."



Patra says "Kudos to Ingrid! She keeps the ship afloat!"

Sherry Douglas says "Kudos to Heather Everhart for all her support in creating a budget for the PALS program. Selected agencies including Universal, work with the Buncombe County Sheriff Department to partner individuals with I/DD with public safety agencies to promote beneficial training and employment opportunities.

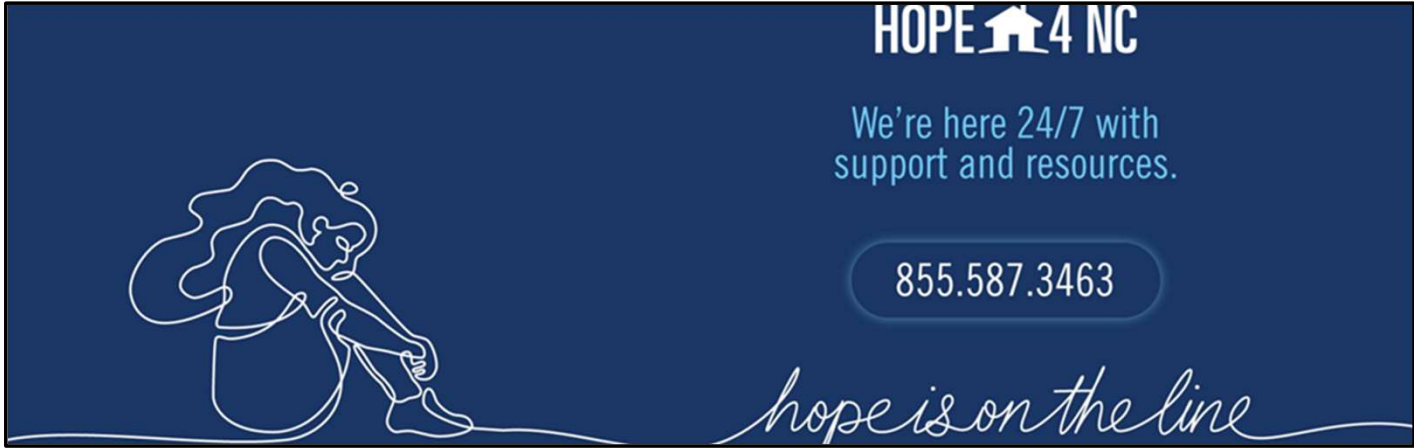
Kudos to Ryan Freeman for having a 100% no correction Record Review in Asheville (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter).

Kudos to Candy McEntyre as an outstanding AFL provider in Forest City! Her advocacy for the person she supports is known throughout Partners MCO!"

Michael Johnson says "Kudos to all my direct staff members for all that they do each day, by showing up on time to work and working diligently with the person served. Also, my AFL providers, for providing constant care around the clock. Thanks to all for a job well done and you guys are very much appreciated."







Morganton's Early Intervention Director Amber Anderson participated in the Kinderpalooza and Childfest. This event was primarily to locate kids who could benefit from Early Intervention and/or Pre-school services!

We think Amber had the most fun!

Wouldn't it be nice if all the world was like this?



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