

The Insider

Oct 2022



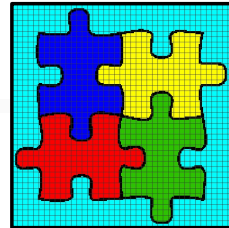
UNIVERSAL MH/DD/SAS Mission Statement

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.*

Burlington's Journey to Success

- submitted by Regional Director Garry Wiley



Inside This Issue

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The autism awareness symbol is denoted by a rainbow-colored puzzle piece. Bianca Green, Brittany Coble, and Tabitha Patterson decorated a Christmas tree for the Carolina Classic Fair Tree Contest held in Winston-Salem. On the next page, you will see Burlington's Journey to Success' tree.

~ Continued on next page



The use of crayons in our tree not only represent the colors of autism awareness, but the crayons used in our design symbolize youth.

The ornaments and the tree were themed around autism awareness and all ornaments were made by the Burlington day program attendees.

Universal is proud to represent the families and the people we support.



Currently, Johnea Littlejohn is the only QP in Forest City. She assists specifically with I/DD members receiving periodic services in Sherry Douglas' department. She has a Master of Social Work from Winthrop University located in Rock Hill, SC.

She is the wife of Timothy Leach, and they have 2 beautiful children. A fun fact she would like people to know: *"I play the organ and piano for 2 churches every Sunday. I believe in meeting people where they are in order to make change happen. When we (the professionals) cannot get on people's level, the people will remain stuck emotionally/mentally/and physically. This is truly what I stand on as a social worker deep down in my heart!"*

Johnea joined Universal in November of 2020 but contributes to the team's success as if she has been a team member for a very long time. She always has a smile on her face, but her focus is to always get things done!

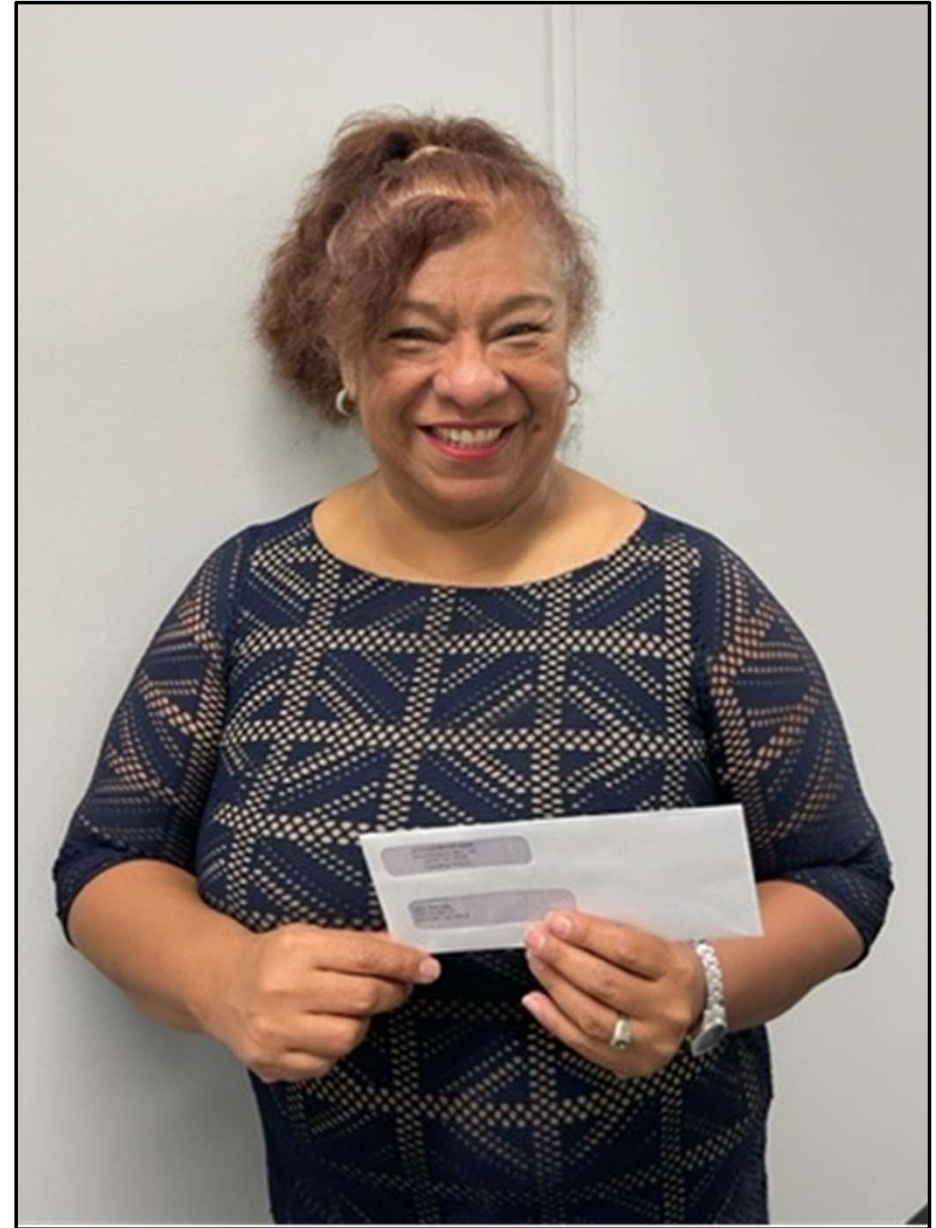


Announcing the Winner of the Universal Marilyn Porter Scholarship

Universal is proud to announce the winner of the Marilyn Porter scholarship. Meet **Aida Taylor** who plans to attend Wake Community College this fall and major in Psychology. Currently Aida is working in our Raleigh office and is supervised by QP, Latonya Harris.

Aida says “I am highly motivated at UMHS by Marilyn Porter. Marilyn’s legacy and vision certainly encourages me to continue with my education and pursue the best that is within me. Attaining my goals will help me to apply the knowledge gained every single day with the people I support.

One of my goals is to have the resources to educate myself better in order that I can serve the community. This scholarship will assist me to reach my goals while I am helping the individuals who I support to reach their goals. Thank you Universal!”





Welcome our new IT Director, Sabin Carroll. Sabin has over 25 years of experience in the IT field, with 12 of those years in the IDD/MH/SAS field.

CEO Brook Phillips says *“Sabin brings a vast amount of IT experience to Universal. We are fortunate to have someone of his caliber and I feel confident in his abilities to steer our Information Technologies Department into the future.”*

Sabin and his wife Jennifer, live in Hudson, NC. They have 2 beautiful adult children; Dylan and Olyvia.



Joe has ADHD and Tourette syndrome.

In Hickory, NC she found skateboarding at an unofficial DIY skate park. She also found a community that welcomed, taught and embraced her son. Wolf lived in Las Vegas until this year. Shortly before she moved to Hickory, Wolf urged Joel to try skateboarding. He was interested, Wolf said.

When they settled in Hickory, Wolf and Joel set out to find a place for Joel to skateboard. In searching online, Joel found the Hickory DIY skate park on Old Lenoir Road. \“Some skateparks — they’re not all friendly. Joel saw there was a DIY one (in Hickory) and from day one they were talking to him and helping him,” Wolf said. From Old Lenoir Road, there’s little to mark the skate park other than an old Concrete Machinery sign, the company that used to occupy the lot. Down a small turnoff and short hill sits the concrete pad once home to the company. Now, the area is covered in brightly-painted bumps, ramps and rails. The park was built by passionate skaters in Hickory in the past two years.

After bringing Joel to the park to skate, Wolf met the skate park’s keepers, Colby Poarch and Ricky Hubert, and an eclectic group of fellow skaters. The group welcomed Joel into their ranks, taught him more about skating and treated him as an equal, Wolf said. For the first time in his life, Wolf saw her son open up. “I’ve never seen him talking that much. They just took right to him, and I’ve never seen him enjoy something this much,” Wolf said. “As a new mom to Hickory and North Carolina, it set the tone for what we thought of the citizens and people who live here.

“I’ve told them I don’t know how many times how much of a difference it made to him and to our family that they welcome us here. If you’re here to skateboard, you’re family, and that’s what he feels like.” Sitting in her car (or leaning up against it on a nice day) Wolf watched her son blossom. He started talking to the other skateboarders comfortably, a change from his usual shy demeanor. He also learned to jump back up and keep going after a fall, something Wolf never witnessed in the past.

The improvements translated over to other parts of Joel's life, Wolf said. His grades improved and he's become more talkative and confident in everyday life. If others make fun of his tics, caused by Tourette syndrome, Joel handles it better now.

"He just lets it roll off his back where he didn't before," Wolf said.

"I knew the only thing different was here, so I knew that it was helping him to kind of get back up and keep going," Wolf said.

"There is such a skate culture that is amazing and awesome.

Anybody who can't find a place to belong, this is it."

The concrete pad left behind by Concrete Machinery has been used by skateboarders for years, Poarch said. He skated there a handful of times over the years but became a frequent visitor when the city of Hickory's skate park closed in late 2019. At the time, there were a handful of makeshift ramps, ledges and a rail.

It was then that Poarch and fellow skateboarder Hubert took control. Hubert, a carpenter, banded together to clean the area up. With the help of friends, Poarch and Hubert added new ramps, rails and jumps, painted the concrete, picked up trash and cut back overgrown plants.



When the skateboarders get going, the rumble of the wheels on concrete fills the enclave, along with the bang of boards hitting the ground after jumps and the scrape of wood after a fall. If a skateboarder pulls off a clean trick, others stop to tap their boards on the colorful concrete as applause.

"I wouldn't trade these guys for anything," she said. "These are some of the greatest guys, and I don't think they understand the difference they make, not just for Joel but everyone here."

D.J. Svoboda was diagnosed at the age of 3 with Autism Disorder with psycho-motor retardation which included speech delays and issues with his fine motor skills. He even found it difficult to hold a pencil. Today D.J. is dynamic, motivational speaker, accomplished artist and author with three books to his credit; My Imagiville, The Mupperezmo and the Rainbow, and The Inspirations of Imagiville.



Growing up, D.J. was teased and bullied. These negative experiences inspired D.J. to create the land of Imagiville; a safe place in his imagination where everyone is treated kindly and accepted just the way they are.

D.J.'s artwork has been featured in numerous publications such as Autism Spectrum, Autism Digest, Autism Perspective and Australian Parent's Child to name a few. His works hang in museums, and on corporate walls, organizations and private homes. The Autism Society of America selected D.J.'s Mupperezmo character to be the image on their "Puzzle Project." Mupperezmo, affectionately know as "Mupp" is a dragon-like character who turns his head upside-down to see the world from a different point of view.

D.J. is an Advocate for the North Carolina Autism Society, has been nominated for the naturally Austistic ANCA Visual Arts Award, and has been interviewed on numerous radio and television shows. His artwork was also featured on the Design Network in a recent episode of "Welcome Angel."



To learn more, go to www.DJandtheImagifriends.com

'Look and see things from a different point of view'

July 14, 2022, 4:25 PM EDT / Updated July 16, 2022, 10:42 AM EDT

By [Daniella Silva](#)

People experiencing a mental health crisis can now call or text a three-digit number, 988, to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and connect with mental health professionals trained to respond to such emergencies.

The [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) went live on Saturday morning, [according to SAMHSA Assistant Secretary](#) Miriam Delphin-Rittmon.

The hotline was designed to provide 24/7 free and confidential emotional support around the country to those in mental health distress, [the 988 lifeline website explains](#).

The new number connects the caller to a certified crisis center in the area where the call is placed, according to the website. The hotline is made up of a network of 200 local crisis centers around the country.

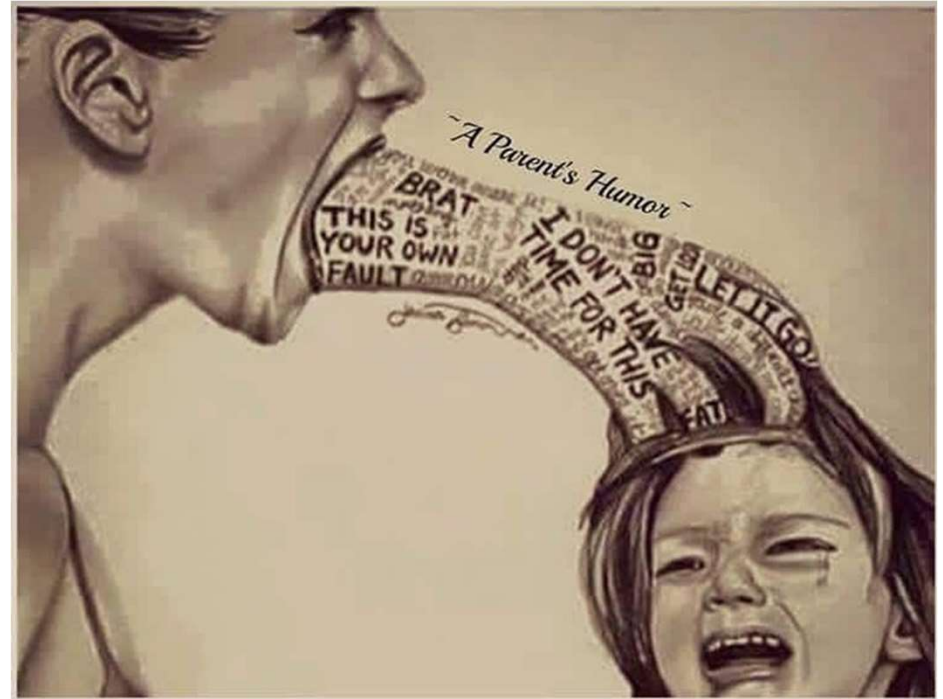
If Americans text or call

988

They will be connected to the
National Suicide Hotline



*“That boy is gonna end up dead or in jail
so don’t try and tell me
he can turn things around
because the more I think about it
he’s throwing his life away
and I’m not going to say
he is a good kid
let me tell you
there is no hope for him
and I refuse to believe
there is some good in that boy
because, whenever he crosses my mind, I think
There’s only a matter of time.”*



When you finish reading – start from the bottom and read upward.
Read the HOPE!

The power of our thoughts and words matter!

~ copied from Facebook



Documentation consistency is very important! How do you qualify for this? By entering your notes within 24 hours of the completion of the service – consistently!

"THANK YOU" to these awesome individuals!

Office	Staff
Raleigh	HONG, HAEJU G
New Bern	COLLINS, OLA
Forest City	EVANS, RHONDA D
Morganton	POTEAT, FAYE W
New Bern	LAWRENCE, GORDON G
Raleigh	MAHMUDA, SYEDA IFFAT
New Bern	MORRIS, MARIAN
Asheville	SMITH, ADAM WESLEY
Wilson	DENNING, SANDRA ENNIS
New Bern	BRYANT, JOAN S



SAFETY TIPS TO STAY HEALTHY**1.Avoid “Snowfalls” of Another Kind**

No matter when or how they happen, slips and falls are major health threats during winter. Make sure you have sturdy boots with good grip and remember to [“walk like a penguin”](#) with shorter strides. Indoor tumbles are also common in the winter. Avoid slippery floors by [investing in a good all-weather floor mat or boot tray](#) to keep entrances clear of condensation from ice and snow.

2.Dress for the Weather

This is especially important for senior citizens. Because of lower metabolic rates, poor circulation and other natural health factors, seniors are particularly susceptible to frostbite and hypothermia. [According to the CDC](#), people over the age of 65 make up more than half of hypothermia-related deaths. Layering is critical when dressing for cold temps. This can be especially complicated for seniors with memory-related impairments.

3.Weather the Storm

Even though we often associate power outages with summer thunderstorms, icy power lines and other severe weather conditions cause interruptions in service as well. Ensure your living space is stocked with everything you need to make it through several days without power. Flashlights, a battery-powered radio, warm blankets, non-perishable food, and bottled water are all cold weather essentials. For a list of suggested items, [check out this winter survival checklist](#). Also consider keeping an extra charged cell phone battery or auto-charger on hand.

4.Beat the Blues

While talk of flu shots and remaining physically healthy during the cold season is a concern, mental health is equally important and often overlooked. Winter weather can lead to increased feelings of isolation, which can lead to [Seasonal Affective Disorder \(SAD\)](#). A support system of family members, friends, and neighbors can help insulate you from the winter blues. There are plenty of ways to stay active and engaged, even if the cold keeps you indoors:

- Take a class online
- Connect with family on social media
- Have an in-home spa day
- Play an instrument
- Visit with friends and neighbors
- Curl up with a good book

Not every winter has to be a God-awful misery. Follow these winter safety tips to winterize your home and stay as healthy, you can kick back, relax and enjoy the peace and beauty of snowfall. Until, that is, it's time to consider spring safety

Here are five steps you can take to help children handle the challenges that come with [having a sibling with special needs](#).

1. Talk openly about the situation

Dr. Emanuele says It's essential for parents to clearly explain what is going on **to siblings** and answer questions they may have. "Some siblings may not fully understand what is happening with their brother or sister. They may feel guilty about it, that they somehow caused it. Or they may feel like they aren't as important as their brother or sister because they don't get as much attention."

It's essential for parents to listen to concerns the other children may have, and reassure them that you love them. "Let them know, 'I hear you, I see you,'" she added.

Parents don't have to use formal jargon like [ADHD](#) or [autism](#) or [OCD](#). But they need to describe the behavior that kids might find concerning, and make it clear that it isn't willful. Kleinhandler found it helpful to explain to her daughters that the disease was just like a bully pressuring their sister to do things she wouldn't otherwise.

Speaking in terms of strengths and weaknesses is often helpful, suggests [David Anderson](#), PhD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. "One sibling might have difficulties with [emotional dysregulation](#)"—getting emotional or melting down when things don't go his way, he said. "But another might not be too good at basketball. So maybe your brother gives you a few extra shots in basketball, and he might need some slack because he has difficulty staying calm when you're [playing board games](#)."

It works for parents, he adds, because it avoids targeting the kid with special needs.

2. Spread the support around

When you have a child with special needs who needs a great deal of support and encouragement, the other children may feel that their achievements are taken for granted or that they're not getting as much praise as the struggling child. So it's important, as Dr. Anderson puts it, to "spread the sunshine around." If you're, say, really trying to reinforce one sibling's behavior, instead of ignoring another sibling's bid for attention, look for something very soon afterwards that's positive about what that sibling is doing, and give them the same level of positive reinforcement."

3. Set aside time for each child

All kids, especially those who have a brother or sister who takes a lot of attention, need one-on-one time with parents. It can be challenging to fit in, but even small amounts of time, on a regular basis, can help a child feel loved and valued, explains Mandi Silverman, PsyD, a clinical psychologist.

“Parents have to remember to give every sibling attention,” noted Dr. Silverman, “It may not be equal, but it has to be meaningful and consistent.” She suggests spending 10 uninterrupted minutes with each child before he or she goes to sleep, reading or coloring or doing a puzzle together.

Liza Long, who has 5 children, including one with [bipolar disorder](#), sets aside time for each of her children to have dates with her. They get to choose what they want to do, and it’s something they look forward to. “I try to plan dedicated time with each of the kids because so much of our attention will go to my son with mental illness,” Long said. “You have to be really sensitive to that.”

4. Try to treat all children the same

Dr. Emanuele says she sometimes sees parents who have a child with special needs worrying that their other children aren’t getting a “normal” upbringing. They feel guilty and as a result they may let them [get away with bad behavior](#) or have whatever they want. “Sometimes parents will be permissive with the other kids because they feel bad,” she said. “But these children still need to learn to be responsible for their decisions and their negative behavior, and that can’t slide.”

5. Look at the positive

Keep in mind that growing up with a special needs sibling teaches valuable skills and empathy, notes Dr. Silverman.

“Sometimes children who have siblings with special needs have a level of compassion that makes them especially good friends, and they have a lot of [friends](#), because they are patient and positive and understanding.”

Long said her kids are unusually empathetic to kids who are struggling with emotional or behavioral issues.

“The experience has made them much more tolerant and kind, and they are more sensitive to mental illness,” said Long.

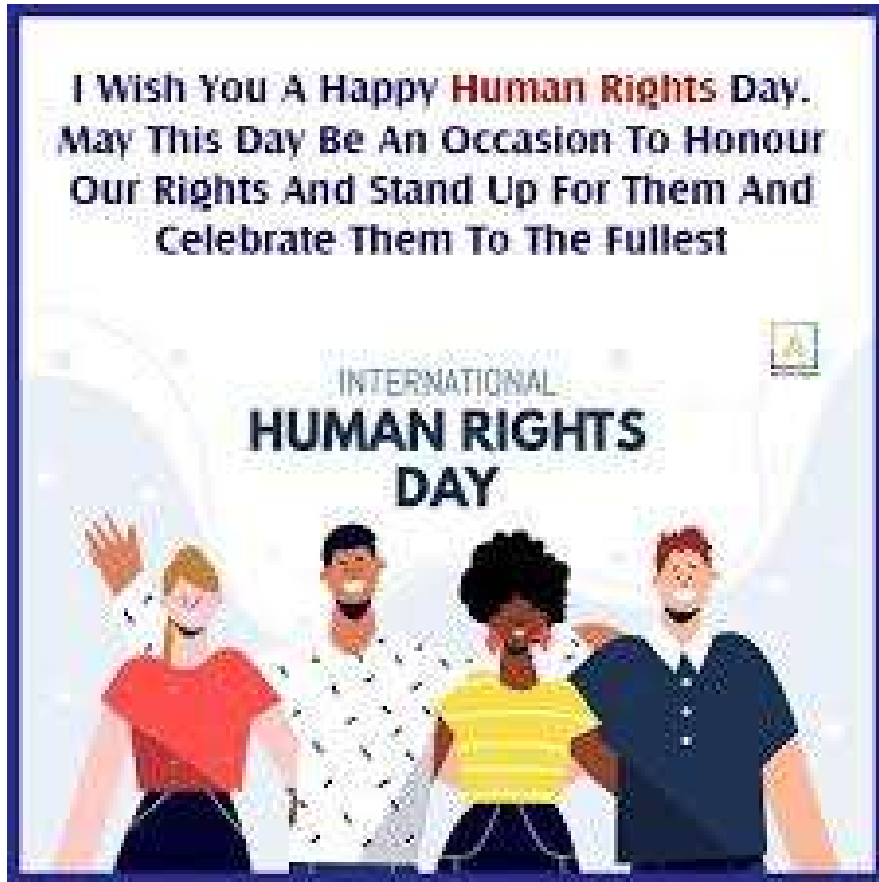
“My daughter, the youngest, came home from school the other day, and she said, ‘I sat with the bully at lunch time. I decided to sit next to him, and we talked, and he has [ADHD](#), and that’s why he is a [bully](#). He doesn’t want to be one.’ “



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."

Dec



December 10 – International Human Rights Day



Nov

November 20 – Transgender Day of Remembrance

Oct



October 22 – International Stuttering Awareness Day



Check out the Company Store!



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

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

KUDOS

"Kudos to Zsa Zsa Johnson for being a great support to everyone on the team. She is willing to go the extra mile to get all tasks completed!"

Audrey Cobb says "Kudos to Heather Everhart. She is always so helpful and very knowledgeable."

Loretta Welcher says "I want to recognize the hard work of Lori Gordon. She has set up KRIs (Key Result Indicators) graphically that show how well Forest City is doing in meeting their goals. It's a great visual to show how well they are doing."



“Lori Gordon, our Office Assistant, has brought life and structure to our office. Her professionalism and knowledge are noteworthy traits, but her kind heart and humor are great strengths that come through those days where Johnea and I need affirmation that we can and will work through the stumbling blocks of the day. When I am venting about whatever issues have distracted me, Lori has a one liner that makes me laugh and instantly resets me to solve the problem at hand. She is a blessing, and we are lucky to have her on our team here in Forest City.” – Sheila Moore, QP

Shannon Gonzales says “Shout out to Raleigh Office staff - especially Ms Audrey and Zsa Zsa. They always go above and beyond to make sure we in the field have everything to do our jobs as successfully as possible.”

Shannise Payton says “Kudos to Audrey Cobb. I just want to say Thank You and you ARE awesome!!”

Sherry Douglas says “Kudos to Johnea Littlejohn for taking on additional cases in Forest City. She is doing a fantastic job with helping her staff meet the needs of the people we support! She is truly appreciated, and the reason Forest City I/DD is still a strong choice for services!

Kudos to Michael Johnson, Taylor Smith, and Ryan Freeman for taking on additional cases in Morganton. They have been communicating with the families and staff to maintain quality services to all the people we support in that area! They are the anchors for my I/DD team in Asheville!”



Welcome to New Bern's newest. Meet our awesome Office Assistant, Alesia Petini. Welcome aboard Alesia!



Welcome to Morganton's newest Office Assistant, Paige Thomas. Welcome aboard Paige!



Welcome our new Nurse Practitioner, Regina Whisnant-Roper. Regina will be working with the Asheville outpatient individuals. Welcome to the Universal family Regina!!!





Corporate's Beverly Smith's granddaughter Piper Smith (back row) is a winner! Her team who had never played together, placed 4th out of 17 teams. The team was comprised of girls from NC, SC and GA. What a competitor!



Granddaughters are THE BEST - Piper holding Evvie!



Look at Asheville's Gary Byrd's new granddaughter Palmer Lee Manning . She was born on August 3rd. Gary isn't smitten is he?



Heather's son Lil Robert Everhart - 3rd grade!

