



Development of GHA Training Centre in Full Swing

As part of the agency’s 2024-2026 strategic plan, GHA’s Learning Department was tasked with developing the GHA Training Centre. Online learning is a primary focus. In close collaboration with other departments, a lengthy list of virtual training topics was developed and prioritized. As part of that process, once training content is created, IT Specialist Doyle Rowan adds video graphics and turns the concept into a digital format. Brittany Blalock, Training and Technology Specialist, then completes the course with a test of comprehension and implements the newly created training online via ADP’s Learning Management System, which allows us to track staff training progress. We are proud to report that so far 20 virtual trainings have been successfully implemented. The trainings vary from safety topics such as bloodborne pathogen and water safety, to regulatory ones such as HIPPA and dietary training, to professional development such as autism and professionalism. While many other vital trainings continue as in-person trainings, these virtual courses expand GHA’s repertoire of tools in our commitment to continuous quality improvement. These e-learning courses are self-paced, allow for flexibility in scheduling, increase access to training, overcome logistical barriers, are cost-effective and measurable. The Learning Department has a goal to continue adding a new virtual training each quarter and plans to offer some of them to other agencies or individuals as web-based trainings in the future. If you have questions or would like to submit training ideas, please contact Janet Banks, VP/Chief Learning Officer at janetbanks@ghainc.org.



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Spotlighting Temika for 30 Years of Service at Wendy's



Temika (middle) is joined by (l to r) Wendy's Shift Supervisor Janeisha Troutdale-Gibson, Wendy's Shift Supervisor Nicole Johnson, GHA Job Coach Patricia Greene and Wendy's General Manager Brooke Smith.

Congrats Temika!

GHA Autism Supports is proud to celebrate Temika Singletary, who was recently recognized by the Wendy's location in Richfield, North Carolina for her incredible 30 years of service and

In Memoriam: Dr. Lee M. Marcus

We are saddened to share the passing of Dr. Lee M. Marcus, Professor Emeritus in the University of North Carolina Department of Psychiatry, who passed away on Friday, January 16, 2026. Dr. Marcus devoted 48 years of distinguished service to the University



of North Carolina, leaving an enduring legacy through his leadership, mentorship, and unwavering commitment to individuals and families impacted by autism. Throughout his career, Dr. Marcus held numerous leadership roles within the TEACCH Autism Program, including Clinical Director of the Chapel Hill TEACCH Outpatient Clinic, Director of the UNC Department of Psychiatry Psychology Internship Program, and Director of the TEACCH Training Program. His work shaped generations of clinicians and strengthened the quality of autism services across North Carolina.

Dr. Marcus also supported many families connected to GHA Autism Supports, walking alongside them in their personal autism journeys with compassion, expertise, and respect. His impact will continue to be felt through the lives he touched and the programs he helped build. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of Dr. Marcus and will always honor the profound difference he made through the TEACCH Autism Program and his lifelong dedication to service.

Android watch, recognizing her loyalty and hard work. Congratulations, Temika, on this remarkable milestone and well-deserved recognition! Your success is an inspiration to us all!



Temika (left) joins Wendy's District Manager Rick Neira as she is presented her watch for her 30 years of service.

sweetheart dance



NIGHT to Shine



Love was truly in the air this February as individuals in both Albemarle and Wilmington celebrated Valentine's season with two unforgettable evenings of fun and fellowship! On February 7, participants gathered at the Stanly County Family YMCA for the annual Sweetheart Dance, generously hosted by Pine Grove Methodist Church and Bethany United Methodist Church. This year's western-themed celebration featured plenty of delicious food, a lively photo booth, and a dance floor full of smiling faces as everyone kicked up their heels and danced the night away. A very special thank you goes to the Stanly Community College cosmetology department for helping everyone look their very best for this special evening. Their care and attention made the night even more memorable. The celebration continued on Saturday, February 15, when individuals from our Wilmington programs attended the annual Night to Shine at Port City Community Church. Made possible through the vision of the Tim Tebow Foundation, Night to Shine provides an unforgettable prom night experience filled with music, dancing, and joy. It was a beautiful evening where every participant was celebrated and shined brightly. We are so grateful for our wonderful community partners who make these meaningful experiences possible each year!



"Community partnerships allow us to promote integration, but most importantly aid in enriching the lives of the people we support."

JOHN FIELDS,
GHA AUTISM SUPPORTS
DIRECTOR OF
RECREATION & SAFETY



GHA Autism Supports gratefully acknowledges the following individuals who made memorials and honorary gifts between November 15, 2025 and February 15, 2026. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this list, however please contact the Development Department at 704-982-9600, x125 if you feel an error has been made.

- In Honor of Dawn Allen**
Susan & Phil Hinely
Paul & Brooke Childress
- In Honor of Aaron Andrews**
Amy Tripp
- In Honor of Nick Benedict**
Dr. Donald J. Stedman
- In Honor of Marlinda Berdoll's Grandson**
Laura C. Brown
- In Honor of Dr. & Mrs. Mike Bohnsack**
Dr. & Mrs. John Kilde
- In Memory of Ellen Brooks**
Shawnee Sundquist
- In Honor of the Carolina Farms Home #2 Staff**
Mrs. Judy Smithmyer
- In Honor of the Carolina Farms Home #3 Staff**
Mrs. Ulla Skeffington
- In Honor of Dr. David Cartrette**
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan
- In Honor of Iris Coggins**
Vicki Coggins
- In Honor of Vicki Coggins**
Iris Coggins
- In Honor of Cannon Cowles**
Dr. & Mrs. Tom Norwood
- In Honor of Jackson, J.T. and Rebecca Cranford**
Charles & Peggy Hughes
- In Honor of Deb Denton**
G.E. Swain
- In Honor of Scott Denton**
Christie and Griff Garner
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel W. Harris
- In Memory of Linda DeYoung**
Phillip G. Ponder, Jr.
- In Honor of Seth Dickinson**
Edward Dickinson
- In Honor of Denise Drye**
Dr. & Mrs. Henry Cremisi
- In Honor of the Jack Fanning Memorial Foundation**
Mrs. Eileen Herbst
- In Memory of Michael Forrest**
Penny Brown
- In Memory of Evelyn & Mac Funderburk**
Lori Ivey
- In Honor of Dr. Bob Gaither**
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan
- In Honor of Donna Gaither**
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan
- In Honor of Robbie Gardner**
Nancy & Rod Rich
- In Honor of All GHA Direct Support Professionals**
Larry & Martha Hupp
- In Honor of GHA Autism Supports Staff**
Mike & Carla Shinn
- In Memory of Kate Hall**
Mr. Harvey Hall
- In Honor of Doug Hughes**
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan
- In Honor of Martha Hughes**
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan
- In Honor of Adam Hupp**
Kodell J. Loftis, Jr.
- In Honor of Lori Ivey**
Brenda Cox
- In Honor of Drew Julian**
Howard & Frances Montague
- In Memory of Reuben Klamer**
Ms. Beatrice E. Pardo
- In Honor of Charlie Lawrence**
Winifred Helton
Angie Lowder
- In Honor of Lindsay Leggett**
John & Taryn Williams
- In Memory of Ashley Lowder**
Mr. Ronnie Michael
- In Honor of Travis Luxenberg**
James Gibbons
- In Memory of Jack Macon**
Boyd J. Jordan
- In Memory of Dru Martin**
Betty Lou Brittain
- In Memory of Jan Martin**
Mrs. Sue Martin

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In Honor of Larry McGuire
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan

**In Honor of Chris
and Debbie Mee**
Meridian Financial

In Honor of Eric Mihalyi
Lyda & Rich Mihalyi

**In Honor of
The Morrell Family**
Maggie Clougherty
Sara Grace

In Honor of Justin Morrell
Carson Bynum
Lucile Dawson
Joanne Evans
Jane FitzGerald
Bill Hodges and Susan Hodges
Rosemary Kenyon
Michael Laut
Kathleen & John McMackin
Patrick Morrell
Sandra DeAngelis Peace
Linda & Mike Riley
Mark Saad
Debbie Woody

In Honor of Maureen Morrell
Linda & Brad Griffin
Janice Odom
Linda & Mike Riley
Liz Widman

In Honor of Mike Morrell
Ari Medoff

In Memory of Dr. Rob Morrell
Tom & Patricia FitzGerald
Tom & Jodi Kelly
Yvonne P. Muse
Janice Odom
Sandra DeAngelis Peace
Linda & Mike Riley

In Honor of Beth Olivieri
John Olivieri
Thomas Southerland

In Honor of Jay Phillips
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan

In Honor of Kelley Phillips
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan

In Honor of Braden Poplin
Dr. & Mrs. Tom Norwood

In Memory of Mary Ann Ponder
Phillip G. Ponder, Jr.

In Honor of Art Rogers
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan

In Honor of Sandy Rogers
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan

In Memory of David Sadowsky
Ms. Beatrice E. Pardo

In Honor of Sandy Saunders
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan

In Memory of Harriet Scott
Tom & Sue Jasinski

In Honor of Denise Smith
Sherrill Smith

In Memory of Marie G. Smith
Mr. & Mrs. David Holbrook

In Memory of Ed Snyder
Margaret Snyder

In Memory of Mike Snyder
Margaret Snyder

In Memory of Roger Snyder
Margaret Snyder

In Memory of Marie Southerland
Bobbilynne Garner
Larry & Martha Hupp
Stan & Annette Leggett
Beth Olivieri
Thomas Southerland

In Honor of Thomas Southerland
Paul Gerald, Jr.

In Honor of Thomas C. Southerland
Thomas Southerland

In Memory of Ronnie Steed
Susan Steed

In Honor of Robbie Stevenson
Bill & Diane Stevenson

In Honor of Ann Upchurch
Harold Sharpe & Nancy Sullivan

In Honor of Emily Whichello
Owen G. Calloway
Southern Lighting Services
Amy Whichello
Gary Whichello



Team Members Recognized for Years of Service

We are proud to recognize and celebrate the dedicated team members of GHA Autism Supports who have recently reached important years-of-service milestones, ranging from 5 to an incredible 35 years, in five-year increments. Each of these individuals represents an important part of our organization, contributing their time, talent, and heart to our mission. Their commitment and consistency help ensure that we continue providing high-quality, person-centered services each and every day to the people we are honored to support.

5 Years of Service

- Markez Brown
- Brianna Eaddy
- Patricia Greene
- Brian Hathcock
- Justin Lowder
- Rex Purificato
- Amanda Schaefer
- Lori Shue

10 Years of Service

- Brittany Blalock
- Jalen Bobo
- Shunquetta Crump
- Antwain Hamilton
- Crystal Williams



Bart Gramling

15 Years of Service



Brett Ridenhour



Bertha Smith

20 Years of Service



Veronica Davis



Maurice Watkins

25 Years of Service



Loretta Carpenter



Amanda Forrest

On behalf of GHA Autism Supports, I want to extend my sincere congratulations and heartfelt thanks to each of our team members being recognized for their years of service. Your dedication, compassion, and commitment over the years have helped shape who we are as an organization. --Dawn Allen, CEO GHA Autism Supports

30 Years of Service



Marsena Gramling

35 Years of Service



Tonda Forrest

Dedicated Intern Completes Service

GHA Autism Supports would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Avery Smith, who recently completed her volunteer internship hours at our Central Office. Avery is a senior at Gray Stone Day School, where she is an active member of the volleyball team and participates in several clubs, balancing academics with a strong commitment to service.

After graduation, Avery plans to attend a four-year university to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. During her time with GHA, Avery shared that what she loved most was seeing firsthand the real difference GHA makes in the community and witnessing how deeply committed our staff are to the mission.

On a personal note, Avery shared that having a family member with special needs made her experience at GHA even more meaningful and purposeful. We are grateful for Avery's time, compassion, and dedication, and we wish her all the best as she takes the next exciting steps toward her future!



GHA Autism Supports Development Coordinator Lori Ivey (left) with Albemarle resident and GHA Intern Avery Smith (right) as Avery recently completed her internship

Participants Thrive in new SCC Program

We're so proud of the individuals from the GHA Autism Supports Day Program who are participating in an Employability Skills Program at Stanly Community College! This semester, our students are enrolled in a math employability skills class taught by GHA Board Member Lisa Ewers, making this partnership even more special. In addition to strengthening basic math skills, participants will be learning valuable skills related to independent living and workplace readiness. Students received their official SCC student IDs, which also provide discounts at community businesses—another great step toward independence and community inclusion! Our individuals will be attending class every Monday and Wednesday throughout the semester, and we can't wait to see all they accomplish. Thank you to Stanly Community College and Lisa Ewers for helping make opportunities like this possible!

“Strong community partnerships are essential to creating real opportunities for the people we support. Our collaboration between GHA Autism Supports and Stanly Community College through the Employability Skills Program is a powerful example of what’s possible when organizations come together with a shared purpose.”

JESSICA MCINTYRE,
GHA AUTISM SUPPORTS DAY
SERVICE COORDINATOR





CEO MESSAGE From the Desk of Dawn Allen

“

In early December, court rulings required the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) to reverse previously implemented Medicaid rate reductions. As a result, GHA Autism Supports and other providers were instructed to restore Medicaid rates to their September 30, 2025 levels. While this action provided some immediate, short-term relief, it is important to understand that it does not resolve the larger, underlying financial challenges facing Medicaid in North Carolina. At this time, Medicaid in North Carolina is underfunded by approximately \$319 million, and the program is once again projected to run out of funding. The restoration of rates should not be interpreted as a permanent solution. Rather, it represents a temporary, “band-aid” fix to a much broader financial crisis. Decisions regarding future Medicaid funding rest solely with the North Carolina General Assembly, and the uncertainty surrounding long-term funding remains a serious concern for providers, families, and the individuals we serve. On behalf of GHA Autism Supports, I want to assure you that we are closely monitoring this situation and will continue to communicate as transparently and proactively as possible as developments unfold. Our priority remains the individuals we support, and we are committed to keeping you informed of any changes that may impact services or supports. We are deeply grateful for your continued partnership, trust, and dedication during this ongoing period of uncertainty. Your support means more than words can express.

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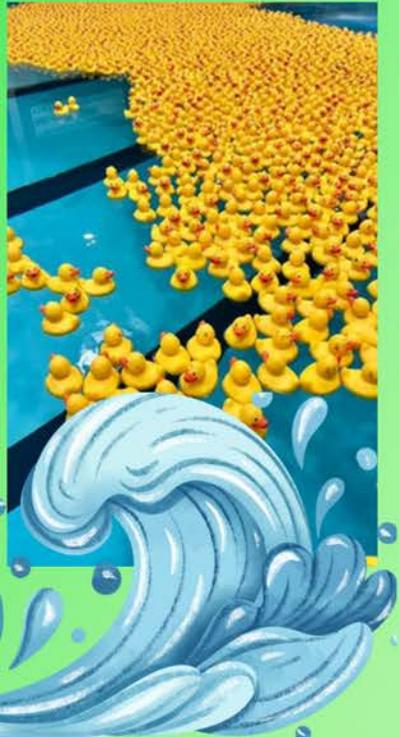
secondNDstreet SUNDRIES Coffee & Cafe

Celebrates 11th Anniversary

After eleven years of serving thousands of customers, Second Street Sundries is a shining example of how a local Stanly County business can create lasting change. Through inclusion, advocacy and unwavering support, the cafe and coffee shop have helped to shape a community where individuals with autism are empowered to reach their fullest potential. We celebrated our 11th anniversary the week of January 20-23, 2026 concluding with a lucky customer taking home a Brrrr Basket filled with winter goodies. Brenda Byrd of Troy and her husband were happy to receive the Brrrr Basket complete with Starbucks mugs & hot cocoa, chocolate, a warm throw, and Sundries gift card. We appreciate all of our customers participating in the anniversary drawing and the solid leadership team at Second Street Sundries that have worked tirelessly to provide exceptional customer service and who have supported our mission to provide employment opportunities for individuals with autism!



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



Make plans to join the fun at the 18th Annual GHA Autism Supports Rubber Duck Derby on Saturday, May 16th at the Stanly County Family YMCA 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. We have some new and exciting prizes for this year's Derby, and a complete list of prizes and event rules can be found at 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!

GHA Receives Support From Speedway Children's Charities

GHA Autism Supports received a Speedway Children's Charities grant again this year to enhance both our child and adolescent homes, the Smith and Thompson Residential Programs. Both homes will receive new outdoor furniture, outdoor sensory activities and games. We will also purchase new outdoor storage that will double as an outdoor table for picnics. The GHA Development Team volunteers during the year at Charlotte Motor Speedway events to raise more than \$2 Million in funds that were distributed to 95 organizations serving children in the region. Lori Ivey accepted the grant on behalf of GHA Autism Supports during a ceremony on December 2, 2025 at the Charlotte Motor Speedway. GHA was also one of ten non-profits chosen to be featured at the "Trees of Hope" display in the infield Christmas Village where our autism tree was featured along with information about our organization.



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. 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

Beth Olivieri, EVP/Chief Development Officer
betholivieri@ghainc.org

Because who doesn't love candid!



“Movie with the Morrells” Brings Holiday Cheer and Community Support to GHA

On December 6th, the Morrell family once again opened their hearts to our organization by hosting the beloved annual event, *Movie with the Morrells*, in Raleigh. GHA Autism Supports, along with families and friends of the Morrells, were invited to enjoy a festive holiday movie in a warm, welcoming atmosphere that truly captured the spirit of the season. In addition to the movie, children had the opportunity to take part in fun, holiday-themed crafts organized by the Morrell family, making the evening enjoyable for guests of all ages. The event also provided attendees with the opportunity to make donations in support of GHA Autism Supports, turning a joyful morning out into a meaningful act of generosity. Thanks to the incredible support of everyone who attended, approximately \$10,000 was raised to benefit GHA!

