



DECEMBER 2021

GHAzette

Official Newsletter of GHA Autism Supports

Saluting Staff During Direct Support Professionals Month

To recognize the vital role direct support professionals play in the lives of children and adults with disabilities, September 12-18 was proclaimed as Direct Support Professional Recognition Week throughout the nation. With so many of the frontline employees going above and beyond during the trying times of the pandemic, GHA Autism Supports decided this year to proclaim the entire month of October as Direct Support Professionals Month, and used this time as a wonderful opportunity to highlight the dedicated, innovative direct support workforce that is the heart and soul of supporting the individuals that GHA serves. The month was kicked off with the delivery of snack baskets to every site, and all direct care staff were given sling bags to carry all of their personal belongings to wrap the month-long celebration up. Throughout the month, weekly drawings were conducted for gas and restaurant gift cards, and “Win Big Fridays” was a staff favorite for drawings for \$250 cash! In addition, four lucky direct support professionals won a Thanksgiving dinner, including a turkey with all of the side dishes. “The events in October to recognize our frontline employees are a small fraction of the recognition that they deserve throughout the year,” shared GHA Autism Supports CEO Dawn Allen. “It is through their dedication, creativity and advocacy, that the people we support are understood and given opportunities to reach their fullest potential.”



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Check out a few of our staff during
goodie basket deliveries as part of
Direct Support Professionals Month!



Celebrating GHA's Newest Program

Morrow Valley Farmstead brings together, for the first time all in one place, the healing forces of nature, man, medicine, science and technology to create for each individual, a world that is uniquely theirs, one that includes all things necessary for their security, comfort and happiness.

GHA Autism Supports staff and board members were excited to celebrate our official ribbon cutting with the Stanly County Chamber of Commerce, donors, GHA families and other stakeholders on October 1, 2021. Additional group tours followed the October ribbon cutting prior to individuals moving in early November. Located on Morrow Mountain Road in Albemarle, Morrow Valley Farmstead is a 10-bed state-of-the-art facility that will utilize cutting edge technology to serve individuals that are medically fragile. Adding this new program to GHA Autism Supports will allow the organization to provide services covering the entire lifespan of individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities.

After careful consideration and years of research, GHA CEO Dawn Allen led the charge of creating a model to revolutionize life-long support to aging individuals, their families and health support systems. Chet and Elaine Gurski, parents of an adult daughter with autism served in a GHA apartment setting, also recognized the need for such a model. They shared excitement in Allen's mission and gave the seed money ten years ago to create an endowment fund housed at the Foundation for The Carolinas to address the need for long-term care of individuals with autism and pressing medical needs. The gift served as a major catalyst for the movement to

"We are so excited to create a dynamic and inspiring environment through Morrow Valley Farmstead. Ultimately, it's about the people we support and their quality of life, rather than quantity of life."

--Dawn Allen, GHA Autism Supports CEO



The official ribbon was cut on October 1st by GHA Board Chair Gina Martin joined by (L to R) Chamber reps Charlie Lentz and Sandy Selvy-Mullis, GHA CEO Dawn Allen and SCC Small Business Center Director Reese Linnell.

design Morrow Valley Farmstead, including gifts from the Cannon Foundation totaling \$500,000 to purchase the 50-acre tract of land where the 10,000-square foot facility is nestled on the therapeutic grounds. Other major gifts followed from the Ireland Family Foundation, Cardinal Innovations Healthcare, the Jack Fanning Memorial Foundation and other private gifts totaling over \$500,000. Morrow Valley Farmstead will provide unprecedented, unique multi-dimensional services that meet the individuals' specific health care needs, as well as their long-term needs associated with their developmental disabilities. Most importantly, this approach will enhance the overall quality of life of all residents.

Meet Morrow Valley Farmstead's Furry Friends

Residents at Morrow Valley Farmstead will benefit from a therapeutic environment surrounded by spacious grounds with sensory gardens that are being planned by local Stanly County Extension Master Gardener volunteers. No farm is complete without animals, and Morrow Valley Farmstead will be home to numerous animals including two miniature horses, donated by Greg and Denise Taber, three Great Pyrenees dogs and several goats that will roam the beautiful pastures surrounding the facility itself. In addition, local breeder Tillery Labradoodles donated "Morrow" two years ago, a beautiful Labradoodle that has been through extensive training to be the therapeutic dog visiting regularly to provide companionship to the residents. The animals are sure to be a highlight with the individuals supported at Morrow Valley Farmstead.



Riley



Riley, Elsa & Bria

The Great Pyrenees dogs are great protectors of all of the animals at Morrow Valley Farmstead!



Morrow



Elsa

"Iggy" and "Bowie", named affectionately for musical artists Iggy Pop and David Bowie, became permanent residents of Morrow Valley Farmstead in late summer thanks to a very generous donation by Greg and Denise Taber. The miniature horses are the perfect size for residents to enjoy!



Bowie

Iggy

"Morrow", the Morrow Valley Farmstead therapy dog donated by Tillery Labradoodles, just earned his third certification, the Advanced AKC Canine Good Citizen Certificate. Special thanks to GHA Autism Supports Regulatory Director Kym Elliott, who serves as Morrow's personal handler! Most recently, Kym and Morrow were both credentialed through the Therapy Dogs International (TDI) organization!

Quilts Donated for New Residents at Morrow Valley Farmstead

We are so grateful for our community partners that continue to support the individuals served by GHA Autism Supports. "Connect*Create*Serve", a local quilting and sewing group that meets the first Friday each month at the West Stanly Senior Center in Locust, donated 10 gorgeous quilts, tote bags and knitted/crocheted scarves for the new residents of Morrow Valley Farmstead. We hope these handmade items help our new residents feel the love from our community! A big THANK YOU to the ladies that donated such beautiful items!



Development Coordinator Lori Ivey (far right) accepted the beautiful works of art from quiltmakers (left to right) Alisa Hylton, Glendel Huneycutt and Kelly Jarrett.

Food Lion Grant Received

Special thanks to the Food Lion corporate office for a grant to stock the shelves with lots of non-perishable goods at Morrow Valley Farmstead!



Organizing a program?

The Development Team works to market GHA Autism Supports to our local community and beyond. Telling others about what we do and who we support is important to those unfamiliar with our programs. It is important for our community to know how we started, the programs we offer for individuals with autism, and how they can support what we do. We feel community partnerships and building relationships will strengthen our mission and assist us in garnering support. Please contact the Development Department at 704-982-9600, ext. 125 to schedule a program for your group!

GHA Autism Supports gratefully acknowledges the following individuals who made memorials and honorary gifts between August 1, 2021 and November 15, 2021. 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, x 125.

In Memory of Jackie Bynum

Denise Drye
Janice Dusseau Jones
Beth Olivieri
Dargan & Blount Williams

In Honor of Jason Cory

Steve Cory

In Memory of Michael Forrest

Benny & Denise Drye
Stan & Annette Leggett
Maureen Morrell
Beth Olivieri

In Memory of Ruben Klammer

Al & Ann Sadowsky

In Honor of Ty LaRocco

Deborah De

In Memory of Jan Bailey Martin

Crystal Beal
Clemmons Moravian Church
Alex & Rebecca Cook
Twila R. Drew
Robert & Judith Hanley
Brian Hoppe
Henry N. Howell
Gay Nell Hutchens
Walter & Barbara Ijames
Janie Jaquier
Brenda Kisabeth
Kathy Kulp
Julianne Lovelace
Larry & Rebecca Matthews
Roger & Betty McCauley
Alan & Beverly Moore
Maureen Morrell
Steve & Diane Murphy
Beth Olivieri
Tray & Lisa Overman
Marsha C. Peters
Richard & Marcia Reich
Phillip E. Royall
Craig & Ulla Skeffington
Sherrie Waddell

In Honor of Justin Morrell

Kathleen Kern Baumann
Eamonn FitzGerald
Marjorie FitzGerald
Jack & Kathleen McMackin
Michael Morrell
Christine Reagan

In Honor of the Sadowsky Family

Joe Bergman, Bill Coughlin & David
Noseworthy of
Friendly Home Services Group

In Honor of Emily Whichello

Amy Whichello

In Honor of Alex Whitten

Debbie Wilson

**In Honor of Marsena Williams
and Staff at Tanglewood Home**

Dr. Linda & Mr. Eric Lawrence

In Honor of Wilmington Staff

Richard Poole



Expansion of Offerings at Second Street Sundries

If you have visited Second Street Sundries in the last few months, you may have noticed some exciting additions! In June, hand-dipped ice cream was added to the menu from Homestead Creamery located in Wirtz, Virginia. Homestead Creamery focuses on quality dairy products from A2A2 cows, and it is carefully batch-crafted into premium dairy products. In addition to ice cream, we also carry their milk products – chocolate, Cowpuccino, orange cream, strawberry, whole and 2% milk in the newly opened Market at Sundries. The Market at Sundries is located in the former gift shop and features a variety of foods from North and South Carolina, as well as milk products from Virginia. Items you will find at The Market include: Ashe County Cheese, Roots & Branches crackers, Chapel Hill Toffee, Dewey's Bakery cookies, Cackalacky sauces and nuts, Ritchie Hill Bakery cheese straws, Old School Mill products, Butterfields candy, handcrafted charcuterie boards, local honey, eggs and fresh produce from Carolina Farms. The Market also sells handcrafted fused-glass made by the individuals served at GHA Autism Supports. Lots of delicious foods and handcrafted items are available just in time for the holidays. The Market is open Monday through Saturday from 6:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. The expanded offerings at Second Street Sundries allow GHA Autism Supports to provide opportunities with individuals with autism.



GOURMET FOODS FROM THE CAROLINAS



And the Pumpkin Winning Decorators Are...

Individuals we support at GHA Autism Supports and staff did a fabulous job creatively decorating pumpkins for our annual pumpkin decorating contest! Each home submitted a pumpkin that was judged for creativity. Everyone enjoyed the day's festivities - trick or treating, playing spooky games and getting to see all of the pumpkins. A special thank you to Kyoko Rorie-Bruton, Creative Arts Director, for coordinating this year's contest and providing treats and games for all!

First Place Winner - A. Jack Wall Home (Witches Brew)

Second Place Winner - Marie G. Smith Home (Sushi Roll)

Third Place Winner - Carolina Farms #2 Home (Trollz)

Honorable Mentions - Durrett Home (Popcorn, Taylor Home (Monster Boy)& Lowder Home (Fish))



Kyoko Rorie-Bruton, who serves as the Creative Arts Director, always has something up her sleeve!

2021 Board of Directors

Gina Martin, Chair
The Honorable Ron Burris
Brian Freeman
Dr. Phil Julian
Terri Meyers
Ronnie Michael
Beverly Moore
Dr. Russ Sharples
Melissa Smith

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An easy way to support



GHA's Cindy Moore Makes Her Mark in Wilmington



Cindy especially enjoys spending time with her first grandchild Kevin William Moore!

This month, we are pleased to celebrate Cindy Moore, who serves as the Quality Services Director for our Wilmington operations. Cindy is approaching her 30th anniversary with GHA Autism Supports! She began her career in 1992 as a direct care staff at the Wall Home in Albemarle. At that time, the organization was known as "Group Homes for the Autistic", and included three residential programs and a vocational program. During her career at GHA Autism Supports, Cindy has served in a variety of leadership roles including serving as the Vocational and Educational Services Director assisting in creating meaningful jobs for the individuals we support. In addition, Cindy played a key role in the contract GHA had with Stanly County Schools to provide appropriate educational services to the children and adolescents that GHA served. Several years later, she



was instrumental in the planning and development of Carolina Farms, helping to secure funding for both the barn and greenhouses through the Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation. Cindy led the charge with many of the vocational initiatives at Carolina Farms, where individuals participated in meaningful work all while gaining new skills. In 2010, Cindy transitioned to Wilmington with the expansion of services in New Hanover County. What began as one apartment setting serving two individuals in Wilmington, has grown into two residential programs with a day program located at the Harrelson Center, a large non-profit center that houses GHA programs along with a number of other local non-profits. When asked to reflect on her career with GHA Autism Supports, Cindy shared "My biggest reward is seeing how the wonderful programs we offer enrich the lives of the individuals we support!" In her spare time, Cindy enjoys spending time with family and participating in coastal activities such as kayaking.



Gray Stone Day School Senior Reagan Gulledge organized a drive collecting hundreds of linens and personal hygiene items for the people that GHA supports!



WellCare Community Advocate Kristin Wing presented a donation of 20 cases of hand sanitizer to GHA Autism Supports in November that will be utilized throughout the organization!

Albemarle's Tidal Wave Auto Spa chose GHA Autism Supports as the Charity Day beneficiary in September. With tips that GHA Development officials Lori Ivey and Beth Olivieri collected, coupled with a company donation, nearly \$1,500 was raised!



Sprucing Up of Carolina Farms



Following the shutdown as a result of Covid-19, the gardens, greenhouses and barn at Carolina Farms needed some updating and care. Mike Fesperman, Farm Manager, John Fields, Director of Operations and Katelynn Braswell, Animal Care Technician, have worked hard to get the program in excellent condition. From making the barn more animal friendly, planting fall crops, repairing and cleaning chicken tractors, as well as an overall grounds update, the team has done an outstanding job! Fresh produce and eggs from Carolina Farms are always available for purchase at The Market at Sundries. All profits support GHA Autism Supports programs, including those at Carolina Farms.



GHA Completes Individual Satisfaction Survey

Our major survey finding: a very high percentage of the individuals that our organization supports say their lives are happy! Ninety-one of the 92 surveys distributed were completed, a return rate of 99%. The survey came in two basic versions. One had six written yes/no questions with emoji; the other version included a picture survey answered by pointing to one of four emoji depicting very happy, happy, unhappy or very unhappy. Before the survey process began, Quality Management, in consultation with Managers, selected the survey form which was best suited for each individual. Forty completed the written survey, and 51 completed the picture survey. A few of the results are shown below. Regardless of the form, 98% of those results reflected happiness in day-to day life. Considering the many months that all of us have been dealing with the pandemic, we are very pleased to see such positive results.

2021 Individual Satisfaction Survey

Written Format	Yes 	% Yes	No 	%No
Are the people you see every day nice to you?	39	98%	1	2%
Are you happy with what you do every day?	39	98%	1	2%

2021 Individual Satisfaction Survey

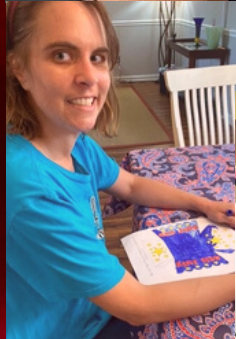
Picture Format	Very Happy 	Happy 	Sad 	Very Sad 
How do you feel about the people you see every day?	59%	39%	2%	0%
How do you feel about what you do every day?	29%	71%	0%	0%

THE RESULTS ARE IN!



'tis the season

TO BE JOLLY



*From our family to
yours,*

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!