



# GHAzette



FEBRUARY EDITION 2017



Chief Professional Services Officer Janet Banks joins Charlotte Motor Speedway mascot "Lug Nut" at the grant presentation ceremony.

## GHA Receives Speedway Children's Charities Grant

GHA received a grant in early December in the amount of \$5,000 from the Charlotte Motor Speedway Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities (SCC) in Concord. The funds will be used to develop day camp activities for the individuals that GHA supports this upcoming summer. The organization was founded in 1982 by Speedway Motorsports and Sonic Automotive Chairman Bruton Smith as a memorial and legacy to his son, Bruton Cameron Smith, who passed away at a very young age. Speedway Children's Charities is focused on funding a wide range of programs that focus on children in need and their families. Dollars are raised annually by the organization

through the hosting of events and promotions geared around race weeks and other activities at Charlotte Motor Speedway, as well as events within the Charlotte community. GHA is pleased to have received on-going support through SCC's grant program for more than ten years.



GHA was pleased to welcome Japanese visitors Togo Nakamura and Mutsuro Kadoya on February 8<sup>th</sup> for a tour of several of the Stanly County programs. Our agency is pleased to continue to host visits from individuals in the autism field from all over the world including professionals from Japan, Denmark, Germany, Canada, and Iceland to name a few.



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*GHA Autism Supports provides quality, community services to meet the unique needs of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.*

**Staff Spotlight**

This past fall marked 22 years of service to GHA Autism Supports by dedicated staff member Maurice Burns. A native of Stanly County, Maurice was a graduate of Albemarle High School and shortly after graduation, he joined forces with the Albemarle Fire Department. Currently a Fire Captain with the AFD, his career as a fireman has spanned 28 years. When not in fire gear, Maurice has worked in nearly every GHA program in Stanly County and in New Hanover County (Wilmington). He brings years of expertise to the autism field and always shares his skill set with the internal crisis team when called upon. When asked about his role as a veteran staff support person, Maurice shared the importance of understanding each individual with autism and how we are all different. "Most importantly, learn the guys you work alongside and you will always build trust in each other. Once that trust is built, we can work together and I can support them in being their very best," shared Maurice. "Always put the guys first." Maurice resides in Albemarle with his wife Temeka. When not working at the fire department or at GHA Autism Supports, he loves spending time with his family and enjoys his hobbies of fishing and cooking.

***Slumpy's* to Feature GHA's Creative Arts Program**

The GHA Creative Arts program continues to allow opportunities for the individuals that GHA supports to create handcrafted works of art using the glass fusion process. Through the assistance of grants received from the Stanly County Community Foundation, GHA now has two kilns that are fired to fuse different colors and shapes of glass together. Many of these works of art are showcased and sold at the gift shop inside Second Street Sundries.

Most recently, GHA Autism Supports was selected to feature pictures of some of their works of art in the *Slumpy's* catalog. For years, *Slumpy's* has operated as one of the nation's largest vendors offering a huge selection of fusible art glass in a wide variety of colors, kilns and fusing tools. In return, GHA has been awarded a mold to use in future glass fusing projects, as well as a store credit. Special thanks to Anna Walker for overseeing this program!



## ***From our CEO, Dawn Allen***

As we are well into 2017, our leadership team tries to remain proactive in staying apprised of any changes in the political landscape that may impact our organization. There continues to be much discussion on a state and federal level about block grants and the possible effects on Medicaid. I want to pass along a recent article featured in the February 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the *New York Times* that provides some very insightful information about block grants and the possible implications. In the coming weeks and months, we will certainly share all information we learn as it becomes available.

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***How Would Republican Plans for Medicaid Block Grants Actually Work? The approach of returning it to the states appeals to the G.O.P., but it has historically shifted costs more than reducing them. --Aaron E. Carroll (Aaron E. Carroll is a professor of pediatrics at [Indiana University School of Medicine](#) who blogs on health research and policy at [The Incidental Economist](#) and makes videos at [Healthcare Triage](#). Follow him on Twitter at [@aaronecarroll](#).)***

**February 6, 2017** There are only so many ways to cut Medicaid spending. You can reduce the number of people covered. You can reduce the benefit coverage. You can also pay less for those benefits and get doctors and hospitals to accept less in reimbursement. Or you can ask beneficiaries to pay more.

None of those are attractive options, which is why Medicaid reform is so hard. Medicaid already reimburses providers at lower rates than other insurance programs. How do you reduce the number of beneficiaries when the vast majority of people covered are poor children, poor pregnant women, the disabled, and poor older people? Which of those would you cut?

Reducing benefit coverage has always been difficult because most of the spending has been on the disabled and poor older people, who need a lot of care. Beneficiaries don't have much disposable income, so asking them to pick up more of the bill is almost impossible.

That doesn't mean that states haven't tried. As I've discussed in past columns, a number are attempting to increase cost sharing. But this isn't really a solution because it doesn't change overall spending much at all.

Part of the challenge lies in the way Medicaid was set up in the first place. The federal government picks up between 50 percent and 100 percent (depending on the population and the per-person income) of whatever it costs to provide health care to a state's population. Many, if not most, Republican plans would like to change that.

They are pushing for what many refer to as a block grant program. The federal government would give a set amount of money to each state for Medicaid; it would be up to the states to spend it however they like. These block grants could be set based on overall past state needs or based on the number of beneficiaries in the state, referred to as a "per capita" block grant. Some per-capita block grants function more like "ceilings" than outright grants, allowing the state to be paid at normal Medicaid rates, but with a maximum each state could get based on the per-capita calculation.

The supporters of such plans have a point. Medicaid has all kinds of complicated rules, which can create perverse incentives throughout the system. It's possible that the needs of one state are different from another, and that with more leeway in how Medicaid is administered on a local level, states could improve how they manage health care for the poor. It's also true that the needs of the beneficiaries are widely different (children and the disabled, for example), and that treating them under one large program is inefficient.

The fiscal magic behind a block-grants approach is that the federal government can then set how quickly the amount they're responsible for will increase over time, regardless of how quickly medical spending grows. If a gap develops between how much a state needs to spend, and how much the block grant provides, it's up to the state to make up the difference. Those who support such a plan argue it gives states greater flexibility to make their own Medicaid programs work better.

A recent *New England Journal of Medicine* article provides some perspective on how this might work by looking at what happened before Medicaid was created in 1965. Care for the poor in the 1950s was done through direct reimbursements to providers. It was calculated on a per-capita basis — the average cash and medical needs of those the programs covered. Those amounts were capped, based on age and demographics. This is quite similar to how many Republican proposals might function. When these capped amounts weren't enough to pay for the programs, states had to make cuts. They began to restrict who would be covered, what would be covered and how much care beneficiaries could use. Some states refused to cover children at all. Others didn't cover doctors' visits or drugs. In the early 1960s, the programs had only 3.4 million beneficiaries nationwide.

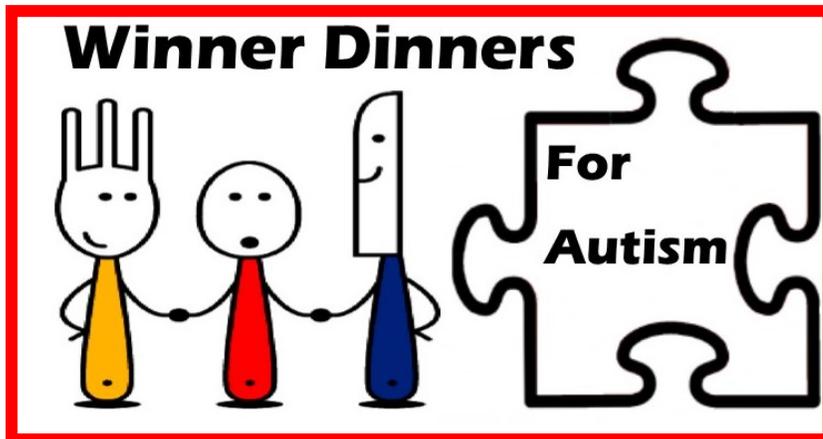
The 1965 Medicaid law removed these caps, and today Medicaid covers about 81 million people, or about one in four Americans. By 1980, spending in the program had grown by a factor of 10, and many politicians began to panic about the cost. This rise appears to have come not as much from a rise in benefits or payments as a huge increase in enrollees.

Andrew Goodman-Bacon, an economist at Vanderbilt University and one of the authors of the article, told me: "From the time Medicaid began until 1980, the amount spent per Medicaid recipient went up about 68 percent. The number of enrollees, however, went up almost 700 percent. Moreover, since 1980, the amount spent per Medicaid beneficiary has been almost flat, at just under about \$5,800."

Given that the growth in Medicaid spending seems mostly because of increases in the number of people benefiting from the program, it seems logical that one of the few ways to cut spending is by reducing that number.

The fact that so much of the discussion about Medicaid block grants centers on cuts points to most policy makers' assumptions that cuts will need to be made. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the House Republican budget plan for fiscal year 2017 (if it had passed) would have led to a reduction in Medicaid spending by \$1 trillion over a decade. By 2026, federal funding for Medicaid would be one-third less than under current law.

From states' point of view, whether they are reimbursed by a block grant or a percentage of coverage doesn't really matter as long as the amount is enough. Almost no block grant plan allows for this, though. Planned cuts are how block grants make future federal budget projections look so good. There's no magic in how Congress reduces spending under a block grant mechanism. It just says it will do so, and leaves the hard decisions to others. It's possible that some states will come up with solutions we haven't been able to see before, and find a way to reduce spending without causing problems. If they can't, though, they will have to make do with less, make the hard choices and face the brunt of the blame." (*February 6, 2017 New York Times*)



*April marks “Autism Awareness Month”* and planning is underway to kick off the month with an event open to members of the community that are providing care for a child with autism. Many families find it difficult to dine out together due to either challenging behaviors exhibited by their child with autism and/or insensitive public responses to their child’s unusual behavior. Some families have

shared that they avoid going out to eat altogether. On Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 pm at Second Street Sundries in downtown Albemarle, families have the opportunity to join GHA Autism Supports for *“Winner Dinners for Autism”*. GHA Chief of Professional Services Janet Banks will be sharing tips and suggestions to make dining out less stressful and more enjoyable for the whole family. In addition, the autism professionals at GHA Autism Supports will unveil their picture menu created to assist individuals with autism with making menu choices and communicating their order.

Each child in attendance will receive a free meal featured on the newly designed menu.

Pre-registration is required by calling Chief Development Officer Beth Olivieri at 704-982-9600, ext. 125 or by email at [betholivieri@ghainc.org](mailto:betholivieri@ghainc.org).

### ***WINGS FOR AUTISM PROGRAM SLATED FOR APRIL***

Registration is now open for the Wings for Autism™ event scheduled for Saturday, April 1, 2017 at Charlotte Douglas International Airport. The event begins promptly at 5:15 pm. In partnership with Delta Airlines, The Arc of Mecklenburg County and The Arc of Union and Cabarrus Counties, Wings for Autism™ is one of The Arc’s national initiatives and serves as an airport “rehearsal” specially designed for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders, their families and aviation professionals. Originated by the Charles River Center, a local chapter of The Arc in Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts Port Authority, Wings for Autism™ is designed to alleviate some of the stress that families who have a child with autism experience when traveling by air. The program provides families with the opportunity to practice entering the airport, obtain boarding passes, go through security, and board a plane. Wings for Autism™ also gives airport, airline, TSA professionals and other personnel the opportunity to observe, interact and deliver their services in a structured, learning environment. To register for the April 1<sup>st</sup> event, contact:

The Arc of Mecklenburg County 704-332-4535 or  
by email at [nancy@arcmeck.org](mailto:nancy@arcmeck.org)  
The Arc of Union/Cabarrus 704-261-1550 or  
by email at [mmiller@thearcisthere.org](mailto:mmiller@thearcisthere.org)



# GHA NOTES OF INTEREST

*Thank You!*  
 to all GHA families  
 who participated in making  
 GHA Staff Appreciation  
 Day 2016 a huge success !!!!

**April 2**  
 Autism  
 Awareness Day

**GHA Family Forum**  
 April 7th—5 p.m.  
 Second Street Sundries

 **GHA  
 RUBBER DUCK  
 DERBY**  
 May 20th  
**Adopt-A-Duck!!!!**  
YMCA Park—Albemarle

## Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Surveys

### Move from Once a Year to Four Times a Year

In the past, GHA's Quality Management Department has distributed a Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey once a year. Starting this past fall, we are tracking parent/guardian satisfaction quarterly. We have now completed two quarterly surveys. A few of the highlights are shown below:

My family member's appearance is neat and well-groomed.

2 <sup>nd</sup> Survey Quarter	October–December 2016
% Answering <i>Agree</i> or <i>Strongly Agree</i>	100%
% Answering <i>Disagree</i> or <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	0%

As a result of services with GHA Autism Supports, the quality of my life has improved.

2 <sup>nd</sup> Survey Quarter	October–December 2016
% Answering <i>Agree</i> or <i>Strongly Agree</i>	96%
% Answering <i>Disagree</i> or <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	4%

# A SWEET CELEBRATION HOSTED BY PINE GROVE UMC

Many individuals from GHA Autism Supports, along with individuals supported through Monarch, Elite, Easter Seals and Lifespan, attended the annual Sweetheart Dance on Saturday evening, February 11<sup>th</sup>. In its 8<sup>th</sup> year, the event is hosted by volunteers at Pine Grove United Methodist Church in Albemarle, and is specifically organized by the Young Women's



Fellowship Group. Although the event itself kicked off at 6:00 pm, the pampering

began far earlier in the day! Many attendees had their hair and makeup done through the Cosmetology Department at Stanly Community College. Upon arrival, attendees danced to music provided by DJ Dan Tucker, a church member who makes this annual event a scheduling priority. In addition, pictures were taken by volunteer David Hearne in an effort to provide a nice keepsake for all attendees. A variety of food was also prepared by church volunteers. Nearly 200 people took part in the day's events that made this year's Valentine's Day



*Thanks to Kathy Odell and all the volunteers at Pine Grove UMC!*

festivities a little more special! Event organizer and local Special Olympics representative Kathy Odell shared, "Many events may come and go, but our church members are committed to ensuring that this outreach program continues for years to come."



Several Wilmington participants attended the "Night to Shine" on Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at Global River Church in Wilmington. Sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, the event in Wilmington was one of 375 worldwide that attracted more than 75,000 honored guests.

Jay takes part in the Valentine's Day festivities at the Harrelson Center in Wilmington by designing the card that was distributed to all of the partners, along with a bag of goodies. Port City Academy, GHA's licensed day program, is one of many organizations that is located in Harrelson Center along with multiple other non-profits.



# The GHazette Snap Shot Corner

