



GHAzette



THANKSGIVING EDITION 2016

Port City Academy Opens In the Harrelson Center

Families from the Wilmington area strongly advocated for GHA to provide supports for their loved ones within their home community, and service delivery began in March of 2010. GHA has continued to expand our service array, most recently with the opening of Port City Academy in the summer of 2016. The licensed day program is located inside the Jo Ann Carter Harrelson Center on Fourth Street in Downtown Wilmington. The Harrelson Center is a North Carolina nonprofit corporation that



supports and partners with other nonprofit organizations in the Wilmington community. The Center, located in the old New Hanover County Sheriff's Office building, works with its partners to meet the needs of the community in areas such as safe and affordable housing, education, employment, health care and family support. Port City Academy, one of thirteen programs housed in the Harrelson Center, provides training with acquisition, retention, or improvement in self-help, socialization and adaptive skills. Prevocational activities, appropriate social interactions, and safety skills are the focus of teaching and learning at Port City Academy. Services provided at Port City Academy include *Day Supports Individual* and *Day Supports Group* and the program provides a team of highly qualified staff who utilize TEACCH methods to provide structured programming focusing on enhancing skills based on the individual's goals. A licensed psychologist is on staff to aid in positive behavior support. Thanks to the generosity of Jim and Lesley Hively, a grand opening reception was held on Tuesday, October 11 for members of the community to learn more about GHA Autism Supports and specifically, the services provided at Port City Academy. For more information, please contact New Hanover Quality Services Director Cindy Moore at 704-322-9089 or by email at cindymoore@ghainc.org. The Center provides its nonprofit partners social and educational

opportunities, marketing and promotions, volunteer recruitment and a place of collaboration for them to help those in need in the community. The Center supports its partners with market rental rates that cover all utilities, parking and security. This synergistic environment allows all the nonprofits, including GHA Autism Supports and Port City Academy, to operate more efficiently and better utilize their funding.



Success at the "Spooktacular Gala Auction"!

On Saturday, October 29th, over 200 gathered at the Carolinas HealthCare

System-Stanly Family and Education Center for the "Spooktacular Gala Auction" where guests savored the "scary" themed array of food and drinks while pursuing over 150 fabulous items up for bid! Auction planning committee members, including Dawn Allen, Sue Bohnsack, Tonia Camiña, Tonia Diggs, Denise Drye, Tonda Forrest, Larry & Martha Hupp, Lori Ivey, Gina Martin, Kim McGowen, Maureen Morrell, Beth Olivieri, Melissa Rivera and Mary Stokes, worked tirelessly for months securing items and sponsorships and providing those final touches in creating extraordinary displays for the event. Emcees Rob Morrell and Lee Allen energized buyers and helped to set the tone for the evening as families and friends of GHA gathered at the organization's fifth run of its signature fundraising event. The gala auction raised over \$38,000 to support GHA's initiatives to provide quality services for individuals with autism. A very special thanks goes to the following sponsors whose support of the "Spooktacular Gala Auction" made the event a tremendous success: Presenting Sponsor: Tim Marburger Honda; Platinum Sponsors: a gift made "In Honor of Ellen Brooks", Anna and Hank Finch, Forrest Fence, Hudson Fence Supply and Uwharrie Bank; Gold Sponsors: Albemarle Pediatrics, All 4 Fun Inflatables, Camiña Design and Construction, Professional Propane, REMAX Town & Country, South Central Oil Company, Southern Pharmacy Services, Brinn & Jeff Smith and Wells Fargo; Silver Sponsors: Albemarle Tire & Retreading Co., Bear Insurance Service, Crook Motor Company, and Davidson, Holland & Whitesell & Co., PLLC; Bronze Sponsors: Deese Electric Company Heating & Cooling, SimplyHome, Stanly Appliance Parts & Service, LLC and Storm Technologies, Inc.; Media Sponsors: Stanly News and Press and WSPC/WZKY Radio. The next gala event is scheduled for November 10, 2018.





Day Services

Art

EXHIBITION

at First Presbyterian Church, Albemarle

Albemarle Day Services Program and First Presbyterian Church Partner for Art

Under the leadership of GHA Day Services Coordinator Kyoko Bruton, individuals supported at the licensed day services program located in Albemarle always enjoy having a creative outlet to spotlight their "inner artist". During the month of September, participants were exposed to Dutch artist Bert Simmons, who takes paper folding art to a whole new level by creating hyper-realistic 3D paper sculptures. As part of the process, all of the individuals were given the opportunity to develop their own paper sculptures that told stories of happiness through their eyes. Many of the works of art were placed on display at the First Presbyterian Church Art Gallery in downtown Albemarle. In addition, church members, along with members of the greater community, were invited to view the fall art exhibit at a reception the Church hosted on September 20th. GHA has partnered with First Presbyterian Church for a number of months, including the creation of numerous volunteer opportunities to assist with art classes, meal preparation and the church bulletins. In return, church members have donated numerous art and other activity supplies to keep the creative juices at the Albemarle Day Services Program flowing! Kyoko would like to extend special thanks to Gina Martin and the entire staff and membership of First Presbyterian Church for providing the opportunity and space for the fall art exhibit. GHA also appreciates the staff for working diligently with the individuals that we support in assisting them in creating these beautiful masterpieces!



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

Staff Spotlight

In her 23 years of service at GHA Autism Supports, Jennifer Turner has served in several capacities throughout the organization. After Jennifer graduated from Fayetteville State University with a major in psychology and minor in social work, she began her employment with GHA working as a 3rd shift direct support staff member. During her tenure, Jennifer has served in a number of positions including Team Leader, Manager of the A. Jack Wall Home, a Qualified Professional (QP), and Clinical Supervisor. She is currently employed as the Quality Management Specialist and works with many families seeking admission and referrals. "By having worked in a variety of positions in GHA, I feel that it has given me a unique perspective on what families are going through," said Jennifer.

Jennifer shared that she has always had a passion for helping others. In high school, she volunteered with Special Olympics and acted as a peer tutor for students with special needs, which led her to pursue this type of profession. In the time Jennifer has worked for GHA, she has learned the importance of patience, compassion, communication and problem solving skills. "On a daily basis, I interact with so many families with unique and diverse dynamics, personalities; and the one thing that they each have in common is that they want to advocate for their loved ones in order to get the best supports that are available." Jennifer told the story of how in her early years of working with GHA, she worked with a mother who said with all sincerity "Until you are a mother, you will not understand." And she says that this, to this day, stands true for her and allows her to be able to communicate with families on a more personal level.

Even though her job as a Quality Management Specialist has its challenges, Jennifer feels confident interacting with staff, individuals, families, perspective families and others in the community based on the knowledge that she has gained while working at GHA. "By being here the length of time I have, I've seen the individual's growth," said Jennifer. "To know that I have had a part in their growth journey over the years, and witnessing them reach their current level of independence, has been very fulfilling." Jennifer is a busy mother of two with sons Dorian, age 19, and Daelen, age 14. In her spare time, she enjoys listening to music, meditating to stay relaxed, and describes herself as a reptile enthusiast. "I have two bearded dragons and a variety of turtle and tortoises. At the end of the day, some people read books; I play with turtles, tortoises and lizards," said Jennifer with a smile.

**High School Student Completes Senior Project at Port City Academy**

Deona Robinson recently completed her senior project at Port City Academy, GHA's licensed day program in Wilmington.

Deona is a senior at North Brunswick High School in Leland, NC and conducted a cooking activity focusing on baking skills.

"I learned a lot more about autism by visiting Port City Academy. Most importantly, this project really showed me how autistic individuals just need to be understood," shared Deona. She aspires to pursue a career in veterinary medicine and would like to work with therapy dogs and individuals with autism.





GHA Hosts Distinguished Visitors

On October 26th, GHA was honored to host a distinguished visitor, Dr. Gary Mesibov, a noted Psychologist, retired UNC professor, former TEACCH Director, editor and author. Dr. Mesibov, an internationally recognized leader in the field of autism, was "very impressed" with GHA's "super staff" and complimented our exceptional use of the TEACCH model. Joining Dr. Mesibov on his tour was Mansi Bagwe Das, Director of Care4Autism Centre, of India. She stated that she has visited many programs world-wide and "appreciated GHA's commitment to serving individuals with autism and the foresightedness displayed in growing our programs."

Staff Recognized for Direct Support Professionals Week

GHA was pleased to recognize the following outstanding direct support staff. These staff were nominated by their supervisors and peers for showing exemplary work and consistently going above and beyond their job duties. All nominees were entered into a drawing for prizes that were awarded during Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week, September 11-17.

Congratulations to the following winners, and thank you all for your service: **GRAND PRIZE WINNER** – Teresa Gaddy; **2nd Prize Winner** – Derek Hill and **3rd Prize Winner** – Tavares Hill. Teresa and Derek represented GHA at the North Carolina Alliance for Direct Support Professionals' "Let's Celebrate!" conference, a two-day event celebrating and training Direct Support workers across the state. Teresa and Derek and their families received a trip to Great Wolf Lodge in



Concord to enjoy the water park and attend the conference. Tavares received a gift card to recognize his service. Other nominees included: Dorothy Allen, Samantha Allman, Anita Atkins, Aaron Baker, David Billingsley, William Bryant, Maurice Burns, Akeara Collins, Lindsay Crites, Regina Crump, Veronica Davis, Asia Grady, Teresa Graham, Samantha Hamby, Linda Hamilton, Amanda Handy, Joanna Hathcock, Laura Hoelzle, Marquis Horne, Brandi Howell, Marcus Ingram, Brian Johnson, Anthony Jones, Phelexia McDonald, Chicaraw Meaders, Brett Ridenhour, Benjamin Roundtree and Doyle Rowan.

Walker Receives PATH Certification

Congratulations to Anna Walker for recently receiving her certification as a PATH International Registered Instructor. Anna serves as a Vocational Coordinator for GHA Autism Supports and has served in a number of roles throughout her 11 years of service to the organization. Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), a federally-registered 501(c)(3) non-profit, was formed in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association to promote equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs. Anna is now one of 4,600 certified instructors and equine specialists and oversees the therapeutic riding program located at Carolina Farms. She works closely with the GHA Clinical Team to devise appropriate therapeutic riding activities with quarter horses "Rio" and "Chico" for the individuals that GHA supports.



The GHazette Snap Shot Corner



Special thanks to the employees of Carolinas HealthCare System-Stanly for volunteering at Carolina Farms for the United Way Day of Caring this fall. Much progress was made sprucing up the sensory garden!



JOB FAIR PARTICIPATION

GHA Human Resources Specialist Mary Stokes talks with a student at a job fair at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte this fall where "Norm the Niner" was present too!

Visit our website to download an employment application at www.ghautismsupports.org.

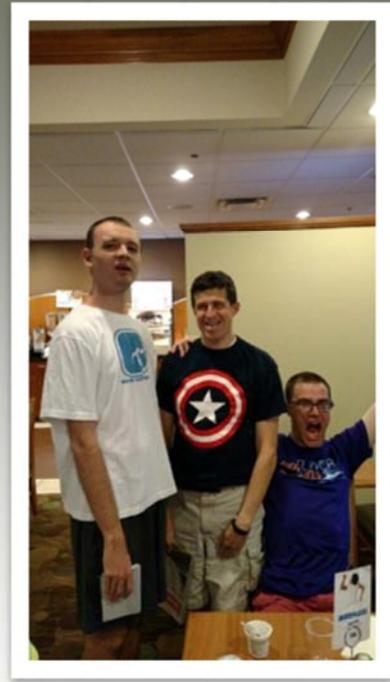
Associates from the Albemarle location of Carolina Farm Credit rolled their sleeves up to paint a new roaming chicken coop at Carolina Farms in mid-October.

Volunteer hours = happy chickens and lots of eggs!



GHA Job Coach Jackie (left) and Jenny (right), who works at The Children's Museum of Wilmington, had the opportunity to meet Actor Sean Astin recently. Astin is most well known for his role as "Samwise" in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Wilmington visits Albemarle



Early October marked a time of evacuation for our Wilmington programs as Hurricane Matthew approached. On the bright side, our crew from Wilmington made the best of a few days by visiting Morrow Mountain State Park and checking out the menu at Second Street Sundries.

second^{2ND} street
SUNDRIES
Coffee & Cafe



Make it easy on yourself and order a fruit or deli tray to carry to your next holiday gathering. Second Street Sundries also carries a wide variety of boxed lunches to meet all of your catering needs!



Stop by to have your picture made with Santa on Monday, November 28th from 5-7 pm. You may bring your own camera and enjoy free activities for children sponsored by Starbucks!



Searching for that perfect gift for that special someone this holiday season? The Second Street Sundries Gift Shop has one-of-a-kind glass works of art handcrafted by people with autism. In addition, you will love the soaps, Papyrus® greeting cards, cookbooks and more. Second Street Sundries gift cards make the perfect stocking stuffers too!



The Albemarle and Wilmington staff had a great time at the Staff Appreciation Day Festivities on November 9th and November 14th respectively. All staff received gift cards that were presented by the GHA Family Network, and many won an exciting array of other prizes. We love the people that make a difference in the lives of the individuals we support every day!

