



## A BOND THAT CAN'T BE BROKEN

After nearly 21 years of employment, Betty Harris Parks recently stepped down from her full-time position as an Agricultural Trainer at Carolina Farms. Prior to her position at Carolina Farms, Betty served in several other positions including as a Support Staff at Day Services and as a Teacher Assistant in the Badin Elementary School classroom. To all at GHA Autism Supports that knew Betty well, she was one of Nick's biggest supporters. For 8 years, "Mrs. Betty" as she is known by the entire GHA family, worked alongside Nick at Carolina Farms. From sunrise to late in the day, you could find Betty and Nick always busy feeding chickens, gathering eggs, weeding the gardens, harvesting the produce gathered, delivering fresh goods to Second Street Sundries and more. Those who frequent Carolina Farms always saw Mrs. Betty and Nick zipping around the Farm on the John Deere Gator with buckets of feed or produce in tow

working tirelessly to complete the tasks at hand for the day. Since June of 2011, Nick has been employed as a Farm Assistant and all can agree that Mrs. Betty and Nick were a dynamic duo! Without question, Mrs. Betty had a bond with Nick like no other and many credit her support style in assisting Nick to reach his fullest potential.

Soon after Betty announced her stepping down from her current role, there is no denying the immediate concern that those who knew Nick well had. Betty was such a critical part of Nick's day to day world, and worry over how he would transition through this change was certainly of concern. A few weeks prior to Betty's retirement celebration, she shared her interest in remaining on as a GHA substitute staff. She reminisced of the day a few years ago when she visited her daughter at her place of employment. Shortly after arriving to see her daughter, a woman approached her and told her that Betty worked with her son. Betty immediately connected with Nick's mother Ella and they began to exchange stories over the years. During one of the last opportunities that Betty saw Ella, Betty recalls Ella saying to her, "Take care of my boy." Those words have resonated with Betty over the last few years since Ella's passing. During the last few weeks of Betty's full-time employment with GHA, she shared that she had been preparing Nick for her departure, but that they were truly not going to say goodbye. Prior to her retirement gathering, Betty already coordinated with Nick's support staff to make arrangements for a standing commitment to go to Golden Corral for a meal together every two weeks. For many GHA staff, their shift may end or their time at GHA may conclude, but the impression made on their hearts lasts a lifetime. And so the tradition begins to Golden Corral, along with the continuation of a bond between Nick and Betty that can't be broken.



## 2019

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#### MISSION

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## HAVE YOU LINKED YOUR AMAZON ACCOUNT TO GHA?

With the holiday season quickly approaching, there is no better time than now to link your Amazon account to AmazonSmile, a program that makes it easy for customers to support their favorite charitable organizations every time you shop. Customers who visit AmazonSmile at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) will find the exact same Amazon they know and love with consistent pricing, selection and convenience, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to their favorite charitable organization. There is no cap on the total donation amount, and you can select **GHA Autism Supports** from nearly one million organizations around the country.

When customers first go to AmazonSmile, you will be asked to select your favorite charitable organization from almost a million eligible organizations – and that's it! Once you have selected GHA Autism Supports on your first visit, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from any eligible purchases through AmazonSmile from that point forward, whether you shop just once or once a day. Please note that you must remember to type [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) into the browser on your PC, tablet or phone when shopping!

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## WILMINGTON RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

The Connections Program at the Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington invites adults and children with mental, physical, emotional or behavioral disabilities including Alzheimer's, dementia, autism, schizophrenia, physical disabilities and other challenges to experience the museum in a supported environment designed to minimize stress and to provide a connection between each visitor and



Residents and staff from our Wilmington program enjoyed an outing to the NC Zoo on September 6<sup>th</sup>.

the art on view in the museum. Several of the individuals supported through the Wilmington program participated in the Connections program over the summer. In addition, two residents volunteer at the Cameron Art Museum throughout the year. GHA appreciates and values this partnership with the Cameron Art Museum and many others in the Cape Fear community!

*GHA creates and maintains an environment that respects and supports individuals' and staffs' diverse backgrounds (i.e.: culture, ethnicity, beliefs, age, race, gender, etc.)*

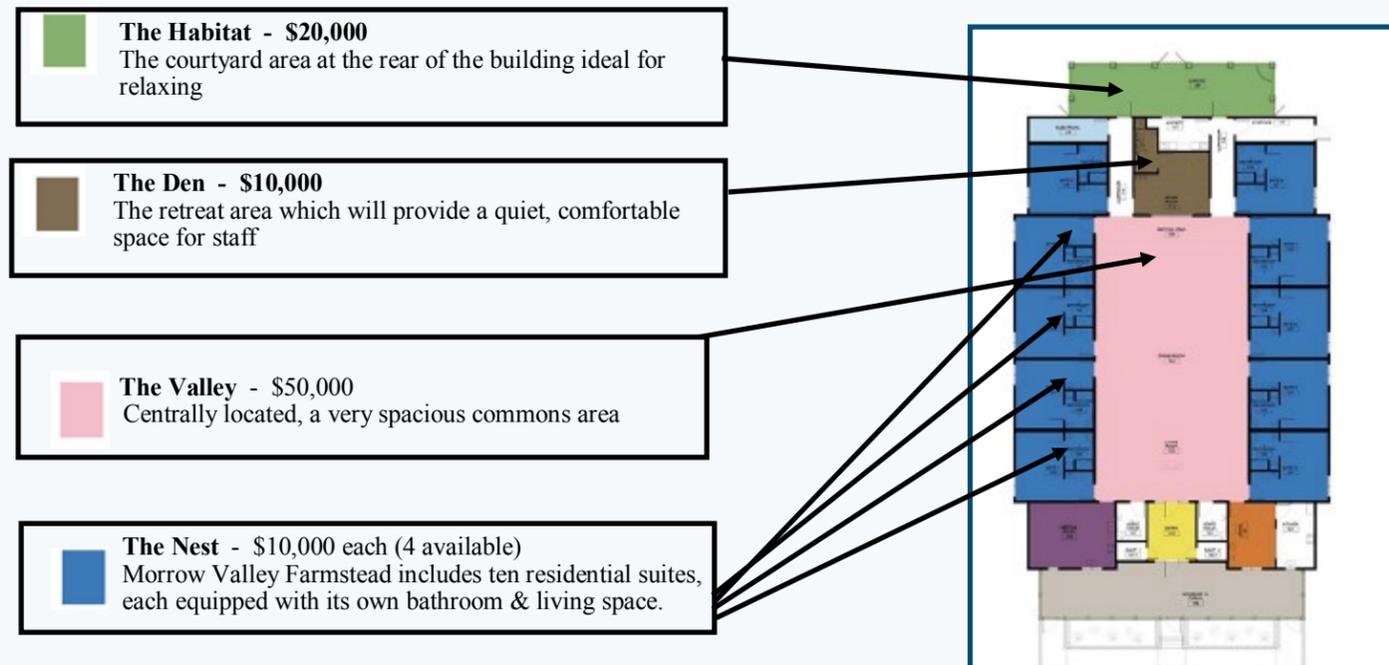
**MORROW VALLEY FARMSTEAD BREAKS GROUND  
ALONG WITH CAPITAL CAMPAIG**

After years of planning, history is in the making with the start of construction of Morrow Valley Farmstead in late September! Located on Morrow Mountain Road in Albemarle, the 10-bed facility will be a state-of-the-art home creating specialized long-term care for aging individuals with autism and developmental disabilities that also have serious medical conditions. Morrow Valley



Farmstead will include pesticide-free gardens, animal assisted therapy, therapeutic horticulture activities, 24-hour healthcare services, telemedicine and whole person coordinated care. (Check out our story about “Moose” in this edition.) Morrow Valley Farmstead residents will have the opportunity to age gracefully and comfortably in an inspiring home environment that is customized for their unique needs and interests. Medical care outside the home will be reduced significantly by utilizing telemedicine. A capital campaign is underway with numerous naming rights opportunities available. Multiple opportunities have been spoken for, but you will find

the latest availability below. Please contact Beth Olivieri at 704-982-9600, ext. 125 for additional information.



The GHazette is a quarterly publication. If you would like to submit story ideas, please contact a member of the GHazette Editorial Team: Beth Olivieri, [betholivieri@ghainc.org](mailto:betholivieri@ghainc.org) or Denise Drye, [denisedrye@ghainc.org](mailto:denisedrye@ghainc.org).

## FUN IN THE SUMMERTIME AT CAMP PUZZLE PIECE

For the youth served by GHA Autism Supports, Camp Puzzle Piece is arguably the highlight of summertime! For three weeks during the summer, the school-aged individuals at GHA are treated to fun mornings spent at Carolina Farms and exciting day excursions throughout North Carolina. This year, Camp Puzzle Piece took place during the weeks of June 17<sup>th</sup>, July 8<sup>th</sup>, and July 22<sup>nd</sup>, with three days of camp each week. Five of the camp days were spent at Carolina Farms, while the other four were spent at the Asheboro Zoo, Wake the World, the Concord Mills Aquarium and Dan Nicholas Park, respectively.

Each day at Carolina Farms began with snack time, followed by a fun arts-and-crafts project, designed by our own Kyoko Rorie-Bruton and her assistant, Victoria. These crafts included plants with pots made out of painted records, decorated bird houses, tie-dyed T-shirts, and painted canvases. Following arts and crafts, the individuals were treated to a hay ride throughout the Farm grounds by John Fields. Days at Carolina Farms were then concluded with time spent at the pool.



In contrast to the relaxing days at the Farm, the day trips were filled with much more excitement, as well as an equal amount of fun! The individuals very much enjoyed observing the wonders of wildlife, both at the zoo and at the aquarium. And, of course, all camp participants loved the boat rides at Wake the World! The grand finale of Camp Puzzle Piece took place at Dan Nicholas Park, where everyone enjoyed a cook-out and partook in various activities, including paddle boats and train rides. Planning will begin in the coming months for Camp Puzzle Piece 2020!



### ANOTHER BANNER YEAR FOR WAKE THE WORLD



On July 11, 2019, GHA Autism Supports took part in an annual Wake the World event on Lake Tillery. Wake the World has been in existence since 2008 and is a nonprofit organization in which boat owners volunteer to provide water-based activities to individuals with special needs, as well as to mistreated children. This year, individuals from both Camp Puzzle Piece and the GHA Day Program spent the day enjoying themselves on the beautiful waters of our region.

Everyone gathered at the boat docks in the morning, where refreshing lemon and peach slushies were served. Then, with life jackets strapped on, both staff and individuals served by GHA were ready to take to the waters in pontoon boats. After leisurely sailing for a while, the boats docked at a sand bar and everyone was able to enjoy some time either relaxing on the boat or splashing around in the water. Later, Domino's pizza was provided; a delicious and much-deserved treat after a busy day on the water. Shortly after lunch, the boats returned to the dock, once again at an unhurried pace. GHA will most definitely be participating in Wake the World events again! This experience provided a perfect opportunity for the individuals served at GHA to tailor their excursions to their individual needs and desires. Special thanks to organizer Robin Lemons and all of his team for putting together such a wonderful event!



# GHA AND FIRST PRESBYTERIAN PARTNER FOR ART



Under the leadership of Creative Arts Coordinator Kyoko Bruton, individuals supported at GHA always enjoy an opportunity to highlight their works of art. Many of the creative works were placed on display for several weeks this fall 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 17<sup>th</sup>.

“In the visual arts world, texture is defined as the perceived surface quality of a work of art. It is an element of two and three dimensional designs, and is distinguished by its visual and physical properties. The use of texture, along with other elements of design, can convey a variety of messages and



emotions when viewing a piece of art which utilizes this technique,” shared Kyoko Bruton, Creative Arts Coordinator. “This year, the GHA Creative Arts explored this artistic medium by making textured art from recycled, reused home improvement supplies. It may sound unusual, however it is common to use a varied mediums in creating artistic designs.”



Special thanks to Paula, Clint and Lyndy for serving as hosts of the show, along with Alex for his photography expertise and Adam for his special music. Refreshments were provided by Second Street Sundries.



## Meet “Moose” Carolina Farms’ Newest Resident

GHA is excited to welcome “Moose”, a 7-year-old miniature therapy horse who will serve as the newest member of the horse therapy program at Carolina Farms. The sweet and gentle-natured gelding received a warm welcome by all on October 15<sup>th</sup>! Under the direction of Anna Walker, a PATH certified horse trainer, Moose will eventually make his home at Morrow Valley Farmstead where the medically fragile population with autism and other development disabilities can interact with him.

Prior to arriving in North Carolina, Moose was familiar with a variety of therapeutic environments in Ohio that included wheelchairs, motorized scooters, crutches, and other animals. His training included exposure to loud noises and sirens at a fire station, traffic, crowds, slippery floors, crosswalks and stairs. Training as such prepared him for frequent outings at law enforcement agencies, schools and multiple other business establishments.

Miniature horses historically make wonderful therapy animals due to their size and overall affectionate personality. The team that secured Moose for Morrow Valley Farmstead felt that his size and training will allow him to go inside buildings with the proper attire, additionally allowing for

those who may be intimidated by larger horses to receive the same therapeutic benefits.

“We look forward to incorporating him in many activities to continue his training prior to his move to Morrow Valley Farmstead, and we know he will be a great asset to the program and to those we serve,” shared Anna Walker who will be overseeing Moose’s program.



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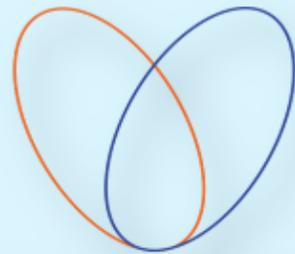
## GHA HOSTS WEEK-LONG VISIT FROM JAPANESE PROFESSIONALS

In late September, GHA Autism Supports hosted sixteen professionals from Japan for four days. The Japan Autism Support Association (JAAS) represents a collaboration of agencies who are working together to advance autism services. The JAAS group toured numerous GHA sites in Albemarle and Wilmington, attended presentations from GHA personnel, and had opportunities to talk with several individuals and staff. Members of the group expressed that were very impressed with the people they met at GHA and they were appreciative of the valuable information they learned that will assist them in providing services to individuals with autism in Japan. Many thanks to all those who helped make their visit so rewarding!



### Saluting Staff During Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week

To recognize the vital role direct support professionals play in the lives of children and adults with disabilities, September 8-14 was proclaimed as **Direct Support Professional Recognition Week** throughout the nation. GHA Autism Supports uses 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. As a small fraction of the recognition that they deserve throughout the year, GHA provided goodie trays at all of the programs throughout the organization. Through their dedication, creativity and advocacy, our DSPs ensure the individuals served by GHA are understood, valued for their diversity, and are given opportunities to grow and contribute to our community.



2019 Direct Support Professional  
**RECOGNITION WEEK**  
September 8 - 14, 2019



Exploring Morrow Mountain State Park to take advantage of the cooler temperatures was enjoyed by many including Jake!



### GHA Creative Arts Pumpkin Decorating Contest

The GHA Creative Arts Program sponsored a pumpkin decorating contest as part of their fall festivities. Check out our winners!



**GHA Autism Supports  
2019 GHA Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey  
Fiscal Year 2018-2019**

Each year in June, GHA Autism Supports surveys community stakeholders. Our purpose is to examine their overall satisfaction with our programs and organizational processes. For the fourth year, our Quality Management Department utilized *SurveyMonkey* in gathering this vital data. The mailing list is reviewed and revised each year. Only community individuals familiar with our organization are included. This parameter assures more meaningful data. Links to the *SurveyMonkey* site were sent to all identified stakeholders via email. Anonymity of individual responses was promised. Participation was encouraged by emphasizing the importance of the survey data to our accreditation and continuous quality improvement. In June 2019, 65 links to *SurveyMonkey* were emailed to community stakeholders, asking that surveys be returned in approximately three weeks. A follow-up email was employed for the first time extending the response deadline by approximately two weeks and again stressing how important this information was to our agency. Twenty-five surveys were completed, a return rate of 39%. Table 1 shows the importance of the follow-up email.

**Table 1. 2019 Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey with and without Follow-up -**

Comparison with and without Follow-up	Surveys Returned	Survey Return Rate
2019 Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey with One Email	20	31%
2019 Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey with Two Emails	25	39%

Stakeholders were asked to respond to ten statements selecting one of four responses: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree*. For each survey question, the *Strongly Agree* end of the continuum was the most positive response. A copy of the survey is include in Appendix A; Table 2 summarizes the final survey results.

**Table 2. 2019 GHA Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey Results Based on 25 Surveys**

Response Options	SA	A	D	SD
GHA works with other community organizations as an advocate.	100%	—	—	—
GHA has an educational program to make its presence known.	64%	36%	—	—
Staff seem respectful and knowledgeable.	92%	8%	—	—
Personnel seem qualified and competent.	92%	8%	—	—
Services are conveniently located.	72%	28%	—	—
Locations are clean and well-maintained.	96%	4%	—	—
GHA does not discriminate in provision of service.	96%	4%	—	—
GHA provides culturally sensitive services.	84%	16%	—	—
GHA’s website (ghautismsupports.org) is user friendly.	80%	20%	—	—
Overall, I am satisfied with GHA and its services and supports.	92%	8%	—	—

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders provided positive feedback. Question number ten is particularly important, serving as a global satisfaction measure of satisfaction for GHA’s services and supports. For three consecutive survey years, no participant has selected a negative response. Moving from 2017 to 2018, the percentage of participants who strongly agreed with our global question increased from 76% to 93%. The 2019 Stakeholder Satisfaction maintained this positive shift, with 92% strongly agreeing they were satisfied with GHA’s services and supports.

**Table 3. Global Measure of Satisfaction: Overall, I am satisfied with GHA and its services and supports.**

Response Options	SA	A	D	SD
2017 Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey	76%	24%	—	—
2018 Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey	93%	7%	—	—
2019 Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey	92%	8%	—	—

At the end of the survey, there was an unstructured section for any thoughts the stakeholder wished to share. The following unedited comments were made: **GHA is a wonderful organization to have in Albemarle. THANKS FOR GHA. We are very fortunate to have an organization of the quality of GHA Autism Supports in our community. The staff is of the highest quality and perform their duties in a most professional manner. GHA Autism Supports is a Valuable part of the Stanly County Community, in particular for Individuals and Families with Autism. They are also very supportive of other organizations. GHA continues to be one of the front-runners. Morrow Valley Farms is a perfect example. GHA is excellent- we need more locations!**