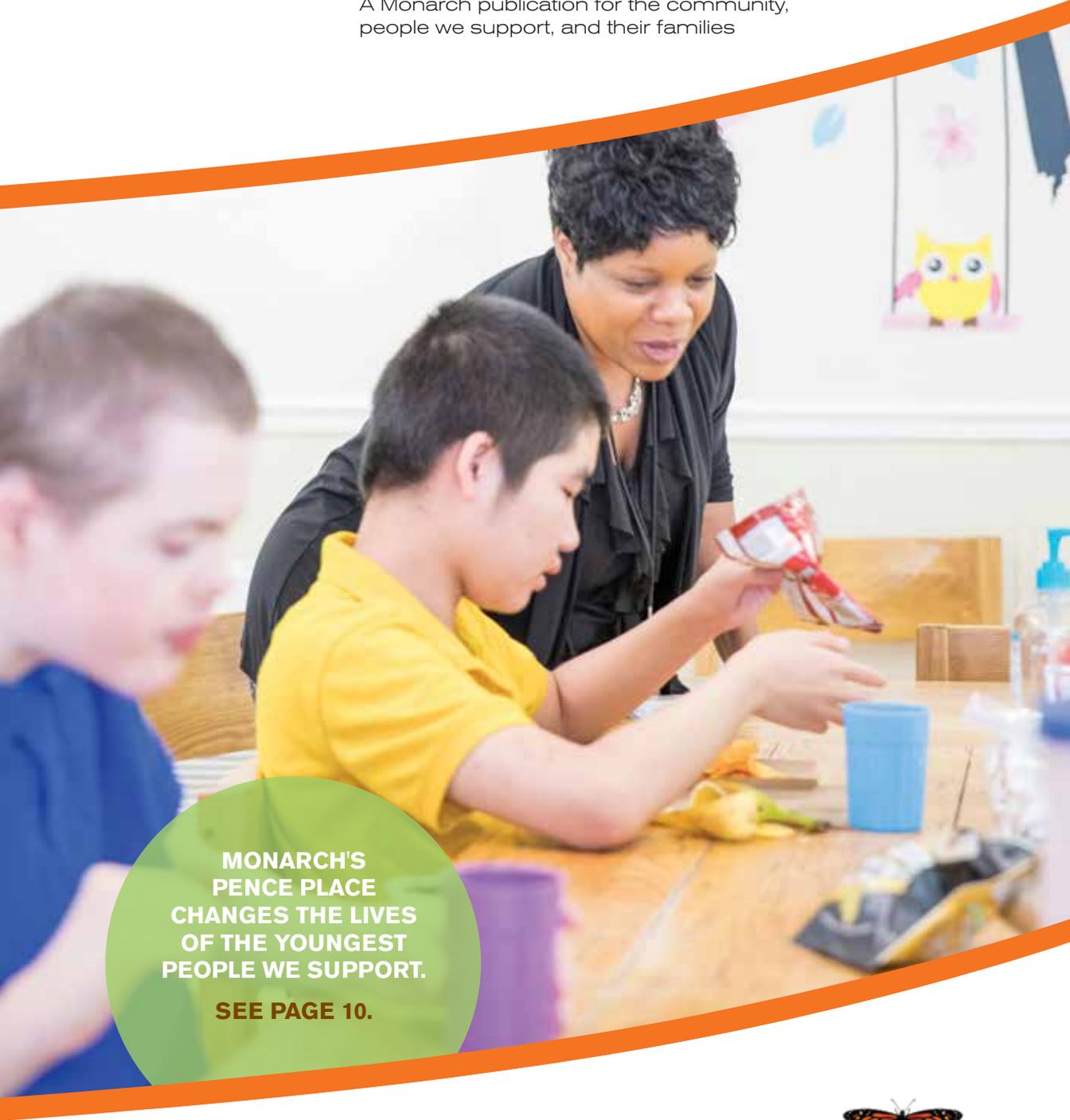




Reaching Dreams

A Monarch publication for the community,
people we support, and their families



**MONARCH'S
PENCE PLACE
CHANGES THE LIVES
OF THE YOUNGEST
PEOPLE WE SUPPORT.**

SEE PAGE 10.

STRAIGHT FROM **PEGGY**



Most of you know that I have been a foster parent for over ten years, mostly to kids with disabilities. I love children! My heart hurts for them when things go wrong, whether it's a scrape on a knee or having to live with strangers because parents sometimes need help caring for their children.

I will never forget a conversation with one mom. Her son was around 8 years old, and he would get up in the middle of the night, turn on the stove, break things and frequently hurt himself. The parents took turns staying up at night, but then had another baby, and their lives had become pretty dysfunctional. They were afraid their son would go into the baby's room and hurt the baby, not on purpose, but because he lacked the cognitive ability to understand what he was doing. The parents seldom saw each other during waking hours, and the stress on their marriage, with caring for a child with a disability and a new baby, was overwhelming. The mom came to me crying and said, "Am I a terrible mom if I put my child in a group home?"

I reassured her that if her desire was to be a good parent, then having her child in a place where people would be up all night was something a good parent would do. The child simply had too many needs to live at home. It happens. It was tough on that mom. Her in laws didn't understand, and some of her friends didn't either. But that mom made the right choice for her son and their family.

This issue, our cover story is about Pence Place, a cool home where kids with severe medical needs can get the love and quality care they need from Monarch professionals. See page 10 and read about the neat kids at that home and learn how staff have helped create a nurturing and healing environment where these kids can thrive.

Recent studies have shown the effects of the physical environment on the healing process and well-being are increasingly significant for people. Kim Howard, who currently lives in one of our transitional residential settings, shares how supportive housing, attentive and encouraging staff and self-determination have assisted in her recovery. Kim worked many years caring for others, before an accident caused a traumatic brain injury. She lost her job, her home and many of her relationships. Transitional housing provides the environment Kim needed to start over and find her true self, she says. Read her inspiring story on the next page.

Delivering care to people in a residential setting is as personal as healthcare gets. We take great pride when people trust us with their care. We help them help themselves. Often, that means helping them to find jobs and getting them involved within their communities. We help them achieve what is important to them. When we do, good things happen. That's why we do what we do.

In closing, I want to thank the many partners and supporters of our first-ever Support Inclusion Saturday event. The goal of Support Inclusion Saturday is to raise awareness, dispel myths, and harness our collective power to foster understanding about intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Read more on page 2. Just like anyone else, people with I/DD want jobs, friends and purpose. In our inaugural year, more than 60 participating locations in 29 cities joined the effort and an estimated 1.3 million people statewide heard about our campaign. We appreciate all who provide inclusive opportunities for the people we support – and all people with disabilities. Together, we'll raise awareness and help millions of hardworking, engaged, and highly-motivated people with I/DD achieve their dreams. Thank YOU!

Peggy S. Terhune, Ph.D.
Monarch CEO

Reaching Dreams is the official Monarch publication for the community, people we support, and their families.

Our Mission

We are committed to supporting, educating, and empowering people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, mental illness, and substance use disorders to choose and achieve what is important to them.

Our Vision

We will lead the way in the state to creatively support people with disabilities in growing toward their potential, reaching their dreams, and making their own informed choices about where they live, learn, work, play, and worship. Through partnerships and relationships with our community, we will offer a variety of innovative quality services and supports and will promote advocacy, awareness, education, training, employment, and residential opportunities.

A mask Kim Howard created in a Monarch art therapy class. The mask represents the 'old Kim.'

STARTING OVER:

Kim Howard says a traumatic brain injury showed her "who I really am"

Kim Howard was on her usual route home from work one afternoon in October 2014. A certified nursing assistant for 23 years, she enjoyed every minute of taking care of others. But this time, her commute on that Charlotte highway was one that changed her life forever.

A semi-truck slammed into the back of Howard's car. She survived, but was left with a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Her ability to speak was severely impaired and she suffered memory loss. Beyond her physical injuries, Howard lost her home and job.

Estranged from her family, she had nowhere to go and no one to turn to for help, she moved to a shelter. Through tears, Howard explained the moment she contemplated suicide.

"I was at my bottom. I worked all my life taking care of people, getting the things I wanted and needed, and helping anybody I could. To have all that taken away from me, I thought, I can't do this," recalled Howard.

What she did next took a lot of courage. She called the Mobile Crisis Center, which led her to Monarch and redirected her life's path. She was paired with Cherie Smith, a residential team leader for transitional housing at Monarch, who helped her find placement at one of the apartments Monarch manages in Charlotte.



"The entire staff, everybody from the [front desk] window to the nurse, every corner they had smiles on their faces. So, that's when I knew I was in the right place, and I told myself to stop putting my pride before my health," said Howard, who visited Monarch's behavioral health office in Charlotte.

continued on page 16

Cover photo: Carrie Tyson, residential manager for Pence Place supervises snack time. Evan (middle) enjoys independently opening his Doritos while Erik (left) has his chocolate pudding. Pence Place is Monarch's only children's home that specializes in treating the most medically fragile children and young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities under the age of 18, who are cared for by 24-hour awake staff. Located in Richmond County, it is home to nine residents from all over North Carolina.

SEE PAGE 10

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Peggy S. Terhune, Ph.D.
President/CEO, Monarch

MANAGING EDITOR

Natasha A. Suber

CONTRIBUTORS

Adina Blake
Blake Martin
Sarah Pisciueneri
Nathalie Santa Maria
Laurie Weaver,
contributing editor

CREATIVE DIRECTOR/ DESIGNER

Donna Wojek Gibbs

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Monarch's **Support Inclusion Saturday** raises awareness statewide about the importance of inclusion for people with disabilities



THANK YOU TO THE
PEOPLE, BUSINESSES
AND PARTNERS
FOR MAKING
INCLUSION SATURDAY
SUCCESSFUL!

Susannah Salazar, system administrator for patient billing and inventory management at Cone Health in Greensboro, recalls the day she was approached by her manager to find an intern some duties. Her initial thoughts were: “another thing to add to the perpetually growing pile of responsibility,” but she said, “I accepted with a smile.”

The intern Salazar and her team would soon work alongside was a person with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD). The intern is part of Project Search, a high school work transition program coordinated by The Arc of Greensboro that has assisted 18 students with 100 percent job placement rate for past two years. She remembers from the first introduction, the intern exuded charm, happiness, positive energy, and eagerness to learn.

“The first thing he did was greet me with a smile and a hug,” Salazar said. “As our journey started, we worked together for the first couple of days, creating stock bins for the rooms to help during busy schedules. As we worked, I realized he was already mastering the job activities that I had developed. I started to work with him on other tasks such as understanding packages and detailed reading.”

Salazar’s experience is the reason Monarch used the month of March to invite North Carolina businesses and organizations, like Cone Health, to join its Support Inclusion Saturday campaign in observance of National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. The new, grassroots initiative aims to celebrate stories like Cone Health’s and the companies that provide inclusion opportunities for people with I/DD.

Chrystal Austin, Joseph Champ Jr. and Jeff Fleming from HANDmeUPs Thrift store in Raleigh show their support for Inclusion Saturday.



Shabby Chic Consignment Boutique in Asheville created specialty baskets with arcBARKS dog treats and Reason to Bake cookies – also inclusive businesses in North Carolina.



We have a two-step program.
YOU COME HERE. WE HELP YOU.



“Similarly to initiatives like Small Business Saturday, the goal of Monarch’s Support Inclusion Saturday is to harness our collective power to foster understanding and dispel myths about developmental disabilities,” explained Dr. Peggy Terhune, president and chief executive officer at Monarch.

On March 25, 2017, residents were encouraged to shop or support the many brands, organizations and businesses across North Carolina that signed up to be part of the registry for Support Inclusion Saturday. These groups offer inclusive opportunities, especially inclusive hiring practices, to individuals with I/DD. But the real goal of the effort was to raise awareness about the importance of inclusion and how it benefits not only people with disabilities but all who are involved.

Salazar would agree that her and her team’s interaction with the young intern likely benefited them more than it affected the intern, who now not only makes stock bins, but puts away the morning order from the dock as well as materials management supplies that helps keep their department organized on busy days and allows the staff more time to provide quality care for their patients. She said he has advanced and is currently working on additional education to meet his desire to be successful and learn.

“We recognize the impact that he has made on our lives,” she said. “He has received many thank you notes and expressions of gratitude for his work from the staff in the Cath Lab and he displays them proudly as he presents them to his family.”

Among the list of organizations included on the Support Inclusion Saturday registry were the Children’s Theatre of Charlotte and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, which were among the first to join the campaign. The theatre offered a sensory friendly performance and the museum hosted two guided tactile tours on March 25.

On March 25, YMCA of Greater Charlotte held the first game of the 2017 season for its Miracle League, which gives children with physical and cognitive disabilities and children of all abilities the chance to play ball in a custom-designed baseball complex, Charlotte’s first completely wheelchair accessible surface. YMCA of Greater Charlotte, which operates 19 branches, hosted free visits on Support Inclusion Saturday, and was one of dozens of businesses and organizations across the state celebrated in March for providing inclusion opportunities for people with disabilities.

“Children’s Theatre of Charlotte is committed to making our programs accessible to everyone in our community, including people with special needs. Our Sensory Friendly Performances are an example of that commitment, and we will continue to look at ways to include – and celebrate – diversity of all types as we create and market our productions and classroom experiences,” said Rob Odum, associate director of marketing – audience development and partnerships.

“Encouraging people to support businesses or programs has helped to generate conversations and ultimately will help us to identify and create new volunteer or employment opportunities for people with disabilities,” Terhune said. “We want to thank all the people, organizations, groups, retailers, brands and businesses that helped to make the first year of Support Inclusion Saturday successful. We could not have pulled this off without your support and partnership!” ●



Sanford Mayor Chet Mann recognized Michelle Ibrahim, site coordinator and Lee/Harnett PSR program manager (pictured far left), as well as coordinators from other organizations as second in the nation out of 31 National Night Out sites.

Michelle Ibrahim, Lee PSR get key to the City of Sanford for National Night Out event

Each year, Michelle Ibrahim, program manager of Monarch's Lee and Harnett Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) programs, and the participants of the PSR in Sanford plan and host National Night Out (NNO), an event that promotes safety awareness, community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie.

The City of Sanford is home to 31 NNO events and has been recognized as second in the nation for its outstanding participation in 'America's Night Out Against Crime.' In early 2017, Ibrahim was among five people honored and recognized by the City of Sanford for its NNO efforts in Lee County in 2016 at a special awards ceremony.

National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood connections to make neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live. Neighborhoods across the nation host block parties, festivals, parades, cookouts and other various community events with safety demonstrations, seminars, and visits from emergency personnel.

Since 2012, the people supported at Monarch's Lee PSR have helped to plan and taken on active roles during the event, like distributing school supplies, and operating game and food stations. National Night Out brings everyone from police officers, fire fighters and other first responders, to local businesses and other organizations together for a night out that families and the community can enjoy.

"It gets them more involved in the community, kind of breaks down some of those fears they may have of being in the community," said Ibrahim, of how the event benefits the people supported at Lee PSR.

She said many of the children who attend the event each year look forward to seeing the PSR participants, making the event that much more enjoyable for everyone involved.

"I see a lot of change from the first year from the people we support who didn't want to run the games but are now like, 'Do I get to run that game again this year?' so it gives them more confidence and self-esteem to do things in their community with community members," said Ibrahim.

For 2017, Ibrahim is coordinating with the City of Sanford to expand the event with a pre-National Night Out gathering to bring the community to Monarch's Lee Psychosocial Rehabilitation for mental health awareness.

"Hopefully, it will bring more awareness and maybe, help build up the people we support and help break the stigma associated with mental illness," said Ibrahim. ●



Monarch, Cone Health Foundation's Co-Occurring Disorders Treatment Initiative makes significant progress supporting people with mental illness and substance use disorders simultaneously

In 2015, Monarch was awarded a three-year grant of \$194,500 from the Cone Health Foundation to implement treatment services for people living with dual diagnoses of mental illness and substance use disorders in Greensboro.

Research shows that as many as 50 percent of people with severe mental illness also live with a co-occurring substance use disorder, and the conditions are often intertwined.

Monarch is one of only four providers in Greensboro invited to participate in the Foundation's Co-Occurring Disorders Treatment Initiative. With this grant, Monarch is implementing the Integrated Dual Disorders Treatment (IDDT) evidence-based practice, which is specifically designed to treat both mental illness and substance use disorders simultaneously.

Now eighteen months into the pilot project, Monarch's clinical team in Greensboro is serving more than 140 people with dual diagnoses using the IDDT model, exceeding its goal for this point at the initiative by more than 40 percent.

"This project is an important step in increasing Monarch's ability to effectively integrate treatment and provide better care for people with dual diagnoses," said Robin Henderson-Wiley, vice president for operations – behavioral health at Monarch. "We are very pleased with our progress and are grateful for Cone Health Foundation's partnership."

Implementation of the IDDT model included enhancing Monarch's screening process to better assess for co-occurring disorders. Clinical staff were trained on the model and the elements of providing treatment in a more comprehensive way. In addition, the selection of group therapy options was expanded to better meet the needs of those with dual diagnoses.

Monarch's clinical leadership plans to take lessons learned from the implementation of IDDT in Greensboro and expand co-occurring disorder services to other clinical sites across the state. ●

Monarch Trailblazers again walk to support NAMI fundraiser



Monarch participants from NAMIWalks 2016 are all smiles. Monarch staff, people we support, and families and friends join NAMI North Carolina's effort to show support, raise awareness and battle the stigma associated with mental illness.

Dedicated Monarch staff members, people we support, and family and friends again joined this year to make up the Monarch Trailblazers team to walk a two-mile course with hundreds of others as part of the 2017 NAMIWalks NC event on May 6.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) hosts nearly 60 walks year around the U.S. to raise money and awareness about treatment and recovery for people with mental illness, and to support the NAMI's mission to foster awareness, education and advocacy for mental health issues.

"Monarch values the important work of NAMI and NAMI North Carolina in educating, advocating and supporting people with mental illness and their families and friends," said Monarch CEO Dr. Peggy Terhune, who serves on the NAMI NC board. "I'm excited for Monarch staff and people we support to lend our support." ●



Annual Dreams Take Flight golf tournament raises money to benefit Monarch programs

A Monarch tradition returned with the organization's ninth annual Dreams Take Flight Golf Tournament held in April at Tillery Tradition Country Club in Mt. Gilead. This year's tournament honored Bill Collier, a long-time Monarch volunteer, who was heavily involved in the tournament. Collier passed away last fall.

The tournament raises more than \$50,000 each year. Laurie Weaver, Monarch's senior director of philanthropy, coordinates this fundraiser and a second tournament held in New Bern in September. The proceeds raised from both events benefit the programs Monarch provides for the people it supports with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illness and substance use disorders.

"Support raised through this tournament is so important to the programs and services we provide," said Weaver. "Every spring, we have a good time for a great cause."

The tournament is also a chance for Weaver and others to share the mission of Monarch, how the funds are used from the tournament and to thank participants and volunteers for their support. Next year will mark 10 years since the tournament in Mt. Gilead began and celebratory plans are underway for the next tournament.

"The fundraiser started as a small community event, but has grown in the past few years. "Every year, we have a full field of 120 golfers," Weaver added.

The tournament also has enjoyed longtime support from corporate sponsors and local businesses. First Citizens Bank returned this year as the tournament's title sponsor.



Remembering a friend: Bill Collier (far left) and his team from the 2016 Dreams Take Flight Golf Tournament. Collier, a longtime Monarch supporter and golf tournament volunteer who passed away last fall, was honored during this year's fundraiser.

"We have numerous sponsors who support this event, and we are so grateful," Weaver said. "Their ongoing support is a big part of our tournament every year."

Monarch will again host its golf tournament in New Bern on Thursday, Sept. 14.

For details about Monarch's golf tournaments and how you can participate, contact Laurie Weaver at (704) 986-1536 or laurie.weaver@monarchnc.org.



Early detection saves lives: *Monarch hosts Community Mental Health Screenings*

Early detection. Early diagnosis. Early intervention. We hear it all the time and know the earlier a medical condition is found and accurately diagnosed, the earlier treatment can begin, and the better the eventual outcomes may be. "Early detection saves lives" is true for cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure and many other diseases. And it is also true for mental illness.

In 2016, Monarch was awarded a generous grant from the United Way of Stanly County to conduct free, confidential, anonymous mental health screenings in the community. Throughout the year, Judith Chappell, MA, LCAS, LPC, CSI, CSOTS, clinical operations manager and therapist at Monarch's Albemarle behavioral health office, led a team of therapists who screened more than 165 individuals at special screening events at the YMCA, Stanly County Community College, Pfeiffer University and at local churches and community events.

"These quick screenings provide community members a chance to learn more about symptoms they may be experiencing," Chappell says. "And as we talk with them about the results, we are able to share information about the variety of community mental health resources available to them."

The screening events also include a variety of educational materials about mental health and wellness, which are available regardless of whether a person is screened. Sharing this



Judith Chappell, clinical operations manager and therapist in Monarch's Albemarle behavioral health office, offers mental wellness screenings at the Stanly County Family YMCA. These series of screenings are made possible by the generosity of the United Way of Stanly County.

information and inviting questions and discussion are important steps in reducing the stigma often associated with mental illness.

Monarch's community mental health screenings will continue in Stanly County in 2017.

May is Mental Health Month across the United States, encouraging conversation and education about mental health and wellness. Support and recovery are possible for people who live with mental illness. Early detection is critical and information on the many resources Monarch has available across North Carolina can be found at MonarchNC.org. ●

● Find us on





Dave & Colleen Zoubek, Kill Devil Hills, NC

Why I Support Monarch

Dave Zoubek and his wife, Colleen, are connected to Monarch in several ways. Colleen serves as the Community Engagement Team Leader for Monarch's programs on the Outer Banks. As Dave learned more about her work and the people we support, he became a loyal Monarch supporter, making a donation to Monarch through his local United Way workplace campaign.

How did you hear about Monarch? My wife started working for Monarch in 2011. She has been working in the field for about 20 years and I have met some pretty awesome folks over the years, but certain folks from the Lighthouse Club have made a lasting impression.

One Friday, Colleen was with the group from the Lighthouse Club at the bowling alley. I stopped in to get something from her. I was wearing a John Deere sweatshirt and this older man named Ray walked up to me wearing a John Deere coat and hat. We started talking about tractors. We probably talked for 15 minutes. I was struck by the fact that here was this guy that I had never met before, but there we were just two guys talking about tractors. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to Ray and we have been talking about John Deere tractors ever since.

What moved you about Monarch? The people [Monarch supports]. They are always happy to see you. They are always out in the community doing things. I work for the power company so we have very distinctive trucks. My wife [Colleen] will come home and say "Hey, the guys said they saw you today and waved." It generally isn't me, but they get so excited about the fact that they have seen someone they know and I love the fact they are thinking about me.

Why do you donate to Monarch? Because of the people that I have met. I just want to give something back to them and maybe they can spend the money to do something fun or to buy something that they want instead of need.



Monarch peer support director now certified to teach others to serve as peer support specialists

Monarch now offers training to certify peer support specialists. Brandon Tankersley, peer support director at Monarch, is now qualified to teach certified peer support specialist classes in North Carolina, expanding the company's ability to develop qualified personnel to work in areas where there may be a shortage of these unique employees.

A peer support specialist is a person living in recovery with a mental illness and/or substance use disorder who can provide support to others who, hopefully, benefit from their lived experiences. The N.C. Psychological Association views peer support as an important component to mental health and substance use recovery.

"A good peer support specialist has traveled a path similarly to the person they serve and fosters hope for recovery by modeling that reality," Tankersley said.

Tankersley completed training earlier this year through the Cardinal Innovations Healthcare's peer support specialist facilitation curriculum and already has conducted his first 40-hour class. The former public school teacher's new training and experience as an educator serves him well; the 11 students in his first class all passed their state exam with a score of 90 percent or above.

Teaching others also helps him keep his own skills sharp, Tankersley said. Research shows that peer learning activities have positive effects on both teacher and student, creating a team-building spirit, more supportive relationships, greater psychological well-being, communication skills, self-esteem, higher achievement and greater productivity.

Tankersley will conduct at least two N.C. Certified Peer Support Specialist trainings per year, with classes held in different locations around the state. He also will teach classes during the year at specific Monarch sites where certified peer support specialists are needed.

For more about Monarch's peer support specialist trainings, call (866) 272-7826 or email Tankersley at brandon.tankersley@monarchnc.org.

What motivates you to stay involved?

Again, it is the people. They never forget you. I recently ran into someone who used to attend the Lighthouse Club and now works at McDonald's. I hadn't seen him for a very long time, but when he finally realized who I was he got this huge grin on his face and said "DAVE!!!" and gave me a hug. That made my entire weekend.

In your opinion, what is the most important work that Monarch does?

Taking care of the wants and needs of the people that Monarch provides services to. Helping them get out in the community and have happy lives.

What can you share with other members of the Monarch family regarding your experience donating?

It is a great feeling for a great cause.

What would you say to other Monarch friends who are considering supporting the organization through advocacy, volunteerism and/or financially? Do it.

It is such a worthwhile cause and experience, because you get to hang out with some of the coolest people you will ever meet. ●

As told to Adina Blake, Philanthropy Services Manager

Photo by Biff Jennings, Shooters at the Beach, Inc. Photography



PENCE PLACE:

Pence Place residents (left to right):
Erik, Parker, Evan and Jessica.



A Loving Home for Children to Thrive

*By Nathalie Santa Maria
Photos by Bert Vanderveen*

Pence Place is an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) and Monarch's only children's home that specializes in treating the most medically fragile young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities under the age of 18. Located in Richmond County, it is home to nine residents from all over North Carolina and has 24-hour onsite staff who stay awake and available for the children.



Moriah Crank, residential developmental specialist, searches through coloring sheets for Evan.



Parker is always eager to go outside and play after getting home from school.

Two cardinals chirped from the trees that line the front lawn of Monarch's Pence Place on a warm afternoon. The school bus pulled up at its usual time shortly after 2:30 p.m. and soon after, Jessica, an outgoing 16-year-old resident, yelled "Michelle!" It was Michelle Wright's first day back after being away for a couple weeks and Jessica's excitement for her return was palpable. Wright, Pence Place's nursing supervisor, hugged Jessica before she rolled her wheelchair into the house.

The entire snack time area was bustling that afternoon. As Jessica and Wright caught up, Erik, a 15-year-old resident enjoyed his chocolate pudding, and Evan, also 15, opened his favorite bag of cheesy Doritos.

Colorful owl decals and frames with inspirational quotes about family decorate the walls throughout the particularly happy home. Seven of the nine residents had a wonderful day at school, and the two youngest residents, six-month-old twins, made great strides in physical therapy that day, too.

A generally good day is more than an ordinary feat for Monarch's most medically fragile children, because it took a combination of teamwork, encouragement and a safe environment to get there.

Beth Tyler, who grew up in the house directly behind Pence Place, is the now the residential team leader at the facility.



Cathy Bannerman, licensed practical nurse, loves spending quality time with Timothy.



Jessica and Michelle Wright, nursing supervisor, catch up after school.

"We are at capacity with nine residents, and they are all nothing short of amazing. We work closely with all the children to ensure they meet whatever goals they set throughout the year, be it eating better, being less afraid of bath time, or walking up or down stairs independently," Tyler explained.

Tyler's face smiles when she's asked about the residents. She said, "Jessica is extremely vibrant and you'd never know that she can't physically see. Sometimes I don't say a word and she will recognize it's me by the sound of my footsteps or the smell of my perfume. She is always the first to greet me in the morning."

And vibrant, she is. When Jessica was asked what her favorite thing about living at Pence Place was, she lit up and without any hesitation said, "Everybody is my favorite," and then rattled off a list of staff and residents' names. She quickly carried on singing Beyoncé on the new karaoke machine in the living room, one of her favorite afternoon activities.

Parker, an 11-year-old resident, reappeared after snack time having changed into a bright blue shirt and orange basketball shorts. He sticks to his schedule and was eager to play outside now that the winter weather was finally letting up. As he exited down the hallway, he called on Evan to join him and the two boys enjoyed a one-on-one basketball match outside.

"I read this somewhere years ago and it always stuck with me – 'When we come to work, we have the power to make a child's day terrific or horrific' and terrific has always been my goal," recalled Cathy Bannerman, who has worked at Pence Place for nearly 10 years as one of Pence Place's on-staff nurses.

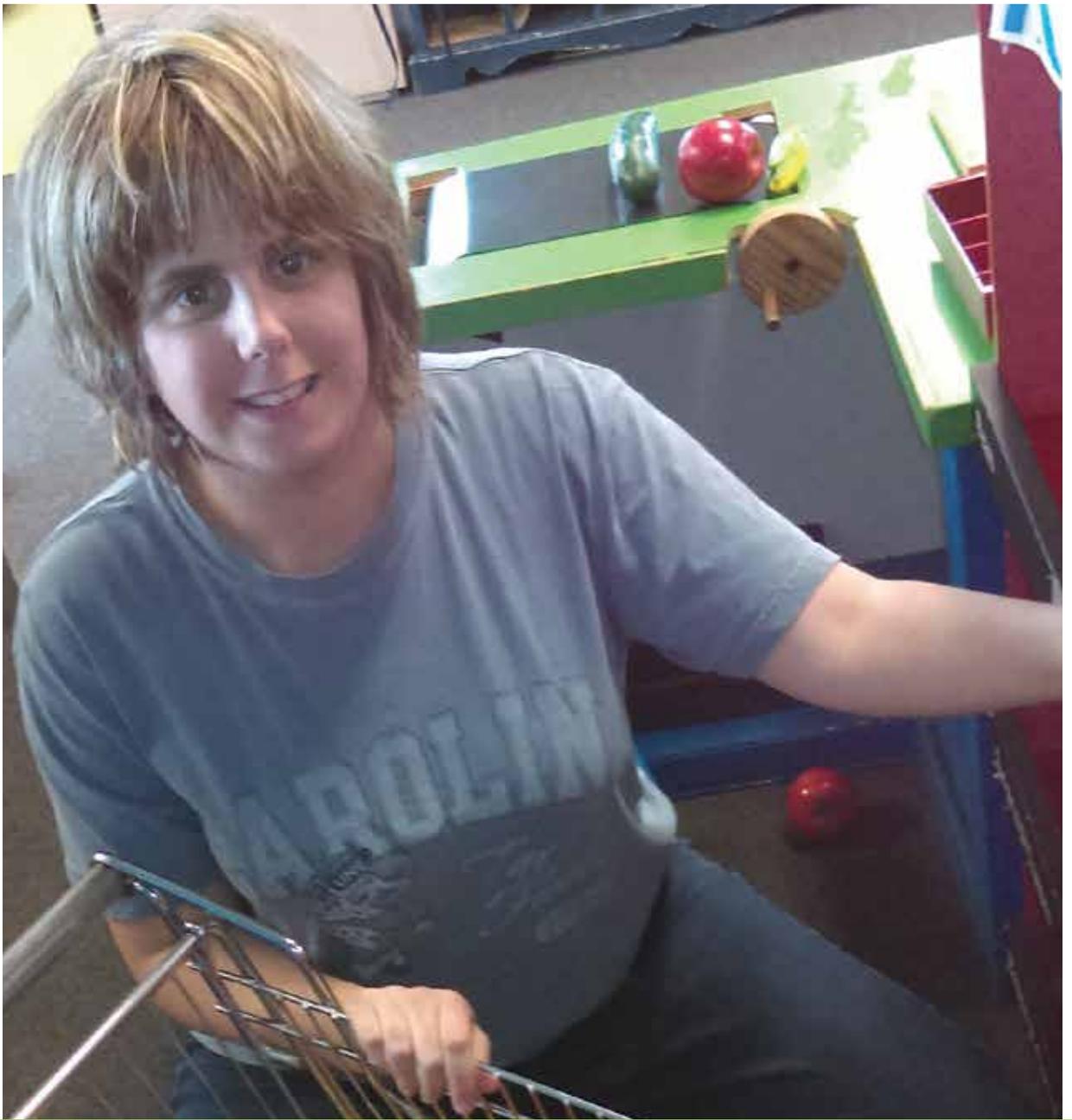
She said this as she held Timothy's hand, a 14-year-old resident and the most medically fragile of the group. She added, "I always want to let him know I'm here even though he can't see me. It's why I hold his hand so he knows it's me. [I want him to know] That he's safe."

That kindness has built a level of trust between Bannerman and Timothy since he arrived at Pence Place two years ago. When she sweetly asked Timothy to smile, he eagerly obliged.

Stability, freedom of choice and an abundance of love have proven effective at helping reach goals like weight management, mastering new motor-skills and graduating high school. But most importantly, all nine residents have a team of more than 35 Monarch staff members who continuously cheer them on along the way.

"Pence Place is about the love you get, not just about the love you give," Bannerman said. "Seeing our children reach new milestones is an amazing feeling and every single one is celebrated here." ●

Nathalie Santa Maria is Monarch's Communications Manager



‘TUESDAYS TOGETHER’

helps people with disabilities in the
Outer Banks share their creativity
and talents with young children



An exciting partnership that gives the women at Monarch's Beach Club and Lighthouse Clubs in the Outer Banks an opportunity to give back to their community, continued in 2017 at the Children @ Play Museum during 'Tuesdays Together.'

The outreach program brings preschool children from the Lil' Barefoot Academy in Kill Devil Hills to the Children @ Play Museum of the Outer Banks on the fourth Tuesday of each month, September through May. The program brings together young children and women with intellectual disabilities, to create art and enjoy other playtime activities facilitated by museum coordinators.

The activities help the children, and their parents, generate positive interactions and feelings about people with disabilities by emphasizing their abilities.

"The people we support look forward to spending time with the children and helping them learn new things. This partnership also gives the kids and their parents an opportunity to meet someone with an intellectual and/or developmental disability. They learn that we are alike in so many ways, instead of seen as different," said Colleen Zoubek, community engagement team leader at Monarch.

Alyssa Hannon, president of the Children @ Play Museum, co-founded the program in 2012 after receiving a grant from the Outer Banks Community Foundation. Hannon said 'Tuesdays Together' has been so worthwhile the museum has continued to support it.

"The group that comes from Monarch is such a neat and engaging group of individuals, and I just really enjoyed getting to know all of them," said Hannon.

Hannon is also a special education teacher at First Flight Middle School in Kill Devil Hills, a move she made since becoming president of the museum. She said one day she hopes to see her students also volunteering.

River City Achievement Club and the Heritage Club are two more programs in the area that have connected to young people in the community for many years. The programs participate in everything from hosting a homerun derby, volunteering at daycares and for Backpack Meals, where backpacks are filled with non-perishable food that are sent home with children in need.

"This partnership gives the kids and their parents an opportunity to meet someone with an intellectual and/or developmental disability. They learn that we are alike in so many ways, instead of seen as different."

— Colleen Zoubek

"'Tuesdays Together' gives kids the opportunity to get into the museum and learn. The other part is community education. Lots of people don't know what we do, or may not know someone who has a developmental disability. It lets these kids know that we're all people, and it takes that stigma away. As these kids grow up, they will have known people with disabilities and just see them as everyday people," said Amy Chavis, director of program operations overseeing Monarch's day programs in eastern North Carolina.

Museum organizers and Monarch participants are equally excited for the program to continue and looking forward to the possibility of another 'Tuesdays Together' program this fall. ●

By Sarah Pisciueneri, Senior Communications Specialist



Kristin Gavoni and Carolina Parks always enjoy their time volunteering with children at the Outer Banks Children @ Play Museum.



Christine Mroz is all smiles when spending time with children at 'Tuesdays Together.'

Pictured left: Emily McCoy is one of several volunteers who participate in 'Tuesdays Together', a program that brings children and people from Monarch Beach Club together at the Outer Banks Children @ Play Museum.



Pictured (l-r): Kim Howard is preparing a move from Monarch's transitional housing to a permanent living situation, and Cherie Smith, a residential team leader at Monarch, helped Kim to find the resources she needs to be successful.

STARTING OVER: *Kim Howard, continued from page 1*

Howard's determination brought her to Monarch, and has kept her moving forward despite setbacks in her recovery. One of those setbacks came when she was diagnosed with diabetes. It was disappointing and a challenge at first, but staying vigilant about her diet and exercise has drastically improved her health. She has even gotten reacquainted with her with her love of cooking.

"Now she's not taking any medication for her diabetes because she walks and exercises," Smith said and Howard has taken up other hobbies, between speech therapy and doctors' visits, to keep herself sharp.

"With a brain injury, if you don't use it, you lose it. I stay focused, I try to read, my house is full of things to remind me daily of my blessings," said Howard. One of those things is a mask Howard created in a Monarch art therapy class. She said the mask represents the 'old Kim.'

"That's the mask that I shed to let everybody know, this is me now. But guess what, I changed for the better," said Howard.

"She's very positive, even with just one more thing happening, that's an additional struggle she had, but she didn't allow that to stop her. She's a survivor," said Smith.

Howard is a survivor — of her accident and of life's challenges prior to it. She carried the weight of an abusive childhood, being forced to support her family as a teenager, using marijuana and alcohol as a form of escape at age 14, and surviving ovarian cancer at 19. Despite it all, she graduated from high school with honors. And while retelling and reliving her story is tough, it has aided her in her recovery.

"When we talk about recovery, one day at a time, everybody's life is one day at a time," said Smith. "Kim's whole life has changed, but she's adapted and she's adjusted and readjusted her goals to fit into where her life is now."

Howard will soon move to permanent housing and is also working on becoming an advocate, building her own business and reconnecting with her family. And although her journey has not been without tears, those tears are now often tears of joy.

"It changed my life, I thought, for the worse. But even up until now, it's changed my life for the better because it took me outside of who I thought I was and showed me who I really am," said Howard.

To read more about Kim Howard's incredible recovery journey, visit www.MonarchNC.org. ●

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350 Pee Dee Avenue, Suite A
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MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

One in five Americans lives with a mental health condition. Do you know what mental illness feels like? We often hear the clinical terms used by doctors and other professionals to identify the symptoms of mental illnesses...but if someone hasn't gone through it, would they know how to recognize it? Life with a mental illness isn't the same for everybody, so we need to take this opportunity to educate ourselves and others.

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