

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

**COVID-19: FIND OUT HOW  
TECHNOLOGY, SAFEGUARDS AND  
COURAGE HELPED MONARCH  
FACE THE PANDEMIC**

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# Reaching Dreams



**PEER BRIDGER PROGRAM  
SMOOTHS TRANSITION AFTER  
HOSPITAL STAY, CONNECTS  
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**Monarch**

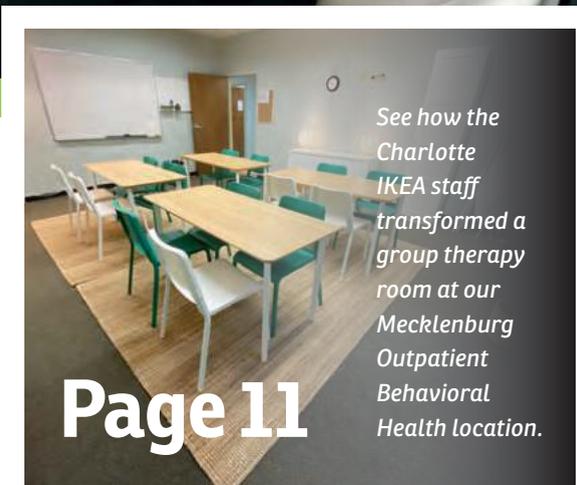
A MONARCH PUBLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY, PEOPLE WE SUPPORT AND THEIR FAMILIES

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*On the cover: Peer Support Specialist Michelle Heatley mentors person supported Brittany Nabinett.*

## Connect with Monarch



**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.

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## STRAIGHT FROM PEGGY



Summer typically brings warm weather, a carefree sense of enjoying life and making the most of our free time. What we consider everyday, routine life continues to change because of COVID-19

and the restrictions the pandemic has imposed.

It is my hope that when you receive this issue of Monarch's Reaching Dreams that you and your family are safe, healthy and doing well.

The past few months have been difficult for everyone. The murder of George Floyd and the videos of police responses to the marches have raised issues our country has refused to face before. Many people are struggling with their own histories of experiencing discrimination.

The constant news about COVID-19 and the upticks in hospitalizations for positive test results have also created a time in history unlike any other. According to Fortune Magazine as reported about data collected by John Hopkins University, the number of deaths from COVID-19 in our country has now surpassed the number of American lives lost during World War I. All of this has raised many emotions, prompted fears and launched changes. It appears the pandemic will continue to change our lives for several years to come.

I would like to think there is a silver lining in spite of the circumstances that we have endured. It would be how COVID-19 difficulties have propelled mental health to the forefront of national and international discussions. Regarding whole-person care, many who weren't convinced before now realize that being mentally healthy is equally as important as physical health.

Before and during the pandemic, the health and safety of the people we support and our staff have remained our first priority. In recent months, our Medical Incident Command and

Infection Control teams worked continuously to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place at our outpatient behavioral health locations, group homes, supported living residences and day programs.

This *Reaching Dreams* issue not only provides a look at how we are weathering the pandemic, but at our services, staff, people we support and donors. On page 2, you will meet two people we support who achieved their professional goals through our Individual Placement and Support (IPS) teams. Their guidance has helped many individuals overcome barriers to secure and maintain employment that are often faced by people diagnosed with a mental illness.

On page 5, you will read how outpatient behavioral health locations rely on telehealth services to continue providing care and what the future holds for providing services in new ways. You will also meet one of our frontline heroes, Behavioral Specialist Monica Love. She selflessly took on the responsibility of caring for people we support who had contracted COVID-19.

On page 8, we introduce you to Michelle Heatley a peer support specialist through the Peer Bridger program. Peer Bridger links individuals following a psychiatric hospital stay with available mental health assistance and community resources. Michelle incorporates her honesty, passion for serving others and experiences from her personal mental health journey into her counsel.

As we think about all that the future may hold, I am reminded that Monarch is resilient. We are accustomed to change and will overcome this pandemic together. Thank you to the people we support and their families for your patience and understanding. Most of all, thank you to our staff from providers, nurse practitioners, administrative support to direct support professionals, who bravely took on the role of frontline heroes.

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

## Individual Placement and Support Services Help People Thrive Through Employment

Monarch's Individual Placement and Support (IPS) teams work hard to help people find jobs and acquire the tools needed to maintain employment. In securing employment, IPS teams assist people we support to overcome barriers such as a severe mental illness diagnosis, homelessness or a substance use disorder.

Vice President of Enhanced Services Shannon Atkinson enjoys being witness to the transformation of the people we support upon receiving assistance from the IPS staff. IPS staff work with people we support on developing essential job search skills such as strengthening resumes, improving interview skills and applying for employment. If needed, candidates can be linked to key resources within their communities for housing and food assistance.

"In many situations, this guiding hand in the details of searching for employment and help with overcoming barriers is all that is needed," Atkinson said of the IPS program, an enhanced service under the umbrella of Monarch's behavioral health services that operates out of Cleveland, Forsyth, Guilford, Nash, Robeson, Stanly and Wake counties with some teams covering neighboring areas.

During the first half of the 2019-20 fiscal year, Monarch IPS teams provided services to 471 individuals who identified a goal of obtaining and maintaining employment.

Here are two examples of the life-changing services that Monarch IPS teams provide.



### JOHN CRANKFIELD: FROM HOMELESS TO HOPEFUL

John Crankfield, 52, once homeless, has come to realize that the best part of life is found in the little things: "I am thankful for every day." In 2007, he moved from Florida to Winston-Salem to be closer to his sister, hoping for a better life and to more successfully handle depressive symptoms.

Crankfield received IPS services and support from a team that included Reina Williams-Talley, an employment peer mentor, along with an employment support professional. Crankfield, working at Dollar

General for over one year as a cashier/associate, is thriving in an environment where he works with customers.

Today, Crankfield resides in a furnished apartment and is enrolled in business administration courses at Forsyth Technical Community College. "I am grateful for the journey from where I was to where I am now. There is nothing wrong with asking for help when you need it. And, even if life knocks you down, you have to be motivated to get back up again," he said. ●



### MARISSA BULLARD: HARD WORK HELPS REACH GOALS

Marissa Bullard, 28, has difficulty maintaining employment due to a bipolar depression diagnosis. Skills she learned through working with the IPS staff in Robeson County are helping her find ways to lessen the symptoms of her diagnosis while utilizing ways to maintain employment.

Currently working two jobs for a combined weekly total of over 40 hours, Bullard is a server at Wesley Pines Retirement Community assisting residents during meals and she is a seasonal garden specialist with retailer Lowe's. She is also studying to earn her

pharmaceutical technician certificate.

Her Employment Support Professional Dawn McNeill, aware of her anxiety about unfamiliar work environments, took Bullard on a tour of area pharmacies. "Seeing what a pharmacy technician's role is within the team gave me motivation to continue studying for my certificate," Bullard noted, adding that she has seen changes in herself and feels more self-assured when talking to others in a work setting.

McNeill has great confidence in Bullard's drive to exceed goals and her sense of humbleness. "She has more strength than she realizes," McNeill said. ●

182 individuals were employed  
during the second quarter of the 2019-2020 fiscal year, 78  
beginning a job with a new employer.

# FACES OF MONARCH



*Peggy visiting Studio 651 in Winston-Salem with Zach Kelly, center, and Developmental Specialist Sean Hawkins; accepting a Moving Mountains Award from the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals on behalf of Monarch; and celebrating our 60th anniversary with former Board Member and parent Nancy Smoak.*

## President and CEO Dr. Peggy Terhune Celebrates 25 Years at Monarch

*Read her reflections on a 25-year career of service that has shaped Monarch, what compassionate care means to her and what the future might hold.*

first job as an executive director, and I was so excited for the opportunity to do things right!

### WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST MONARCH MOMENT?

That's really hard! There have been so many proud moments. I am proud of our growth, but more proud of the reasons behind it – that we are providing support to people who need us. Honestly, the things that mean the most to me are the phone calls or notes from families telling me they never had the support they needed until they found Monarch. It is extraordinary to know that we are impacting lives every day. I'm also so proud of our staff. They are a remarkable group of people and I am inspired by the stories of why they love working for Monarch and what motivates them every day. I'm also proud that they email me when frustrated, and I can often solve whatever challenge they've had. It often changes how we do things, and I love that staff have that input!

### WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU THE MOST OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS?

We work in an industry where there is always something new or that we've not seen before on the horizon. Every single day is different. And just when I think we have seen it all, something will arise for a person we support or an operational issue will present itself and I am surprised all over again.

### WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MONARCH IN ANOTHER 25 YEARS?

In 25 years, I hope that Monarch will still be led by a person who truly listens to people and families. I hope Monarch will continue to provide services through state-of-the-art, evidence-based practices that put people first. I envision we will continue to be connected to many other community agencies, hospitals, and providers in a true, whole-person health care system that shares information to provide better services. And I hope we will continue to grow, serving people in multiple states and through new and innovative services we can't even imagine today. ●

### WHAT DREW YOU TO MONARCH 25 YEARS AGO?

At the time, we had moved to Matthews where I'd taken a job as the rehabilitation director for a nursing home. I realized pretty quickly that the organization's philosophy of care didn't match mine and I knew I'd made a mistake. We had just joined a new church and I went on a retreat that changed my life. During it, as I was taking a beautiful walk alone outside, I realized that God wanted me somewhere else. When I got home, I updated my resume and sent it anywhere I was qualified to work with an occupational therapy degree and a Master of Business Administration. In 1995, I was invited to interview with Monarch (then Arc Services), and the rest is history. The board members and families I met as I interviewed showed me that Monarch was a truly caring place. To that point, I'd worked for a variety of organizations and for people who either seemed to understand the organization's mission, but did not know how to run a business, or the opposite. I wanted to do things differently and this was my



**ONLINE EXTRA:** Visit [www.MonarchNC.org/peggycelebrates25](http://www.MonarchNC.org/peggycelebrates25), to hear Peggy share the story of one Monarch family whose own journey with Monarch stays with her today.



**PEGGY WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!** Take a moment and send your 25th anniversary good wishes to [pr@monarchnc.org](mailto:pr@monarchnc.org).



## HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE:

*Spencer Home's Mark Tomasik Proud of Musical Gift*

*"Music makes me feel like I am worth something and I am on top of the world when I am playing."*

— MARK TOMASIK

*Photo: Spencer Home resident Mark Tomasik practices on his piano at the residence.*

Spencer Home resident Mark Tomasik's affinity for music became evident when he was a toddler. He wrote the correct musical notes on the keys of a toy piano to help him learn to play.

While growing up, his family fostered his budding talent. A musician was born.

Tomasik, 41, brings melodious sounds to Monarch's Spencer Home located in New Bern, a Group Moderate Living home focusing on the mental health needs of its residents. In his room, near the window, he has an electric piano that he plays.

At 4 years of age, he mastered the violin. He studied the piano at 6 years old and moved on to the organ at the age of 9. "As soon as my feet could reach the organ pedals, I was playing," he remembered.

While growing up in Whitesboro, New York, a local pastor was impressed by Tomasik's musical talent, so much so, he paid for his organ lessons through his teenage years in exchange for him playing the organ and conducting the choir at the church. Tomasik obliged and continue to perfect his musical talents.

In 1995, his family moved to North Carolina, making their new home in Cherry Point. After graduating from high school, Tomasik applied, auditioned and was accepted into the Appalachian State University's Mariam Cannon Hayes School of Music on a full scholarship.

Graduating summa cum laude and valedictorian of his class, Tomasik proudly recalls performing his hour-and-a-half-long senior recital from memory. He gives credit to a piano teacher who taught him as a young boy how to memorize music. After graduation, he worked at a church in Boone, North Carolina, where he served as organist and choir director, before leaving in 2015.

As a young adult, Tomasik suffered a traumatic brain injury following a fall and hitting his head. As a result of the accident, he experiences short-term memory loss. In addition, he was diagnosed as having bipolar disorder.

During the summer of 2018, Tomasik became a resident of Spencer Home. Tomasik continues to improve on his musical skills by practicing once a week using the organ at St. Paul's Catholic Church in New Bern. He also began giving organ recitals at the church.

"It is my therapy and my life. It is hard work playing," he said of his passion, confiding that singing and playing the organ are his favorites. "I have to focus when I play the organ. It calms my mind. It helps me focus on one thing at a time and take things a little bit slower."

He strives to perfect his talents through practicing and studying music: "I try to challenge myself. That is the only way to continue to make myself better. I want to get better."

Why is music special to Tomasik? "Music makes me feel like I am worth something and I am on top of the world when I am playing," he said, adding that receiving a standing ovation from his audience following a performance means a lot to him.

Tomasik has had several pieces of his musical arrangements published, in addition to musical theses.

Residential Manager Carolyn Boggan said Tomasik has adapted well to the group. He enjoys the routine of household tasks, attending a local day program during the week and outings with his housemates.

Staff and fellow residents appreciate Tomasik's sunny disposition. "Every day is a good day. I like to say I am in a permanently good mood," he said with a laugh. ●

## Monarch Faces Pandemic Challenges with Technology, Safeguards and **COURAGE**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the health and safety of the more than 30,000 people we support and 1,800 staff members were paramount. Local, state and national guidelines were followed throughout the pandemic and critical operational changes were implemented to reduce the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus.

Emerging stories over the past few months are testimony to Monarch employees' courage, compassion and resiliency. Their flexibility and willingness to adapt to the changing pandemic landscape show that people supported are at the heart of Monarch's mission.



Earlier this year, Behavioral Specialist Monica Love cared for a person supported who had contracted COVID-19.

**BEHAVIORAL SPECIALIST MONICA LOVE IS A FRONTLINE HERO.** *Our mental health care providers, nurses and administrative employees and long-term services and support staff have been the backbone of Monarch during COVID-19.*

**Behavioral Specialist** Monica Love celebrated her birthday on April 2 and it is sure to be a memorable one. She spent her special day quarantined for over two weeks caring for a person Monarch supports.

Love, who has worked in the mental health field as a behavioral specialist for over 22 years, has supported a husband and wife at a Monarch apartment for for 11 years. They require a supported living environment due to behavioral health diagnoses. The husband contracted the coronavirus in late March after initially being diagnosed with pneumonia.

Love realized that continuity of care would benefit both during recuperation: "I decided that it would be best having worked with them for 11 years. I know the couple well and how they are when they are sick, not feeling well and how they express themselves."

During the quarantine, the husband and wife stayed in separate rooms with Monarch processes and protocols carefully followed with the use of personal protection equipment. Love reported that he has recovered from the coronavirus and is doing well.

Love said that she considers the couple like her family and treats them as she would her own. "Their family thanked me and said what a big help it was in making sure their loved ones were safe. I got a lot of thanks from a lot of people" she noted. ●



Medical Director Dr. Robert McHale demonstrates how Monarch's telehealth process works during an open house at the Bellemeade outpatient behavioral health site in Greensboro.

**MONARCH'S PRIVATE, SAFE TELEHEALTH OPTION WAS IN PLACE AND READY DURING COVID-19.** *COVID-19 pushed the telehealth option for physical and mental health care into the limelight. Monarch was ready with virtual videoconferencing in place for people receiving outpatient mental health services.*

**Monarch initially** implemented the telehealth option eight years ago at its outpatient behavioral health locations. It continues to play a significant role in delivering services during the pandemic,

when on-site services are limited.

Telehealth services have proven to be a reliable, safe and easy-to-use alternative to face-to-face care. Monarch uses the Doxy.me videoconferencing software enabling the provider and the person supported, with internet access, to talk via personal device such as a laptop, desktop computer, tablet or smartphone.

Desiree Matthews, PMHNP-BC, a nurse practitioner in Monarch's Mecklenburg behavioral health outpatient office, has provided digital mental health resources in her virtual waiting room for individuals she supports. She also posted a video providing guidelines on how to best communicate during the telehealth session, when patients may be discussing sensitive information related to any behavioral or physical side effects experienced from medication.

Prior to an appointment, health care providers share a link with the person supported, which leads them directly to the provider's "virtual waiting room" and to their scheduled appointment. The Doxy.me system safeguards privacy and adheres to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) standards and conveniently there is no additional app to download.

Matthews agrees that the transition to telehealth has been simple and with positive outcomes.

"I want the people we support to be relaxed and comfortable with telehealth. Telehealth alleviates a number of barriers to care and provides the opportunity to see their provider from the comfort of their own home," she observed.

The person supported can complete their visit from any location they choose, since telehealth visits do not require travel to a physical location. Patients have shared positive feedback with Matthews, noting that they appreciate not having to travel for appointments and the freedom to complete their visit from virtually anywhere. ●

## CCBHC Awarded \$3.9M Federal Grant to Strengthen, Expand Services

Monarch was awarded an additional two-year, \$3.9 million grant to continue support of our Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) in Stanly County. The Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) allocated the funding to expand vital services for people with serious mental illness and substance use disorders.

Funding for this grant is provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and will continue through April 2022. "We know that in the wake of COVID-19, the mental health needs of our communities will only increase. This funding will ensure we can respond with comprehensive mental health care and substance use disorder services for people who need it most," said President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Peggy Terhune.

The CCBHC model provides a comprehensive behavioral health care framework that directly impacts the lives of people with mental illness and substance use disorders. As a result of this new award, Monarch's plans for continued expansion of services include:



- Support for patients immediately following mental health-related hospitalizations and emergency department visits.
- Occupational therapy services to enhance treatment outcomes.
- A community-based peer recovery center.
- Additional services to treat co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders.
- Screening for HIV and Hepatitis A, B and C.
- Increased community education and outreach on mental health and substance use disorders.

Over the next two years, it is estimated that more than 2,000 adults and children with serious mental illness, emotional disturbance, long-term chronic addiction, mild or moderate mental illness and substance use disorders, as well as physical health conditions will be served through the CCBHC, located within the behavioral health outpatient office in Albemarle. ●

## Club Horizon Earns Updated Accreditation through National Organization



Club Horizon, a psychosocial rehabilitation (PSR) program where people we support learn day-to-day skills, strengthen their independence and form friendships, earned renewed accreditation through 2022 from Clubhouse International, the governing organization for this type of PSR.

Clubhouse is a multi-national model of rehabilitation that promotes recovery, full community integration and improved quality of life for persons who have mental health conditions that seriously impair functioning. Club Horizon Program Director Tabatha Moore, LCSW-A, LCAS-A, explained that the Clubhouse International organization rated the Monarch

PSR program in a variety of areas which included clubhouse standards / meeting the needs of members; advisory board compilation; and as a transitional employment program.

"We are thrilled that Clubhouse International extended accreditation renewal. Our staff and people we support worked diligently to expand and achieve the conditions needed to earn the renewed status. We will proudly display and promote the international symbol," Moore said.

Moore noted that in the coming year, Club Horizon will work to expand the advisory board to include members of the local professional and business community. ●

## Behavioral Health Urgent Care Builds Partnerships During First Year



Monarch's Behavioral Health Urgent Care (BHUC), located in Raleigh, celebrated the completion of its inaugural year and becoming a vital, Wake County resource providing crisis mental health services to individuals in need.

The BHUC offers same-day care with no appointment to provide assessment, stabilization and psychiatric intervention for individuals aged four and older experiencing mental health or substance use disorder crises.

During an individual's visit, the BHUC medical staff evaluates the reason treatment is sought and what preventative measures, and links to resources, can be established to prevent seeking repeated medical assistance, as well as including family members in the healing process. "We are trying to be the glue that puts the pieces back together," explained BHUC Practice Administrator Brian Maxey.

To identify and best meet the needs of the communities it serves, the BHUC engages with key community partners such as health care agencies and first responders. Future BHUC plans include strengthening and developing new collaborations with local hospitals, emergency departments and psychiatric hospitals, as well as community providers, including primary care services. ●

*BHUC staff members are ready to support people seeking behavioral health services during the COVID-19 pandemic: (left to right) Amber Remington, Charisse Fullwood, Robin Trivette, Shannon Hinton and Douglas Cox.*

### IPS TEAM INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN BOSTON UNIVERSITY STUDY

Monarch's Individual Placement and Support (IPS) team in Cleveland County has been invited to participate in a research project with Boston University in Massachusetts. The program's maintenance of a high level of program fidelity was a significant reason university officials sought input and information from the Monarch Enhanced Services team.

The study is funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) and will look at the barriers that impact people with mental illness and the opportunities to receive IPS employment services. During 2020, interviews will be conducted with our staff, the people we support and their families. ●

## SECU Youth Crisis Center Celebrates Second Anniversary



The State Employees' Credit Union Youth Crisis Center (SECU YCC), a Monarch program, celebrated its two-year anniversary and staff could not be prouder of the more than 1,000 youth, and their families, who are thriving after receiving critical mental health services.

The YCC formed thanks to a partnership with Cardinal Innovations Healthcare, as well as state and federal

officials, the state's general assembly and community partners. The SECU Foundation generously provided a one-time grant. Today, children ages 6 through 17 have access to a facility offering timely, age-appropriate mental health care.

**Since opening in late 2017, the SECU YCC has provided crisis mental health services for over 1,000 youth in Mecklenburg County and surrounding areas.**

As youth mental health issues change across generations, Associate Medical Director Dr. Jacqueline Smith said the YCC will find ways to assist with trending issues such as the impact of social media; sleep issues; gender identity and sexual preference; and, dealing with grief due to the death of a loved one.

Dr. Smith said the YCC will continue to see how youth crisis services best fit within the community: "We are guided by doing what is best and appropriate for the youth that we serve . . . What does that child need to be successful outside of these walls? What resources are available to that family?" ●

**Monarch's Peer Bridger program assists with the transition of individuals from inpatient psychiatric units back to the community and their everyday lives. The program aims to ensure that the people we support are engaging in treatment that will help them on their journey to healing and living mentally healthy.**

Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinician Kenzie Elmore, LCSW, described the program as a connection between mental health crisis stabilization and outpatient providers and resources. "The ultimate goal of the Peer Bridger program is to bridge that gap for individuals leaving the hospital setting and returning to their home because it can be an intense time," she said.

Peer support specialists, who promote hope through lived experiences demonstrating that recovery is possible, are employed to assist others in their mental health journey to wellness, address barriers that may exist and develop a crisis plan. In addition to mental health assistance, Peer Bridger services can include connection to resources for food, housing or employment.

The Peer Bridger program, which was initially implemented in late 2017, was developed to address the critical need for timely follow up after an individual has been hospitalized providing mental health assistance and community resource information, explained Senior Vice President of Operations, Behavioral Health, Lyndril Leonard, MA, LPC. She noted

that peer support specialists are given a seven-day window from the date of discharge, following the hospital stay, to connect.

Monarch currently collaborates with two Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) for the Peer Bridger program, Cardinal Innovations Healthcare and Partners Behavioral Health Management. Peer Bridger staff partners with Atrium Health to serve their King's Mountain Hospital, Behavioral Health Charlotte and Behavior Health – Davidson locations. Monarch also has a partnership with Old Vineyard Behavioral Health Services in Forsyth County and is establishing a partnership with Novant's Forsyth Hospital to begin providing Peer Bridger services.

During the past year, the Peer Bridger program received 351 referrals from community partners. Approximately 23 percent of individuals referred to the Peer Bridger program were recommended to other Monarch enhanced or outpatient service.

Peer Bridger peer support specialists include: Dorothy Woods, Alvin "Ted" Boyd, Rico Johnson and Michelle Heatley.

Leonard sees the program's peer support specialists as strong links in the chain of recovery. "Peer Bridger is about establishing relationships, being able to communicate and share what it is like to go through a mental health struggle," she said, adding that the peer support specialists' personal experiences can be positive motivation.

# PEER BRIDGER SMOOTHS TRANSITION AFTER HOSPITAL STAY, CONNECTS TO RESOURCES

Elmore, who acts as a liaison between the hospital and Monarch services, assists with reviewing referrals and what services would aid in healing. "The peers are the experts. Everyone on our team brings something different to the table. I can share clinical insight and they help me understand the reality that people are facing," she noted of the team's collaborative process.

Peer Support Specialist Michelle Heatley incorporates her personal mental health journey dealing with a bipolar disorder diagnosis, as a way to connect with individuals supported. She focuses on being honest about mental health struggles.

"You need to communicate how you are feeling. The feelings not shared get you to the hospital," Heatley articulated. "If I have to keep control of myself and maintain, I show other people how to do the same. That is why I am so adamant about the mental health field and the care, because I know it works. I am that person."

Being afforded the opportunity to share her story and helping people is Heatley's motivation each day. "I make a living telling people my story – the ups, the downs, the good, the bad. I get to help people with that story, and it is my job. That is a good feeling," she said of her role as a member of the Peer Bridger team.

Heatley said she finds her role connecting the person supported to resources that will encourage and maintain a healthy recovery rewarding: "Like a recipe, we find the way that works best. The same with medication, therapy or whatever resources are needed. It's about putting it together." ●

*Peer Bridger Peer Support Specialist Michelle Heatley incorporates her personal mental health journey as a way to connect with individuals supported.*



# When Does Typical Worry Give Way to an **ANXIETY DISORDER?**



## **TYPES OF ANXIETY OUTLINED BY MHA**

**Generalized anxiety disorder** – excessive anxiety and worry about a number of life events for at least six months; symptoms can include restlessness, feelings of being on edge, easily fatigued, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension or sleep disturbances.

**Panic disorder** – panic attacks, sudden feelings of terror that can strike repeatedly without warning such as chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath or dizziness, among others.

**Social anxiety disorder** – a persistent fear of one or more social or performance situations in which a person is exposed to unfamiliar people or to possible scrutiny by others, resulting in humiliation or embarrassment.

**Phobia** – extreme, disabling and irrational fear of something that in reality poses little or no threat or actual danger.

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** – repeated, intrusive and unwanted thoughts or rituals that seem impossible to control.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** – an individual has been exposed to a traumatic event experiencing one or multiple events involving an actual or threatened death, or serious injury, and a threat to the physical integrity of self or others with a response of fear, helplessness or horror.

During the recent COVID-19 crisis, restrictions such as stay-at-home orders, limited face-to-face interactions and curtailing of favorite activities altered our lives.

Monarch Behavioral Health Therapist Chalonda Coleman, MSW, LCSW, LCAS-A, reminds us that everyone has some level of stress or temporary worry in their life, however the recent coronavirus pandemic may have accentuated levels of anxiety among many people.

An anxiety disorder may be present when worries or nagging feelings, which were once typical occurrences, become more frequent and interfere with day-to-day routines or activities.

### **ANXIETY DEFINED**

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes, according to the American Psychological Association. For an individual with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not dissipate over time and worsens without attention, explained Coleman, who is based in the Lumberton Facility-Based Crisis Center.

Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental illnesses in this country with over 21 percent of adults (approximately 42.5 million people) affected by the debilitating illnesses each year, as cited by Mental Health America (MHA).

Children are susceptible as well with 25.1 percent of youth between 13 and 18 years old affected by an anxiety disorder. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, if left untreated, children with anxiety disorders are at a higher risk for poor academic performance, missed social experiences and possible substance use.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), signs of stress during an infectious outbreak like COVID-19 can include fear and worry about one's health; changes in sleep or eating patterns; difficulty concentrating; worsening of chronic health problems; and increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

### **ANXIETY DISORDERS VS. ANXIOUS BEHAVIORS**

Coleman explained that anxiety disorders differ from normal feelings of nervousness or anxiousness because excessive fear or anxiety is involved: "It is completely acceptable, and sometimes an advantage, to feel apprehensive about an important job interview or test that you are taking. An anxiety disorder occurs when there is a feeling of heightened apprehension or unexplained thoughts of impending doom."

### **WAYS TO TREAT ANXIETY**

Coleman noted that treatment depends on the

type of anxiety disorder and the individual's preferences.

For lesser forms of anxiety, self-treatment such as stress management or relaxation techniques may provide relief.

For more severe anxiety disorders, psychological counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy, which alters harmful thought patterns, can alleviate symptoms. Coleman said medications can be prescribed to control an anxiety disorder, noting that key preventative measures include keeping emotions in check, practicing self-care, maintaining a nutritious diet, adhering to healthy sleep hygiene and consuming less caffeine and alcohol. ●

# SUPPORTING MONARCH



## IKEA Crew Transforms Mecklenburg Outpatient Group Therapy Room

The group therapy room at Monarch's Mecklenburg behavioral health outpatient site received a refreshing facelift from IKEA, located in Charlotte, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

Stephanie Folts, a person Monarch supports, said she is thrilled to participate in the group therapy sessions in the newly designed room, noting that a comfortable space helps in the healing process.

The goal of group therapy is for participants to understand their diagnosis and the medications that help manage their symptoms. Monarch's group therapy services aid in the healing process

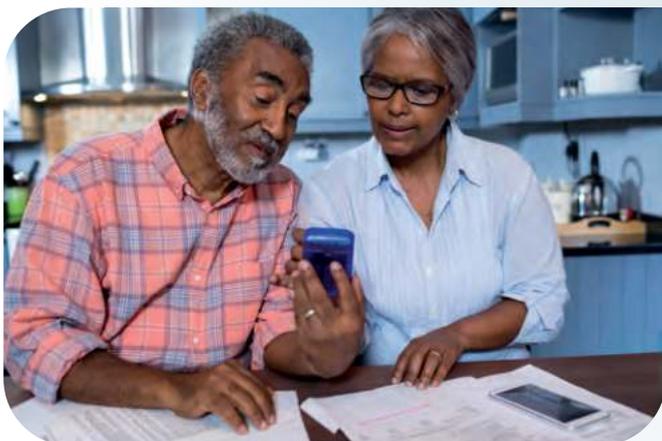
for mental health diagnoses such as anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder, connecting people with others who face similar challenges while helping them develop coping and self-advocacy skills.

Thanks to a team of five IKEA staff who spent a workday assembling tables, chairs, bookshelves, window treatments, artwork, accessories and lighting, a typical conference room was transformed into an inviting environment. On a quarterly basis, the local Charlotte site of the Swedish retailer typically donates time and products to local organizations for community "life improvement" projects.

Senior Vice President of Operations, Behavioral Health, Lyndril Leonard, MA, LPC, is grateful for community partners such as IKEA who support the services Monarch provides. "Most importantly, the new look of the space will bring comfort and support the therapeutic practice that takes place here daily," Leonard explained of the Mecklenburg outpatient room. "Group therapy is a communicative and evolving healing process. I am confident the newly designed and furnished IKEA area will further enhance our ability to create a safe and comfortable therapeutic space. Thank you to our partners at IKEA Charlotte!" ●

## YOUR COMMITMENT TODAY SUPPORTS MONARCH'S

# Future



By including Monarch in your will and estate plans, you ensure that life-changing services for people we support will be available when and where they need them in the future. Your commitment now will help shape Monarch's future.

Visit us online at [MonarchPlannedGiving.org](https://www.monarchplannedgiving.org) for information on the many benefits of making a legacy gift and request a FREE Estate Planning Guide to help you as you plan.

For more information on how you can include Monarch in your estate plans, please contact Laurie Weaver at (704) 986-1536 or [laurie.weaver@MonarchNC.org](mailto:laurie.weaver@MonarchNC.org).

# SUPPORTING MONARCH

To make a secure, online gift to Monarch, visit  
[MonarchNC.org/donate](https://MonarchNC.org/donate).



MCACC staff share our message during Twigg & Company's shopping event that benefitted Monarch services.



Participants in Lincolnton's Yoga on Main show their strength during a yoga class organized to benefit Monarch services.

## SUPPORT CONTINUES TO **GROW** FOR THE DONATIONS FROM ORGANIZATIONS

### **ABERDEEN'S TWIGG & COMPANY FEATURES MCACC ARTIST DURING SHOPPING BENEFIT**

Twigg & Company in Aberdeen held a shopping event with a portion of the evening's proceeds benefitting Monarch's Creative Arts and Community Center (MCACC) in Southern Pines. The day program's course offerings include art, pottery, dance and music programs for the 60 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who attend.

The featured artist for the Twigg & Company's event was Josh Galbicsek, a talented artist and person supported responsible for designing a variety of art including the "Monarch Gallery: Where Art Takes Flight" tiled sign visible on the MCACC building. Works of art and pottery made by MCACC day program participants were sold and auctioned during the event which raised over \$900 to benefit MCACC services.

MCACC Community Engagement Team Leader Bob Huber is appreciative of the Moore County business' support of the life-changing services Monarch offers. MCACC participants were a valuable part of preparing for the event with setting up displays, completing inventory and tagging items, noted Huber. Thank you Twigg & Company Owner Molly Twigg for your generous support and donation! ●

### **LINCOLNTON'S YOGA ON MAIN HOSTS BENEFIT CLASS FOR MONARCH**

Lincolnton's Yoga on Main Owner Barbara O'Donnell knows firsthand the value of therapy and how it can help in the healing process following a mental health diagnosis.

Since she is the owner of Yoga on Main studio, O'Donnell also recognizes the value and impact of incorporating the practice of yoga into daily routines.

In February, O'Donnell organized a yoga flow class with proceeds from admission donated to Monarch services. The group class donated \$100 to help the people we support. Thank you Yoga on Main and all class participants for stretching for a great cause! ●

# WE'VE POSTPONED!

We've postponed the

Monarch

*Dreams* **TAKE FLIGHT**

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Title Sponsor

 First Citizens Bank

The rescheduled tournament will be held at  
**The Club at Irish Creek, 1196 Fairway Drive, Kannapolis, NC 28081**

For updates and information, watch your email and visit [Monarchnc.org/events/golf-tournament](http://Monarchnc.org/events/golf-tournament)  
or call Laurie Weaver, Vice President of Marketing and Philanthropy, at (704) 986-1536.

Interested in a career at  
**MONARCH?**

**Join our team!**

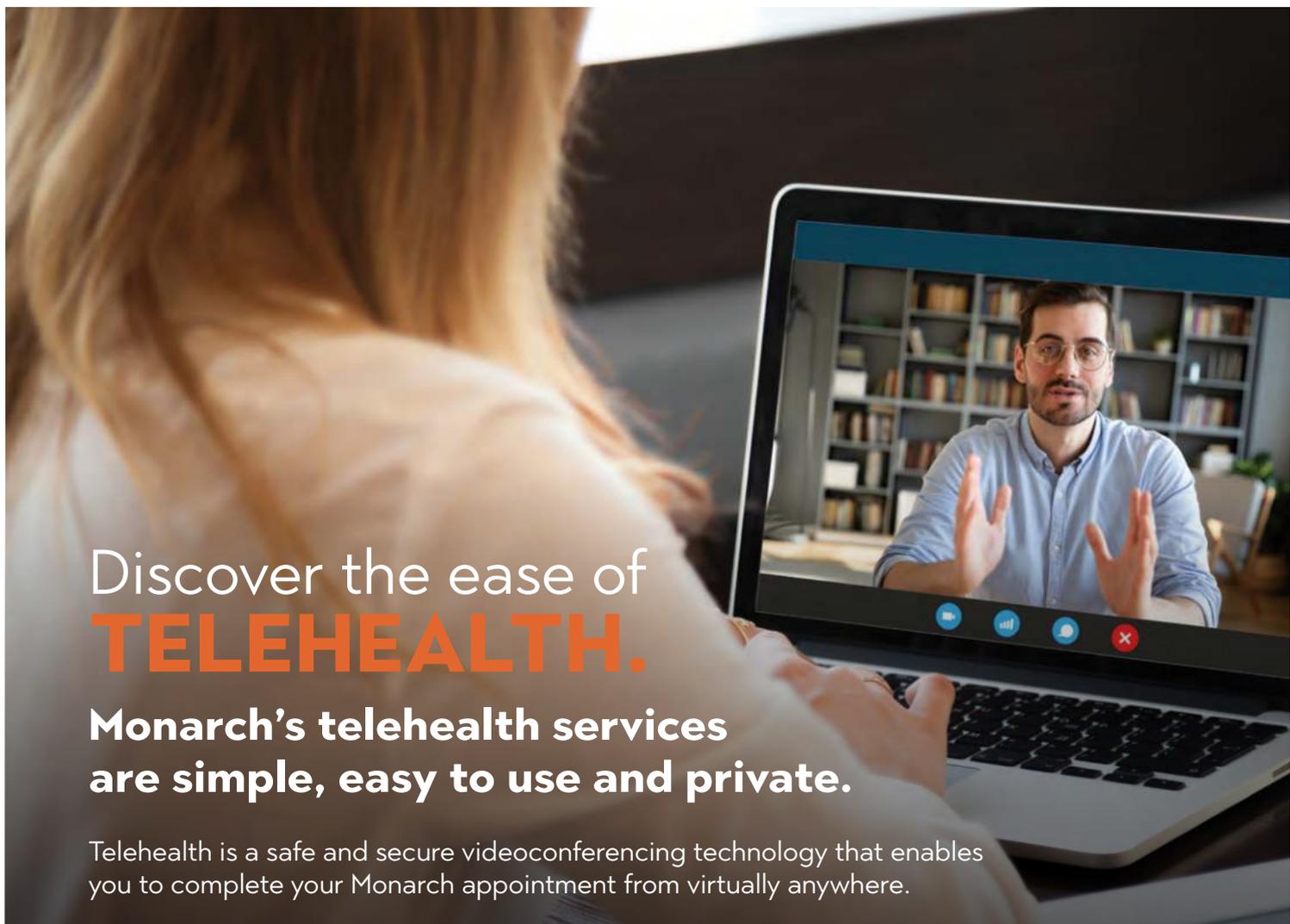
Monarch is searching for extraordinary talent across North Carolina. Here, you'll find that working with individuals with developmental disabilities, mental illness and substance use disorders is a life-changing experience.

  
Monarch

If you would like to join our growing team of professionals,  
visit [MonarchNC.org/careers](http://MonarchNC.org/careers) or call (704) 986-1550 to begin your application.



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