



# The CHALLENGER

Winter 2023/Spring 2024

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## OUR MISSION

To enhance the lives, develop the abilities, and promote the independence of people with disabilities

## April is Autism Awareness Month

### *What is Autism?*

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a complex, lifelong developmental condition that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. The Autism experience is different for everyone. It is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is often referred to as a "spectrum condition" that affects people differently and to varying degrees.

While there is no known single cause for Autism, it is generally accepted that it is caused by differences in brain structure or genetic factors. Early diagnosis and intervention can greatly support an Autistic individual with the resources needed to live fully.

### *Facts & Statistics*

1 in 36 children in the U.S. have autism, up from the previous rate of 1 in 44.

1 in 45 adults in the U.S. have autism

In the U.S., about 4 in 100 boys and 1 in 100 girls have autism.

Boys are nearly 4 times more likely to be diagnosed with autism than girls. 74% of autistic students in the U.S. graduate with a diploma, versus 86% of all students.

8% of autistic students in the U.S. don't finish high school, versus 5% of all students.

### *Resources*

<https://autismsciencefoundation.org/>

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

<https://www.iacc.hhs.gov/>

Challenging the community, families, and individuals to make a difference

A publication of the Darlington County Disabilities and Special Needs Board



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*Winter 2023/Spring 2024*

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# Christmas Party

## Festivities

Our Christmas party at BTG was a memorable event enjoyed by our residents and community participants. The party was filled with fun and exciting activities, including a visit from Santa Claus himself! Everyone had the opportunity to meet Santa and take pictures with him, capturing the special moment to share with their friends and family.

In addition to the meet and greet with Santa, the party featured talent shows and classroom decoration contests. Our residents and community participants put on a great show and showcased their various talents, including singing, dancing, and poetry recitation. The classroom decoration contests were also a hit, with participants getting creative and showcasing their skills in decorating their classrooms with a festive touch.



# Christmas Party



Overall, it was a jolly time filled with laughter, fun, and holiday cheer. We are grateful to our residents and community participants for making it a memorable event and look forward to hosting more events like this in the future!





# Angel Tree Project

The Angel Tree Project is an initiative that aims to provide support and happiness to special angels' families during the holiday season. It allows community members to sponsor a child or family by purchasing gifts from their wish list, which are then delivered to them in time for Christmas.

The project has been running successfully for several years, thanks to the local community's support and generosity. By participating in the Annual Angel Tree Project, members of the community can make a significant impact on the lives of those with disabilities and their families. They can help them feel seen, heard, and valued during the festive season.

In the year 2023, the Angel Tree Project successfully completed its mission by collecting a total of \$4,130.00. This amount was raised through generous donations from individuals and organizations who supported the cause. The project had a total of 74 Angels, who were individuals in need of gifts and support during the holiday season. The Angels were selected based on their specific needs and wishes, and the project team worked tirelessly to ensure that each Angel received a gift that brought joy and happiness into their lives.

Thanks to the overwhelming support from the community, the Angel Tree Project was able to make a positive impact on the lives of many individuals in need, and spread the spirit of generosity and kindness during the holiday season.



# *Angel Tree* Project

## *Donations*

*Norton Funeral Home  
AO Smith  
Vaughan Insurance  
Darlington Veneer Company, Inc  
Faith Baptist Church  
Lakeview Baptist Church  
YMCA of Hartsville  
Carolina Pines Regional  
Manheim Darlington  
Liberty Chapel  
Judy Ratley  
Hattie Hughes  
Leatrice Taylor  
Alan & Edie Kelley  
Rev. Coleman Cannon  
Joe McCollough  
Mr. & Mrs. Jay Black  
Rev. Troy Shaw*

# BTG's VALENTINE'S DAY Social



The DCDSNB residents and service participants recently had a blast at the BTG Valentine's social. They indulged in some yummy pizza, participated in exciting activities and dressed up in red to show their cheerful spirit for the day. It was such a fun and delightful experience for everyone involved!



# BTG's VALENTINE'S DAY Social





# BTG's VALENTINE'S DAY Social





# Night to Shine

*Have you heard of Night to Shine? It's a fantastic initiative that is led by churches worldwide and spreads the love of Jesus while celebrating the worth and value of individuals with special needs. The Tim Tebow Foundation provides resources and support to enable churches to host a prom for people with special needs in their community, which is just amazing!*

*Our residents and service participants had an absolute blast at the Night to Shine event hosted by the West Hartsville Baptist Church on February 9th. They danced the night away, sang karaoke, made new friends, and had a ton of fun!*

*We are so grateful to the West Hartsville Baptist Church for hosting such a wonderful event and for providing our residents and service participants with an unforgettable night. They truly went above and beyond to make it a special experience for everyone!*





# Night to Shine





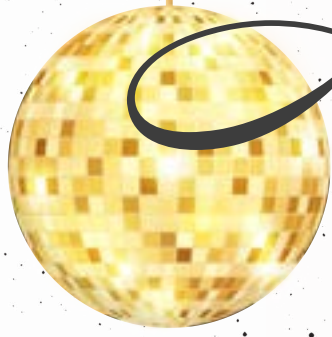
# Night to Shine





# Night to Shine





# Night to Shine



# Baby Shower



Candace, our HR Director, recently had a baby shower for her little girl, Ivy Dream! The day was filled with delicious finger foods, yummy cake, fun games, and lots of thoughtful gifts. It was such a joyous occasion and everyone had a great time celebrating Candace and her growing family!



# Baby Shower

An illustration of a stork carrying a baby in a basket, positioned to the left of the main title.



# *Ivy Dream Graham*



We joyfully announce the arrival of Ivy Dream,  
daughter of Candace Graham, HR Director.  
Born Sunday, March 3rd weighing 7.3lbs.  
Warmest congratulations on your precious new  
baby!



LOOK WHOOO'S HERE!

# KROSS SMITH

*Born February 13th, 2024*

*5 Pounds, 12 Ounces*

We want to congratulate Jalisa Smith, DSP at Yarborough, on the arrival of her son Kross Smith. Congratulations on expanding your family, and welcoming even more love into your life.

# Brylin Wilson



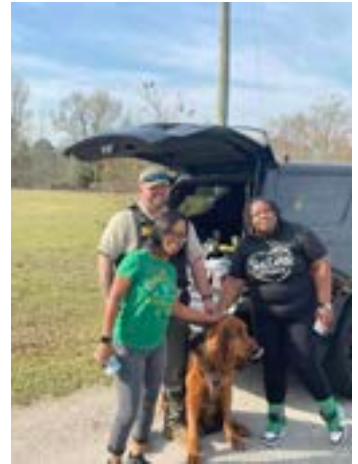
## **Say hello to Brylin!**

We have some great news to share with you today! LaShonda Wilson's family has welcomed a new baby boy into the world. Brylin Wilson was born on Monday, April 15th, weighing a healthy 7lbs and 11oz. Both Ms. LaShonda Wilson of Jones House and his grandmother, Ms. Rochelle Moses, ICF Residential Director/QIDP, are ecstatic about the new addition to their family. We would like to express our warmest congratulations and love to the family during this exciting time.

# COMMUNITY HELPER'S DAY



# COMMUNITY HELPER'S DAY

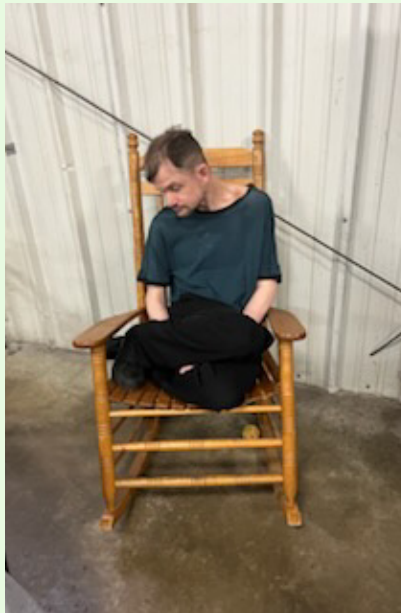


# COMMUNITY HELPER'S DAY



Our service participants and residents had a memorable day with our Community Helpers on March 15th at Bridging the Gap, engaging with the Darlington County's Sheriff's, EMS, Fire Department, and Care South of Hartsville.

# SAINT PATRICK'S DAY



**ROCHELLE MOSSES**



**ICF RESIDENTIAL DIRECTOR/QIDP**

We are delighted to announce the promotion of Rochelle Moses to the position of ICF Residential Director/QIDP at DCDSNB!

Rochelle has been a committed member of our team for 17 years, serving in various capacities such as CTH Residential Programmer and Residential Manager at Trantham and Shaw House. In her new role, Rochelle will oversee the work of ICF house managers and direct support employees, ensuring that we continue to provide exceptional care and active treatment to our participant in the ICF/ID residential services. Rochelle's dedication and hard work have been an inspiration to us all, and we look forward to seeing her excel in her new role. Congratulations, Rochelle!



# WELCOME BACK!

**We missed  
you**



## **Dawanda Brown Director of Nursing**

**Dawanda Brown has returned to DCDSNB! We are absolutely thrilled to have her back with us and we cannot overstate how happy we are that she has resumed her role as the Director of Nursing. We would like to invite everyone to join us in extending a warm and friendly welcome to Dawanda Brown, RN/DON as she rejoins DCDSNB. Let's show her how much we've missed her!**

# WELCOME BACK!

**We're happy  
you're back!**



**Roneka Dawson**  
**Lead LPN & Healthcare Coordinator**

DCDSNB welcomes back Roneka Dawson, who has taken on a new role as Lead LPN & Healthcare Coordinator. We are thrilled to have her back on board and look forward to seeing her excel in her new position. Roneka's return is a testament to the valuable contributions she made during her previous tenure and we are confident that she will continue to make a positive impact in her new role.



**Courtney McElravy**  
**LPN & Healthcare Coordinator**

We are delighted to welcome back Courtney McElravy, who started her career with DCDSNB as a Direct Support Professional and has now returned as an LPN & Healthcare Coordinator.

Her story is an inspiration to us all, as she continues to grow and achieve great things in her career. We are excited to see what the future holds for her and are honored to have her back with us.

# NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

**Say hello  
to...**



## **Shequila Taylor Residential Programmer**

**Let us introduce you to Ms. Shequila Taylor, the CTH Residential Programmer. She is from Hartsville and is a proud mother of a 15-year-old son who receives services from the board. With over 15 years of experience in healthcare, she holds a Bachelor's degree and is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with a focus on Psychology. Please join us in welcoming Shequila to DCDSNB!**

# NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Say hello to  
the newest  
DSPs

**MARK COLLINS**

**CAROLYN GRAY**

**MONESHA JOHNSON**

**EJUANICA MCDONALD**

**GRENNEA FORD**

**WENDY MOSES**

**YVETTE BAILEY**

**LATOYA BRUNSON**

**JASMINE JONES**

**KENYATTA MCDANIEL**

**TYQUAN WARREN**

**SHANTIYA WILSON**

**BOWEN**

**BTG**

**JONES**

**BTG**

**KING**

**TRANTHAM**

**PAULEY**

**BTG**

**BTG**

**REAGAN**

**JONES**

**REGISTER**



# Hiring

## Direct Support Professionals

201 N. Damascus Church  
Hartsville, SC 29550  
843-332-7252

At DCDSNB, we continuously accept applications for Direct Support Professionals who wish to work Part-time or on a PRN basis. This position requires exceptional people with tireless patience. Caregiving is a calling, not just a job. If this is you, we welcome your interest and encourage you to complete an employment application today!

## How to Apply

Visit us at [www.dcdsnb.org](http://www.dcdsnb.org) or contact us at 843-332-7252 for additional information.

# Disability Awareness Month

March is “Disability Awareness Month in Hartsville, SC.” March is an important month, not only because it marks the start of spring and St. Patrick’s Day, but also because it holds a significant meaning. March is recognized as Disabilities Awareness Month, which presents an opportunity to shed light on individuals with disabilities and showcase that they are just like neurotypical individuals, with their own dreams, lives, hopes, and aspirations. Brenda Ferguson, Board Chair and Dawanda Brown, RN/DON, attended the City Council Meeting to accept the Proclamation from Mayor Hancock.

*Awareness is the foundation for empathy.*

Disabilities Awareness Month is a chance to create awareness about the obstacles that people with developmental disabilities face while interacting with their communities. Disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder and developmental delays, affect over 6 million Americans daily. This month provides a platform for individuals with disabilities to showcase their talents and abilities in a world that is often not accommodating to their needs in an inclusive manner.

## Doctor Appreciation Week 3/25 - 3/31

The team at DCDSNB would like to express our gratitude for the exceptional support that Dr. Chapman has provided to our residents. We appreciate your tireless efforts and commitment to providing the highest level of care to our residents.

Your unwavering dedication to patient care has not gone unnoticed, and we are fortunate to have had you as a part of our team. After 30 years of dedication to the residents of DCDSNB, Dr. Chapman is retiring. We are saddened, but wish you well in your upcoming retirement.

Once again, thank you for all that you do. Your contributions to our team and to our residents are truly invaluable, and we are grateful for your continued dedication to your profession and your patients. We appreciate your tireless efforts and commitment to providing the highest level of care to our residents..



*Pictured above are Medical Transporters, Vanessa Cabbagestalk and Winnie Arnold, Dr. Chapman, and Janie McPhail*

# Early Intervention Professionals Week 4/22 - 4/26

## What does an EI Specialist do?

An Early Intervention Specialist is a professional who works with children that have developmental delays or disabilities. They typically work with the child on a one-on-one basis in the comfort of their own homes through play. The specialist assesses the child's development in several key areas, including physical and motor skills, cognitive abilities, communication, social and emotional skills, and adaptive skills. Using their expertise in childhood development, the early intervention specialist will create personalized strategies that aim to help the child improve in these areas. These strategies are tailored to meet the unique needs of each individual child.

## EI Specialists at DCDSNB

The Bright Beginnings Early Intervention Department at DCDSNB is a dedicated team of professionals with a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of Early Intervention. Our team works tirelessly to provide exceptional services to families and their loved ones, with the goal of ensuring that every family has access to the resources they need to support their loved ones' development and well-being. They are deeply committed to providing compassionate care and unwavering support to families, and this dedication is evident in every interaction they have with families.

They understand the challenges that families face when supporting loved ones with developmental delays, and they are here to provide guidance, support, and resources every step of the way. We would like to take a moment to express our gratitude towards the EI Department, including Joni Pendergrass, the EI Supervisor, Cricket Porter, and Sheril Strong, both EI Specialists. Their unwavering commitment and hard work towards the betterment of the individuals we serve have not gone unnoticed.



Pictured above are Joni Pendergrass EI Supervisor, Sheril Strong and Cricket Porter EI Specialists receiving gifts from the agency.

# Administrative Professionals' Day

National Administrative Professionals' Day, otherwise known as Secretaries Day or Admin Day, is a special day dedicated to recognizing the contributions of the professionals who work hard to keep any office running smoothly. This day is celebrated on 4/24/2024, and it acknowledges the work of secretaries, administrative assistants, receptionists, and other administrative support professionals. These individuals are central to any business, as they play a crucial role in keeping everything organized and efficient.



The day-to-day work of an administrative professional is varied and requires a great deal of flexibility and adaptability. While organization is key to their success, their ability to handle unexpected situations and changes in plans is what makes them so valuable to any business. Some of their responsibilities include managing appointments, drafting letters and memos, booking business trips, coordinating appointments, and planning meetings.

Let us take a moment to express our heartfelt appreciation for the contributions of Miriam Anderson, the Executive Assistant at DCDSNB. Her commitment and efforts have been instrumental in keeping our operations running seamlessly. We are truly fortunate to have her as a part of our team and want to thank her from the bottom of our hearts.





# DCD/AB EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

## Jennie McQueen

"She is a great person with a great personality. She loves, supports and cares for the consumers. Working with this population is more than just a job to her." - Brandolyn Moore

## De'Lora Singletary

"Goes the extra mile to help out where and whenever you need her. Works very hard and she shows all consumers patience, care, love, and encouragement." - Takisha Decessard

## Vanessa Carroway

"Always willing to help! No matter what." - Shermeka Brown

## Bessie Patterson

"She works very hard, and she will step right in and help out wherever she is needed. She has assisted in the home and has done a good job, and all the consumers like her." - Takisha Decessard

## Taylor Townsend

"Relatively new employee but it seems as though she has been with the agency for a long time. Taylor displays an excellent work ethic and team player attitude." - Eleasha J. Smith

## Wanda Cooke

"She is always the first person here. Wanda is very consistent in making sure Finance records are accurate and kept up to date. Without Wanda, finance would not run as smoothly as it does." -Candy Wyrick

## Candy Wyrick

"Most committed and versatile staff. The consistency and commitment to staff throughout the whole agency is remarkable. Usually the first one here and last to leave." - Joni Pendergrass

## Simone Taylor

"Has been very helpful, there to pick up the pieces and kept the Day Program running when no supervisor and director were there." - Kewanda Hunter



*"This company is incomplete without hardworking and highly motivated employees like you. Thank you for your efforts, hard work, and sincerity that you put in your work every single day without fail!"*  
-Staff Support Team



# DCDSNB EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

## **Felecia Scott**

*"She cares about all the individuals and goes out of her way to help those in need. Even though it's a challenge with some individuals, Felecia does not see a challenge, she shows them love, patience, kindness and understanding. She is a beautiful person inside and out." – De'Lora Singletary*

## **Clarissa Joe**

*"Clarissa goes above and beyond as a DSP to help out at the Day Program. She is always willing to help out in different classrooms when short staffed. She takes pride in her job and never takes days off unless its an emergency."  
- Kewanda Hunter*

## **Nicole Lee**

*Nicole is one of the staples of the Residential Department. She works many hours to make sure her individuals are supported and cared for.. The type of person she is can be measured by what her individuals think of her, they all love her and are confident that she will support them." - Candy Wyrick*

## **Kewanda Hunter**

*"Kewanda is dedicated to her job. She goes above and beyond to make sure staff and individuals get what they need. She is a great team player and sets a good example to others." - Simone Taylor*

## **Cricket Porter**

*"She does an excellent job as she carries a full-time case load. Making her visits as she should and being productive with the families that she serves. She does an extraordinary job at gathering and sharing resources that help El's and the families that we serve." – Joni Pendergrass*

*"This company is incomplete without hardworking and highly motivated employees like you. Thank you for your efforts, hard work, and sincerity that you put in your work every single day without fail!"  
-Staff Support Team*



# Donations

On February 5, 2024, the Darlington County Disabilities Foundation was thrilled to receive generous donations of pillows and packages of disposable underwear for men and women. These items will be used by the residents of Darlington County Disabilities and Special Needs Board (DCDSNB).



Pictured above are New Vision CDC Representative (left) and DCDSNB's Executive Assistant Miriam Anderson (right).

These gifts were presented by New Vision Community Development Corporation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. The mission of New Vision CDC is to improve the quality of housing for low-to-moderate income persons by way of area development, redevelopment or renewal, and to impact the overall quality of life in Darlington County through other neighborhood or community benefit activities such as economic development and food distribution.

You can learn more about New Vision CDC and their multiple programs at <https://www.newvisioncdc.org/index.php>

# Donations



## PINEY PLAIN CHURCH SISTERHOOD

The Darlington County DSN Board has received a wonderful donation of dignity bibs from Piney Plains Church. We are extremely grateful for their kindness and generosity. Thanks to this amazing donation, our residents will now be able to experience the comfort and dignity they deserve.

