

Featured Stories

Decade-long Holiday Tradition Brings Residents Together Like Family at Moss 1 Springs Home



The holidays are a time to celebrate traditions that bring families and friends together. At Monarch's Moss 1 Springs home in Albemarle, the holiday season starts with a beautiful Thanksgiving dinner at Patricia Cannon's house where all the residents and staff look forward to delicious food.

It is also a time to share the things that make them most grateful.

On the heels of the annual Thanksgiving feast at the Cannons, Moss 1 residents and staff prepare for the next big holiday with a Christmas tree and a festive party at a local church. Then, gifts for all of the residents start to trickle in thanks to an amazing community of hardworking and kind individuals who have kept a decade-long tradition thriving.

Cannon's sister, Janie, has been a resident at the home for more than 27 years. Her sister is the reason Cannon has been spearheading a holiday gift drive to make sure other Moss 1 residents also get gifts on Christmas morning.

"I would deliver my sister Janie a lot of presents every year and noticed that her housemates did not have very much to open. This bothered me. I shared this information with my friends and they promised that this would never happen again. For the past 10 years or so we have made sure they were all well taken care of during the holidays," said Cannon.

Cannon and her husband host a Christmas party in early December every year and invite all their family and friends who kindly give what they can for presents for Janie and her housemates. In the weeks leading up to Christmas Day, the group will buy all the gifts from the wish list the residents eagerly start drafting as early as October, and wrap them and personalize them.

The "wish granters" try to focus on the resident's interests and needs. Throughout the years, important essentials like shoes, coats, comforters, pillows, sheets and blankets have been gifted, too. Items the house and its staff need are also gifted, including towels, washcloths, cups, DVD players, movies, stereos and CDs.

"Patricia has been a blessing for everyone at Moss I. There are lots of smiles from her sister and her sister's housemates whenever she comes to the group home. We truly love and appreciate all that she does to make everyone's life a little brighter," admits Shelia Brown, the residential team leader at Moss 1.

"It is simply a blessing, and a calling a few of us felt to do for those who can't do for themselves," adds Cannon.

Everyone at Moss 1 is Janie's family and therefore they are my family. And that includes the amazing staff, some of whom I've known since I was a child and have cared for my sister for more than 20 years. These ladies go above and beyond for their residents. This is just what families do. They take care of one another."

Monarch Expert Shares How to Cope With Holiday Stress and Grief



The holiday season is a happy and exciting time for many. But for those who have suffered the loss of a loved one, experienced family conflict, job loss or financial stress, this time of year can be less than jolly.

Feelings of stress can easily be exacerbated by a variety of situations that arise during Christmas. There are holiday parties to host or attend, decorations to put up, shopping lists to be crossed off and visits with family members – all of which have to be squeezed into a short amount of time.

While experts say stress and grief are normal reactions during the season, learning to cope can help people manage their feelings and help them to enjoy the holidays.

Monarch's Senior Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer Ben Millsap, MSW, LCSW, LCAS, CCS, provided the following general tips and suggestions to help reduce stress during this festive season – and all year long:

- Get some rest. Regardless of the excitement, guests and travel, make an effort to get plenty of rest. Lack of sleep can quickly increase stress levels.

- Keep a healthy perspective. Guests will leave, messes will be cleaned and, generally, heightened feelings and emotions during the holidays will pass.
- Remember. Normalcy as you know it will eventually return.
- Laugh. When stressed in general, and especially during the holidays, remember to smile or laugh. Either can help to reduce stress. Engage in activities that brighten your mood.
- **Don't sweat the small stuff!** It's a cliché, but meaningful. Focus on the big picture and the little things don't seem to pile up so fast.
- Give back. If the holidays are a difficult time, helping others can improve feelings and mood. There are many opportunities this time of year to support someone else in need. It may just help you feel better, too.
- Start new traditions. If a routine has been altered due to a significant change – positive or negative – start a new custom that can help bring new meaning.
- Find time for yourself. Carve out some “me” time! Take 10 minutes to think, breathe, listen to music, take a walk, etc. Time for yourself can help you center yourself and feel better.

Millsap said, in addition to the above suggestions, families should not be afraid to celebrate memories of lost loved ones during the holidays.

“Take time to remember the good times. Others may want to share a special thought or two about a lost family member or friend,” Millsap explained. “Listen and, if comfortable, join the conversation.”

If you know someone who is in need of support, please call Monarch at (866) 272-7826.

Monarch expands DBT Team to Provide Even Greater Support to Those Who Need it



Rachael Lam Yuen, LCSW, who has been co-leading Dialectical Behavior Therapy DBT groups for months at Monarch is looking forward to using her intensive DBT training in full once she receives her official letter from the Linehan Institute this month.

Yuen joins a team of five certified therapists who are specialized in DBT.

“I wanted to be intensively trained in DBT because I truly believe in its power,” explained Yuen. “It’s a therapy that just makes sense. It teaches people we support logical skills for managing intense emotions in a healthy way and being more effective in relationships. DBT gives me the tools I need to be a more effective therapist and know that I have a greater chance at making a difference in the lives of the people I support.”

At Monarch, DBT is one of the many evidence-based therapies used to help the people supported live fuller and healthier lives. DBT was designed to help individuals who feel that emotions are always “in charge” of their lives. The therapy has worked well for people who struggle with suicidal ideations, self-injury, eating disorders, substance use, trauma, anxiety and depression, and requires a supportive and collaborative relationship between the person served and his or her therapist. Treatment combines

individual psychotherapy, structured skills training groups and “coaching calls” available to the individual during and outside of business hours. In addition, the team meets weekly to provide support and consultation to one another to maintain the fidelity of their practice and keep their energy for the work high.

In 2015, Alliance funded a six-month intensive DBT training to several teams throughout their catchment area. Alliance identified the need to provide increased access to DBT therapy to provide the highest level of treatment for high-risk individuals. One of the people supported by Monarch’s DBT program noted that the approach has helped her “leave the past, become the present... and feel, see and watch the doors open to the future.”

To find out if DBT can help you or someone you care about, please call Monarch at (866) 272-7826 to get an assessment appointment on the same or next day.

Pictured (l-r): Backrow: Stephanie Seitz, Lorraine Monroe, Stacy Blankenship and Mackenzie Almond. Front row: Christina Unruh, Nancy Herron and Rachael Lam Yuen

The “Overhead Costs” Myth About Where Your Money Goes When You Give to Charities



During the season of giving, many charities and non-profits are ramping up campaigns to raise money for their programs and initiatives.

But there is often a misconception about how donations are used and questions about what percentage of charity expenses go to administrative and fundraising costs—commonly referred to as “overhead.”

Overhead costs include important investments charities make to improve their work: investments in training, planning, evaluation, and internal systems—as well as their efforts to raise money so they can operate their programs. These expenses allow a charity to sustain itself (the way a family has to pay the electric bill) or to improve itself (the way a family might invest in college tuition).

These costs are part of any organization and can have positive impacts on how it’s run, yet oftentimes, charities are viewed as irresponsible if they spend money on anything else other than what is directly related to who or what they support.

Three organizations dedicated to holding charitable organizations accountable, [GuideStar](#), [Charity Navigator](#), and [BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#) are asking people to change that view and consider other factors when it comes to giving to an organization; such as transparency, governance, leadership and results, something Monarch is committed to in all aspects of its programs.

When people focus solely or predominantly on overhead, it can create what the Stanford Social Innovation Review has called “The Nonprofit Starvation Cycle.” We starve charities of the freedom they need to best serve the people and communities they are trying to serve.

So when you are making your charitable giving decisions, please consider the whole picture. The people and communities served by Monarch don’t need low overhead, they need high performance.

Check out this [Ted Talk](#) by Dan Pallotta on the ways we think about overhead cost.

Inside Monarch

Technology Helps Teenager Build Independence and Break Barriers



There is still time to share your Arc US Tech Survey Challenge Stories. Deadline is Dec. 16.

Over the last decade, we've seen astonishing progress in technology for people with disabilities. From 3D-printed prosthetics to self-driving cars for the blind, there is no denying that technology impacts our lives and is evolving at an unprecedented speed. For the people we support, technology is more than being interconnected; it is about breaking barriers and helping people become more independent.

Recognizing the importance of technology and how organizations like Monarch should adopt it into its programs, The Arc US initiated a Tech Survey Challenge earlier this year to prize individuals who incorporate it into their daily lives. One of our own technology champions, Brittany Travis, a Monarch community specialist, submitted several tech survey nominations. Her submissions included a story about Daniel, a spunky 17-year-old high school student with autism, who uses technology. Travis' tech

submissions made her one of the winners of the challenge and several Amazon gift cards.

For eight hours each week, Travis relishes in seeing Daniel develop an interest in things he initially was indifferent about. Whether it is his music likes and dislikes, his sense of fashion or looking up a word he doesn't know – Daniel's four devices have helped him become much more independent.

"Daniel is such a cool kid. Devices like his iPod and iPhone have helped him demobilize his repetitive ticks when he feels anxious in social situations because he can focus on music that calms him or even look up conversation starters," says Travis. "He also has individualized himself with the help of technology and has realized that it is OK for him to have his own sense of style and opinions.

"He loves Adele and Evanescence, but doesn't like country or rap. Seeing that personal development first-hand over the last year has been nothing short of amazing," she adds.

Daniel's story is relatable because it is one of scholastic and personal progress. He is just like any other teenager looking to make friends and get good grades. Handwritten assignments would take several hours to complete and cause Daniel distress. But by using his laptop, Daniel has become much more efficient in his schoolwork because he is a visual learner. Being able to see his ideas typed up in front of him at the speed in which he develops them has starkly improved his grades.

"Technology helps me text friends and not feel so lonely," Daniel says. "I get online and look up things I don't know. I can do my homework faster and it helps me with the English and Spanish homework...I can look up videos for music and ways to deal with my emotions better."

His adoption of technology is serving him well now and has encouraged him to think about his future, too. He aspires to work at Apple, or study child psychology and help children with autism.

Daniel's personal and scholarly progress with the support of technology is just one of many stories on how technology is positively impacting the daily lives of the people we support at Monarch.

Do you have a similar story about a person supported? Monarch was selected to pilot The Arc's Tech Story Challenge, which encourages staff to submit narratives about the ways Monarch uses technology to improve the lives of the people we support. A cash prize will be awarded if your submission is selected.

There is still time to enter the Tech Survey challenge, so please share any great stories. The deadline is Friday, Dec. 16. For details, including how the challenge works, visit: <https://tech.thearc.org/>.

Support Monarch While You Shop for the Holidays at Amazon.com



If you shop Amazon.com, you can now support Monarch with the click of your mouse.

Through a program called AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate a portion of the price of your eligible purchases directly to Monarch.

It's as easy as 1-2-3. Visit smile.amazon.com where you will be prompted to log in and select your charity of choice. You can use your existing Amazon.com login information and all of your current shopping carts, wish lists, wedding and baby registries, Amazon Prime and other settings will stay the same. If you do not have an Amazon.com account, you can easily set one up.

Once you select Monarch as your charity of choice, you are ready to shop. There is nothing else you need to do. Simply visit smile.amazon.com when you shop and, once you log in, your qualifying purchases will automatically generate a donation.

'Tis the season for shopping and giving. [Click here](#) to learn more about how your holiday shopping can help Monarch.

Important Information About the 403(b) Retirement Plan



Saving for retirement is one of the most important steps to build a financially secure future.

Monarch supports this initiative and as part of our journey to improve your employee benefits, effective Jan. 1, 2017 Monarch will transition from our current 401(k) Plan to a 403(b) Plan.

BB&T has hosted several educational sessions to get staff prepared for this transition. Now through Dec. 31, 2016, all employees need to logon to www.BBT.com/MyRetirementPlan to set up your account in the Monarch 403(b) Plan.

- Click “create user ID and password”
- Your temporary PIN is the last 4 digits of your Social Security Number followed by your birth month and day (format: MMDD)
- Your temporary PIN will expire after 30 days
- If your PIN expires, contact (800) 228-8076 and press **“0”** immediately upon hearing the automated voice to speak with a live representative.

Once you have setup your account, there is an option to make changes to your contribution percentage as well as indicate how you wish to allocate your investment election.

There will be two ESS Assessments assigned to all employees on Dec. 1. Please be sure to complete these assessments reading over the important information that has been provided for you.

As an eligible employee if you are not currently participating in the Monarch 401(k) Plan, because Monarch participates in the Auto Enrollment, you will be automatically enrolled in the Monarch 403(b) Plan at 1 percent of your compensation.

It is very important, if you do not wish to participate that you opt out of the plan between now and Dec. 31. You may do so by calling (800) 228-8076 and press "0" immediately upon hearing the automated voice to speak with a live representative. The representative will ask for your PIN which will be the last four digits of your Social Security Number followed by your birth month and day (format: MMDD) only through Dec. 31.

The following dates are the remaining educational sessions to share more information about this important change:

Dec. 9

11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Mecklenburg Behavioral Health
5700 Executive Center Drive
Suite 110
Charlotte, NC 28212

Dec. 12

11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

New Bern Administrative Office
1308 Commerce Drive
New Bern, NC 28562

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Meet Mareida Grossman-Orr

Mareida Grossman-Orr, who has worked as a behavioral health therapist with Monarch for a year and a half, has received the company's Dream Maker Award for her outstanding work with the people we support. She works at the Greensboro walk-in clinic, and handles TeleMed and some assessments at psychosocial rehabilitation centers across the state. She also performs forensic evaluations for Guilford County defendants, either in the Monarch office or at the jail site.

What does a typical workday look like for you?

I do Comprehensive Clinical Assessments on people who are seeking mental health treatment, from the most routine to extreme emergencies. I may see three to six individuals or families in a day (part-time), depending on the severity of the presentation. I do a thorough biopsychosocial assessment, determine preliminary diagnosis, offer treatment options and create a treatment plan. Every day is different and very challenging.

What is the most important aspect of your role, and why?

The most important aspect of my role is being completely focused on each person, caring only about them, their needs and their pain while with them. This helps them to open up about their problems and feel validated and important. It also helps them to accept treatment recommendations, from medication or therapy to hospitalization, because it is coming from someone who truly cares and wants the best for them.

What has been your most rewarding, or proudest moment, while working here?

Every time someone says “this is the first time I have ever told anyone this,” it really touches my heart and lets me know I am in the right place at the right time.

What do you enjoy when you aren't working?

I am an avid reader, love music, enjoy coloring (my favorite color is glitter), and adore cuddling with my daughter, husband, and our “Waggin’ Tails Gang.”

What movie or song best describes you?

What movie or song best describes you? “[Eagle When She Flies](#)” by Dolly Parton. After losing my 20-year-old son three years ago, I have been hardened and softened in so many ways, and there is no question I am now both “a sparrow when she’s broken and an eagle when she flies.”

MONARCH IN THE NEWS

[Monarch launches post-Hurricane relief efforts](#)

[Monarch Shakers, Movers Bell Choir perform for retired school personnel](#)

[Town turns out for Monarch art exhibit at VOHC in Raeford](#)

[Local resident Diane Bowden receives Arc honor](#)