

Lead Story

The Meditation Movement is Taking Off at Monarch

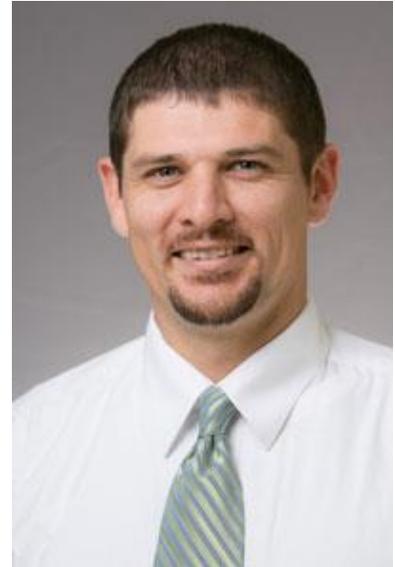


Meditation is already happening at companies like Apple, Google and Yahoo. It's rooted in ancient history, and is a booming billion-dollar industry today. Now Monarch is one of those companies joining in the movement, by offering a series of on-site meditation training sessions for employees around the state.

Clinical Operations Manager Karen Holst and Outpatient Therapist Jude Johnson launched the training called 'Changing Your Response to Stress' in Mecklenburg County in March. Over the course of three and a half hours, participants learned how the mind and body respond to stress, how mindfulness and meditation are used to reduce stress and practical mindfulness tools. There are periods of instruction and practice, followed by a two-hour webinar to serve as a refresher course.

The National Institutes of Health defines meditation as a mind and body practice. Becoming more aware, or mindful, of thoughts, feelings and sensations and observing them in a nonjudgmental way is at the foundation of meditating.

“Changing our response to stress in the workplace is vital. Work pressure is one of the main sources of stress for Americans today. If people in the workplace can learn mindfulness skills to mitigate the impact of stress, it will improve their work relationships, diminish burnout and result in the provision of quality services to customers and co-workers alike,” said Johnson.



According to a national poll conducted by NPR with assistance from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health, one in every four Americans admitted they experienced a higher level of stress the previous month, and half of all adults said they experienced a major stressful event in the past year. That is the equivalent of more than 115 million people and a clear sign that meditation training can be a major benefit to workplaces.

“Meditation is not meant to clear the mind, but rather make us more aware of the content of our minds without being swept away by the thoughts. Anyone can benefit from practicing this. It’s training for the mind and body which allows a person to deepen awareness, increase positive mood, enhance creativity and focus. It’s beneficial for people facing stress related to trauma, depression, anxiety and other medical problems like high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, and chronic pain,” Johnson added.

A common misconception about meditation is that there is only one way to practice it to experience the benefits. In reality, there are several ways. Holst and Johnson explore the basic practices in their training and give practical ways of applying them to daily life, as well as pointing to other resources that can help.



“Some apps like Headspace and Calm are helpful for beginners. In this course, we address sitting meditation, walking meditation, body scan meditation, loving kindness meditation, and gentle yoga practices. The intention behind this training is to teach all of the basic meditation practices and for the individual to decide what methods seem to suit them best in creating a dedicated meditation and mindfulness practice,” said Holst.

An internal grant for more than \$8,000 made the training possible. Feedback on the courses has been positive. For Holst and Johnson, the goal going forward is to continue gathering data and

results and make recommendations based on the feedback from employees who have already participated.

“We anticipate the need for further training for employees to aid them in becoming more resilient and compassionate in the face of stress. We are also moving forward with a business plan as we would like Monarch to consider a larger commitment to staff self-care through mindfulness and to provide a larger array of mindfulness services to the community and local businesses,” said Holst.

For more information and guidance on mindfulness and meditation techniques, check out these books and online resources:

Akeenmind.com with Jude Johnson

Tarabrach.com

[10-minute introduction to mindfulness](#) with Andy Puddicombe

Wherever You Go There You Are by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Hardwiring Happiness by Rick Hanson

True Refuge or Radical Acceptance by Tara Brach

Photos:

Middle-

Jude Johnson, MA, LMFT

Bottom-

Karen S. Holst, EdD, LCSW

Headlines

Hamlet Family Dollar Store Manager Is Extended Family for Circlewood Drive Residents



Most people feel like a trip to the drug store for daily essentials can be mundane.

But for the people who live at Monarch's Circlewood group home in Richmond County, a short walk to the Family Dollar next door is anything but.

"Hey William!"

It's a familiar greeting from the Circlewood residents to the Store Manager William Leviner who said it is the highlight of his day.

"They're like family. I've met everyone that stays there and they love talking to me. I love it too, it's like I'm their big brother," said Leviner.

Circlewood is a transitional home for people Monarch supports with mental health diagnoses. The goal is to get residents stable so they can move out and continue to live their lives in the community with little, to no supervision.

“He gets really familiar with them because that’s the closest store. When [the people we support] get unsupervised time they get to walk there on their own. They get what they need and when they talk to him he makes all of them feel welcome,” said Jessica Jordan, the residential manager at Circlewood.

One of Circlewood’s residents is Kristy Brady. She’s lived there for two years and says she looks forward to going to the store and seeing William, even for a quick routine trip.

“He’s a nice friend, he’s very helpful,” said Brady.



It’s a relationship that was established not long after people supported by Monarch moved into the home about four years ago.

Throughout the year and especially around the holidays, Leviner puts together gift baskets with items donated from the store and brings them to Circlewood. They often include soaps and other daily essentials, but holiday baskets come with even more goodies.

“When we get to donate stuff it’s usually like food, cookies, clothes and we get to do that at least three times a year,” said Leviner.

It is just one way Leviner has shown his support and has helped the residents feel more connected to the community. He also offers something priceless; his friendship on more difficult days.

“Just a few months after we moved here, he started getting to know the staff and the people we support. People would go to Family Dollar and William would sit outside and talk to them,” said Jordan.

There are days when Circlewood residents make multiple trips to the store. Leviner said he looks forward to their visits and they’re the highlight of his shift. His motivation for his generosity is purely for the love of helping others and brightening their day.

“I’d rather see someone smiling than being down,” he adds.

“It gives them someone to talk to besides staff because their families aren’t always involved, and sometimes [the staff] is all they have, so the comradery with William gives them another

outlet,” said Jordan. “It only takes a second to change someone’s day or even their life. William has taken that extra second in a day, and to some people that means everything.”

Photos:

Top-

Christian Rodriguez (left) with Kristy Brady (right) look forward to seeing Store Manager William Leviner.

Middle-

Hamlet Family Dollar Manager, William Leviner, says seeing people from Circlewood is the highlight of his day.

For Shelisha Campbell Writing is Therapy, but Her Work is Turning into Much More



Shelisha Campbell isn't one for sugar coating. Perhaps that's why her writing is so powerful.

As a self-described lifelong writer, Campbell's poetry has helped her through some of the most challenging times in her life, including her challenges with schizophrenia.

"I've been writing poetry since I was a little girl. It's therapy for me. It's from the heart and it's real. If I'm feeling angry or hurt, I write. I write about how God brings me through it and I make a negative situation a positive one," said Campbell.

Campbell arrived at Monarch about four years ago after exploring therapy options at other organizations in the Laurinburg area.

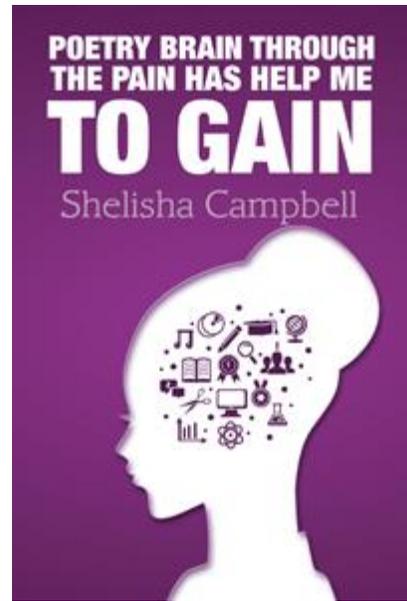
"I wanted somebody I could really trust. I could be up one minute and then be down the next. So, when I go to Monarch for my therapy, it does help me, but I can still help myself by writing. I can tell them how this helps me and it actually helps me communicate with my therapist, and that makes me feel good," said Campbell.

Campbell's therapist Louvonda Townsend said she agrees. Campbell's writing is a hobby that is encouraged for her therapy.

“Shelisha has made positive changes in herself through writing and in therapy. She is not very trusting to systems and struggles with filtering her thoughts, so when she writes, she is very honest with her emotions. I encourage her to continue to write to express herself with words and not anger or violence,” said Townsend.

It’s clear Campbell’s work is more than a hobby, it’s a talent. Her writing has turned into two published books of poetry: “[Poetry Brain Through the Pain Has Help Me to Gain](#)” and its [second volume](#), which were both published in 2015.

“It is success stories like this that help others find courage to overcome the stigma society has with mental health. She didn’t allow her struggles to debilitate or define her. Instead, she embraced them with great confidence and a lot of determination to achieve whatever she set her mind on. Shelisha is living proof that maintaining a positive mind will lead to a positive life,” said Rosa Locklear, a referral coordinator at Monarch.



The first book focuses on Campbell’s personal struggles. Poems like Life and If This Was You take you through some of Campbell’s experiences with loss, looking for love, how her faith and her children keep her going through her struggles with schizophrenia, and even her disdain for social media in *Face-book*.

“I don’t Facebook, I face God,” said Campbell. “Volume two is about relating to and living in a world with issues like immigration, women’s rights, changes in the White House. It hits all different points,” said Campbell. “People with mental health diagnoses are really smart. If we have someone positive telling us we can do it and helping us through it, that plays a huge part in our success,” said Campbell.

That same sentiment is shared by Karen Nance, also a therapist at Monarch. Nance and Campbell first crossed paths about 15 years ago, when Campbell was at one of her lowest points. She called a mobile crisis team where Nance was working at the time. It was then that Nance got a glimpse of Campbell’s writing and how it helps her cope.

“I can’t take credit for Shelisha’s God-given talent, but I always have encouraged writing as a coping strategy. With any kind of mental health disorder, you have to figure out what works best for each person and her writing does for her,” said Nance.

Nance said she’s excited about Campbell’s success and growth since the first time they met and looks forward to catching up with her.

“No one should be limited in striving to achieve their goals no matter what their diagnosis. To remind someone they are good enough, that they have a right to achieve is what therapy is all about,” added Nance.

“She struggles daily due to the severity of her diagnosis, but she is goal oriented and highly motivated to provide a better life for her children,” said Townsend.

Campbell says her biggest inspiration are her three children. She has two boys; a 13-year-old and an eight-year-old. Her youngest is her seven-year-old daughter. All three children have been diagnosed with ADHD, but like Campbell, they are battling through. She said her youngest son is already exercising his own writing talent.

“He’ll write about how people call him ugly, how he makes good grades because I stay on him and he can’t go outside and play until his homework is done. He wrote one called Black Child. It’s pretty cool because it’s so unique and that’s what inspired me to write Black Woman,” said Campbell.

While writing has served as a tool for her and her family to cope with their diagnoses, she said she hopes her poetry will help anyone who reads it regardless of where they are from or their struggles in life.

“I love writing and I love helping people. I hope and pray that my writing will touch someone. Not just people struggling with their mental health, but anyone. We all have good days and bad days,” said Campbell.”

Campbell plans to continue publishing poetry and to schedule book signings. She also has two novels in the works with tentative release dates set for later this year.

Photos:

Top-

Shelisha Campbell with her book, “Poetry Brain Through the Pain Has Help Me to Gain.”

Middle-

Photo courtesy of AuthorHouse Self Publishing.

May is Mental Health Month: Monarch is Expanding its Services in Tandem With the Evolving Mental Health Movement



Many people suffer from mental health conditions silently and without support, but every May, organizations like Monarch, and individuals across the United States work diligently to change that as the nation observes Mental Health Awareness Month.

Local awareness events, mental health screenings and other efforts help educate communities and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues.

“A lot of people don’t understand that mental health conditions are medical conditions. What I explain to the people we serve is, a psychiatrist is similar to your dermatologist or your cardiologist, for example. They treat medical conditions. And the number one prescribed class of medication in the United States is anti-depressants,” said William Garrot, a behavioral health therapist at Monarch.

According to National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI), one in five Americans will be affected by a mental health condition in their lifetime, and many more are affected through friends and family who struggle. While mental health education should be year-round, observing May as

Mental Health Awareness Month is a reminder of how important it is to know the risk factors and symptoms, as well as the array of integrated treatment services available, so that people can be empowered to receive the help they need, when they need it.

Monarch is spearheading the evolution of mental health care in North Carolina in numerous ways. The first is by providing Facility-Based Crisis services, via a new center in Lumberton and a future location currently being built in east Charlotte. Last month, Monarch broke ground on a new Child & Adolescent Facility Based Crisis Center, the first of its kind in the state. The new 16-bed facility will serve people in Mecklenburg County ages six to 17.

“If someone goes to an emergency room at a hospital, they could literally be stuck there for days waiting for a bed without proper treatment. Meanwhile, the hospital must have staff look after them or have police officers stay with the patient or transport them several hours away for an available bed, so it can be a disaster,” adds Garrot. “Facility-Based Crisis services are helpful because they provide people with local treatment and are part of the same agency where they can get their outpatient services, so it provides continuity of care.”

Another way Monarch is addressing the evolving mental health needs of the community is through a recent partnership with Cone Health where our professionals are providing person-first treatment for co-occurring mental health and substance use issues in Greensboro.

“One person supported through this program came to us with depression and was using opiates. Since she’s been coming, her depression has been treated, she stopped using opiates and she is back in school. We’re working on getting her connected with a group as well, like Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous to build natural supports,” said Garrot.

Monarch is committed to providing quality services by identifying the needs of each community and invites everyone throughout the month of May and year-round, to take NAMI’s [“StigmaFree Pledge”](#) and help spread awareness about mental illness.

Inside Monarch

9th Annual Dreams Take Flight Golf Tournament Raises Over \$60,000



Friday, April 21, more than 110 golfers from across North Carolina gathered at the Tillery Tradition Club for Monarch's 9th Annual Dreams Take Flight Golf Tournament.

The event kicked off with a boxed lunch provided by Kerr Long Term Care Pharmacy and Key Benefit Administrators, and a raffle which included an iPad Air donated by CDW. Before the golfers headed out to the green for more than four hours to enjoy the warm, perfect golfing weather, Monarch bestowed the first annual Robert Q. "Bill" Collier Cup to Martha Collier, honoring her husband's long-standing commitment to Monarch and the people we support. The Collier Cup will become an annual tradition, recognizing the tournament's first place team each year.

"Bill Collier shaped the level of community involvement we have from local businesses, sponsors and players. He eagerly volunteered to tell everyone he met about Monarch and the

services we provide, and we want to honor him for the years of advocacy he contributed to our agency,” said Executive Vice President and Chief Development Officer at Monarch, Blake Martin.

Corporate sponsorships are an integral part of the tournament each year. Returning as this year’s title sponsor was First Citizens Bank; the platinum sponsor was BB&T Insurance Services and Gardner Skelton Attorneys at Law was this year’s gold sponsor. All in all, more than 32 businesses provided snacks, beverage cart support, tee sponsorships, and hole-in-one car sponsorships.

“The golf tournament grows every year and this year did not disappoint. All of the golfers are always eager to help Monarch raise money because they know their contributions go directly to our programs and the services we provide,” added Laurie Weaver, senior director of philanthropy.

The tournament wrapped up with hors d'oeuvres and awarded this year’s Collier Cup to the First-Place Team from Clint Miller Exterminating in Mt. Pleasant.

To view the 2017 tournament photo album on Facebook, [click here](#).

To view the 2017 tournament recap video on YouTube, [click here](#).

Photo: Monarch's First Annual Robert Q. "Bill" Collier Cup

New Performance Management Program – The R.O.A.D. to Performance Excellence – is Now Live on Employee Self Service (ESS)



Performance Management Program, The R.O.A.D. to Performance Excellence, launched earlier this spring as part of Monarch’s continuing effort to increase employee engagement and develop its existing talent.

The program is based on feedback gathered by the human resources team from last year’s employee engagement survey and focus groups, and serves as a new and efficient way to evaluate and measure individual employee performance.

The R.O.A.D. acronym for the program stands for:

R – Review and reward individual performance

O – Objectives (and competencies) will be assigned to each employee

A – Assessments will be conducted

D – Development opportunities will be established

“Our goal with this program is to ensure that everyone who is part of Monarch’s workforce understands his or her role and responsibilities. Through active feedback, managers will continue helping develop their team members’ strengths and holding each person accountable for their goals,” said Vice President of Human Resources, Nanette Davis.

At this point in the program, everyone at Monarch should have viewed all three introductory videos located on Sharepoint* and reviewed the competencies and objectives they will be measured on (located in ESS) together with their managers.

Throughout the month of June, all employees will need to submit their self-assessments for the five goals they were assigned. Manager assessments will take place towards the end of June through the beginning of July.

Videos on both assessment processes taking place in June and July will be made available later this month.

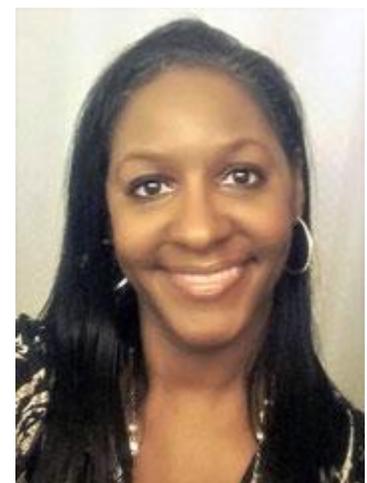
Employees with any questions or concerns about The R.O.A.D. to Performance Excellence process, should contact their direct supervisor.

**In Sharepoint, click Employee Self Service Training tab located on the right → Click on the folder Performance Management Program to view all three videos.*

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Stacy Harrington

Stacy Harrington, a registered nurse, has worked for nearly two years in Monarch’s Raleigh behavioral health office, where she completes assessments, administers injections and checks vital signs among many other duties. She works diligently to provide key information to the people we support in that office so they are equipped to control and manage their own health. As we observe Mental Health Month, which seeks to raise awareness about mental health and wellness, Stacy believes education is important and wants to do everything within her power to ensure patients receive quality care and are healthy, well-adjusted and happy.



What does a typical workday look like for you?

I currently cover two providers so my work day begins with ensuring both have a current schedule for the day. Afterward, I complete assessments on the people we support which

include vital signs, weight and body mass index, and I update demographic information and offer appropriate patient education. Between the appointments, I answer calls that come into the nurse line, complete injections, if needed, prior authorizations and follow up on lab work, etc.

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

Patient teaching or education. I feel knowledge is power and when you educate the people we support it empowers them to do better.

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

When I received a thank you card from a person for helping her get affordable medicine. That gesture made me realize my work isn't in vain and I am appreciated for my efforts.

What do you enjoy when you aren't working?

Spending time with my two-year-old grandson and all our activities, from basketball and tee ball to just watching all his favorite TV shows.

What movie or song best describes you?

["Put A Praise On It"](#) by Tasha Cobbs. I have been singing in church since I was five years old and I will continue to put a praise on it whenever and wherever I can!

MONARCH IN THE NEWS

The Stokes News - [Monarch Hosts Art Programming Workshop at Stokes Opportunity Center](#)

Charlotte Business Journal - [People On The Move: Dr. Sharyn Comeau](#)

Pilot - [Eye Candy Gallery Opens Exhibit of Sobat's Abstracts](#)

The Gaston Gazette - [Center is Given Award for Mental Health Efforts](#)