

# Reaching Dreams

## 'HERE'S TO STARTING OVER'

Learn How Veronica Tim Stands Up to Stigma and Encourages Others that Mental Health Matters

**PAGE 9**



# Table of CONTENTS



## MONARCH AWARDED \$1.6MM FEDERAL GRANT

To expand mental health and substance use disorder services in Stanly County

5

## THE GIFT OF SERVICE

Monarch's volunteer impact in numbers

6

## HOME AT LAST

Columbus Industries settles into new location

7

## MAKING MUSIC

Monarch Creative Arts and Community Center embraces new music therapy program

15



*On the cover: Veronica Tim creates a grassroots campaign to give others hope, change attitudes about mental health and raise funds to support treatment. Photo by Bert VanderVeen.*



**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



As I continue to reflect on an outstanding anniversary year, my thoughts turn to Monarch's legacy. Our company was established 60 years ago by leaders with an overarching dedication to support and serve

people with disabilities. Our focus to help people find jobs, foster community integration and outreach, leadership, education and awareness about topics important to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illness and substance use disorders remains. That vision has successfully guided Monarch's mission since 1958.

A company's legacy is only as big as the commitment, passion and hearts of the people who are devoted to it. The people of Monarch have always given their all to the people we support, our communities and this organization. Our sense of service and giving back (Pg. 6) runs deep.

At Monarch, we aim to treat all people fairly. I have lived my life as an advocate for people with disabilities – and stood up for the underrepresented. We are committed as a trauma-informed company to foster compassion and operate as a diverse and culturally competent organization. Race, religion, culture, gender, sexual orientation, zip code, ability or inability to pay should never be factors that exclude anyone from access to fair treatment or quality health care. We will continue to identify and hire professionals who reflect the people of the communities we serve to promote fairness and trust.

We are proud of Veronica Tim (Pg. 9) and Rev. Debra Hopkins (Pg. 12), two courageous women, for sharing about the support they received at Monarch. Most importantly, they are speaking out and educating people with their inspiring stories. They are sending the message that it's okay to seek mental health treatment.

Access is key. I'm excited about the opening of our new Behavioral Health Urgent Care in Raleigh (Pg. 6). The conversation about the importance of mental health care must continue. It's devastating to think people don't get help due to the lack of access or fear of being ostracized.

Research reveals racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. are less likely to seek mental health services or delay treatment until symptoms are severe. As you will read in this issue, some people of color who seek support for mental illness have mistrust and fear. Clinical stereotyping and biases that practitioners or mental health professionals have about certain cultures can prevent people from getting support and has been known to influence diagnoses. The Commonwealth Fund Minority Health Survey revealed 43 percent of African Americans and 28 percent of Latinos, compared to 5 percent of whites, expressed feeling discrimination in clinical settings.

I believe the most substantial lesson from our company's legacy is the visionary approach to tomorrow's Monarch. We were founded in Stanly County and, although, we are now a leading, statewide provider of services, we have never forgotten our roots. In fact, we are expanding behavioral health services in Stanly in an impactful way with a federally funded \$1.6 million grant (Pg. 5). We will continue to identify greater opportunities to serve in rural and underserved communities.

People are important. We need to treat all people with respect and dignity. We need to provide the very best we can, every single day – and we do. I am proud and humbled to be able to lead this organization, and I look forward to the future with excitement and anticipation.

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

## WRITING HELPS POET SHELISHA CAMPBELL COPE WITH MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

Published poet Shelisha Campbell uses her writing skills for two reasons: as a healthy way to express what she is feeling and to cope with the struggles of mental illness.

The author, with several additional poetry books and novels in the works, is an unapologetic advocate of honesty, mental health and expressing feelings in constructive ways like her writing.

"When things hurt me, I have to write about it. Through my poetry, I like to think I am helping others to shine brighter," she admits.

Campbell believes she is living a better life because of the therapy she receives at Monarch's behavioral health outpatient office in Laurinburg. Therapy and writing have proven to be life-saving tools Campbell uses to navigate her schizophrenia diagnosis.

Monarch Therapist Louvonda Townsend agrees that Campbell's writing has helped her cope with mental

health struggles.

"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," says Townsend.

Campbell is grateful for Townsend's appreciation of her writing talent, which often mirrors her real-life experiences. "The connection I have with my therapist is good. She has read my books and understands me," Campbell says.

Writing began as a way of coping in sixth grade following the death of Campbell's brother: "I always wrote, and it literally helped me . . . I can vent when I write," Campbell confides. Two editions of her first publication, *Poetry Brain Through the Pain Has Help Me To Gain*, were published in 2015.

Monarch Referral Coordinator Rosa Locklear said she is proud of Campbell's accomplishments and has become one of her biggest supporters.

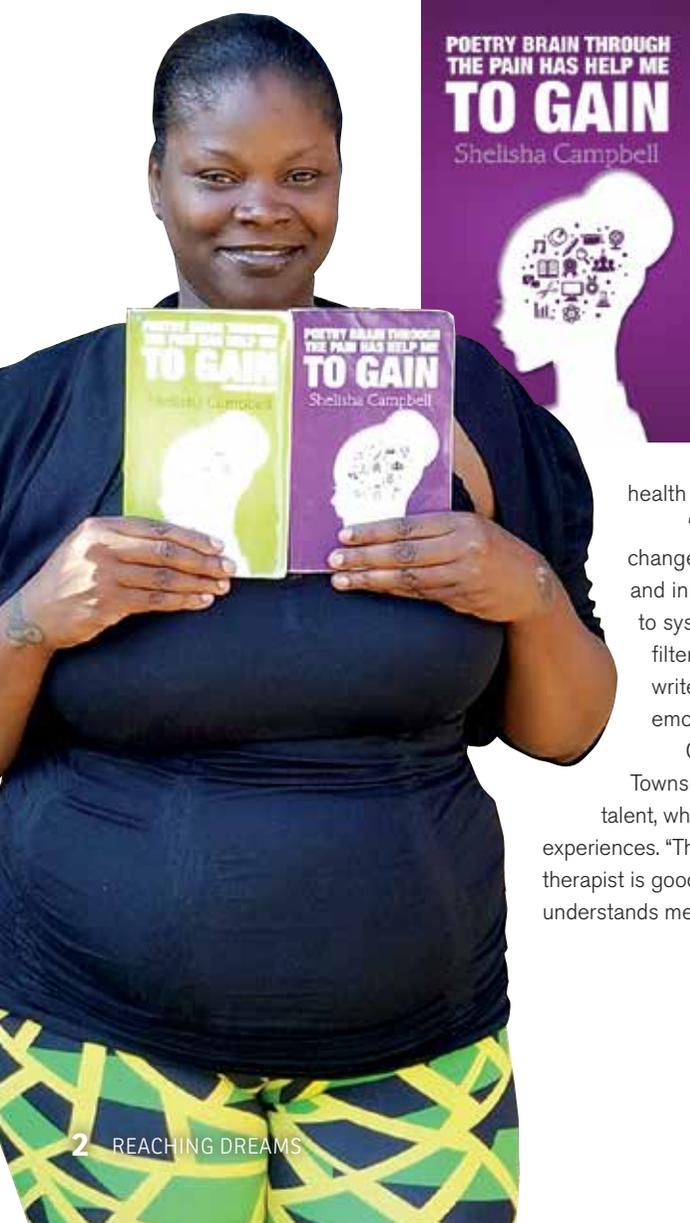
"It is success stories like this that help others find courage to overcome the stigma society has with mental health. She didn't allow her struggles to debilitate or define her," Locklear shares.

Campbell not only deals with her own mental health, but an attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) diagnosis for each of her three children, two sons and a daughter. However, she says her children serve as her biggest inspiration and they are coping well: "I want to be an example for my children. I feel it is very important to be a role model for my children."

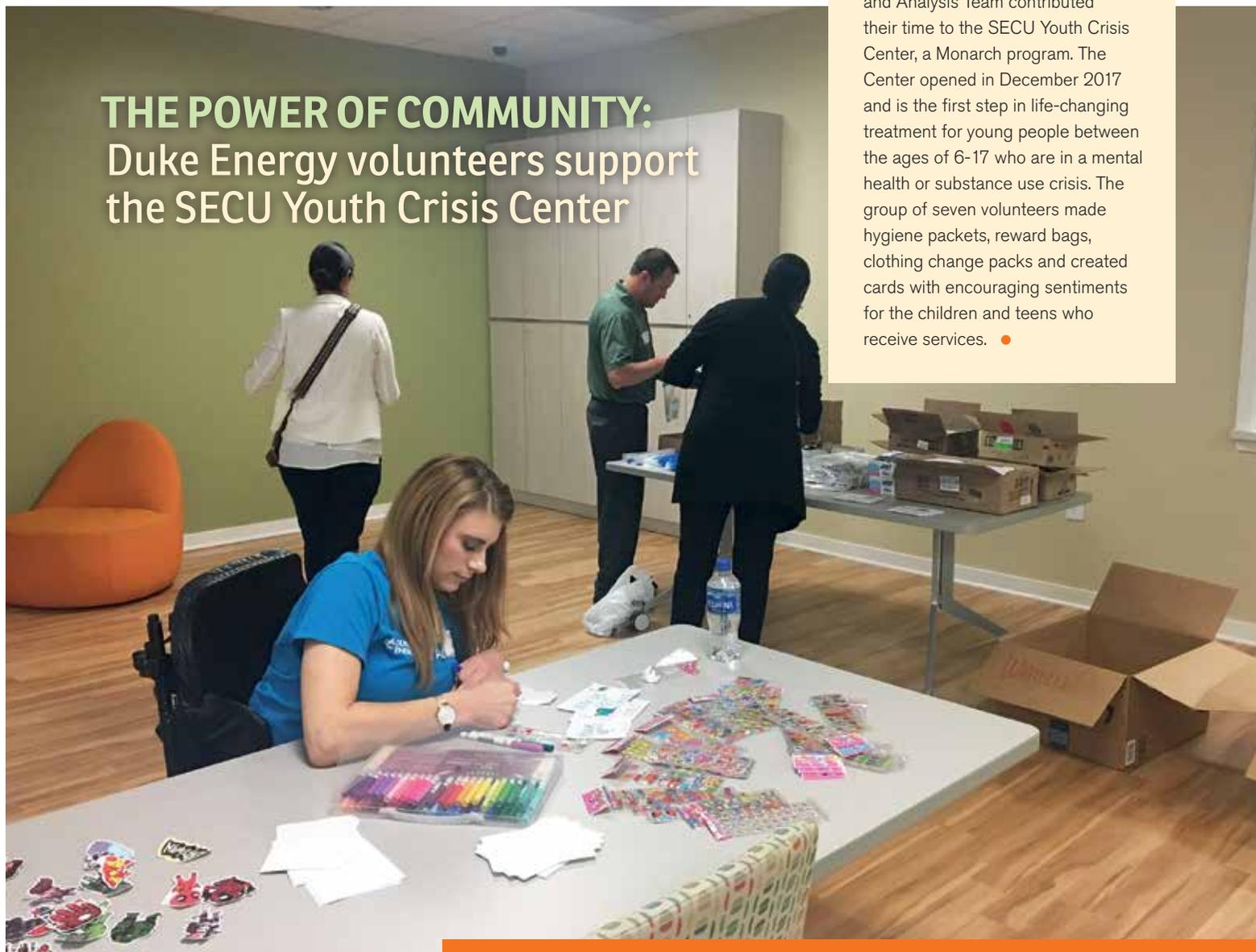
Townsend believes Campbell's commitment to her children and maintaining her mental health is key to her progress. "She struggles daily due to the severity of her diagnosis, but she is goal oriented and highly motivated to provide a better life for her children," compliments Townsend.

Looking toward the future, Campbell has begun a job search. She knows she can rely on her Monarch therapist and put pen to paper when needed as she navigates this new chapter of her journey. ●

*By Melissa Tanferno, Senior Communications Specialist*



## THE POWER OF COMMUNITY: Duke Energy volunteers support the SECU Youth Crisis Center



Duke Energy's Financial Planning and Analysis Team contributed their time to the SECU Youth Crisis Center, a Monarch program. The Center opened in December 2017 and is the first step in life-changing treatment for young people between the ages of 6-17 who are in a mental health or substance use crisis. The group of seven volunteers made hygiene packets, reward bags, clothing change packs and created cards with encouraging sentiments for the children and teens who receive services. ●

## Monarch names Dr. Alexandra L. Spessot as Chief Medical Officer



telemedicine processes in North Carolina meet the ever-evolving healthcare standards. She is

In August 2018, Dr. Alexandra Spessot joined Monarch as Chief Medical Officer to ensure that all medical administrative processes for the organization's behavioral health locations and

responsible for providing oversight and direction for nearly 50 medical providers statewide to ensure a continuum of excellent care for approximately 30,000 people who receive services from Monarch.

As part of Monarch's strategic plan, Dr. Spessot will also help the organization foster positive relationships with local stakeholders, legislators, potential donors, payers and physician groups as it relates to behavioral health services.

Dr. Spessot most recently served as the director of psychiatric emergency care at the

Durham VA Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina. She is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and is a member of the American Psychiatric Association. She completed her residency training at Duke University Medical Center in General Adult Psychiatry. She earned her medical degree from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies and Sociology from The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. ●



*Pictured (l-r): Lee Allen, chair of the Monarch Board of Directors, Avery Thatcher and Avery's mother, Angela.*

## Wake County middle school student speaks up for mental health

Avery Thatcher, a then seventh-grade student at Wake Forest Middle School, was chosen as the 2018 McIntyre Youth Leadership Challenge winner by the North Carolina Bar Association this past spring. Her award-winning speech discussed mental health challenges in schools and the community, and how Monarch's services are helping to meet a tremendous mental health need. Thatcher was honored with a monetary donation, in her name, to the charity of her choice – and she selected Monarch, which has five behavioral health outpatient offices in Wake County.

The McIntyre Youth Leadership Challenge, established by Poyner Spruill, a North Carolina law firm, and former Congressman Mike McIntyre, is a new program designed to provide students the opportunity for civic engagement and

community leadership. The program was inaugurated before the North Carolina Court of Appeals during the recent Law Day celebration hosted this spring by the North Carolina Bar Association in Raleigh.

"It is our hope that this new Youth Leadership Challenge will light a fire in young people to demonstrate how through good citizenship, civic engagement and dynamic leadership, they can carry the torch forward and challenge themselves and others to discover new solutions to the problems their communities face," says McIntyre.

Student participants were asked to consider a challenge they see in their local community, advocate for the necessity to mitigate that challenge, and then speak to the actions they would take upon returning to their community to lessen the impact of that

challenge moving forward. Thatcher stated in her speech that since the Columbine High School tragedy in 1999, 122 lives have been lost to school shooters and the middle school student believes mental health and lack of community resources play a bigger part in the national issue. She was selected as the winner among four finalists.

"I wanted to choose Monarch, because I felt like it was really cool that you guys were offering your services to everybody. You did it without regard to people's ability to pay. You did it for everyone. People of all ages and incomes... and that kind of tied into my speech," Thatcher explained. "I think you [Monarch] are a really good example of what we need more of in our country since mental health issues are a big problem." ●

# Monarch awarded \$1.6MM federal grant to expand mental health and substance use disorder services in Stanly County

*This grant will assist Monarch in establishing a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) to focus on mental health and substance use disorder needs in Stanly County, ensuring integration of care with primary care physicians through the use of care coordination. The newly implemented CCBHC services began in October.*



Photo by Bert VanderVeen.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded Monarch a \$1.6 million grant to provide Stanly County vital, expanded services for people with serious mental illness and substance use disorders through the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model.

Over the next two years Monarch estimates it will serve over 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 complex health conditions. Monarch's newly established CCBHC is located at the current behavioral health outpatient office at 350 Pee Dee Ave., Albemarle.

The CCBHC model is part of the National Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Expansion Act. This legislation expands the number of CCBHCs to increase access to community mental health and substance use treatment services while improving Medicaid reimbursement. CCBHC key goals include mental health and addiction treatment access; opioid crisis service expansion; primary care health screenings; expanded behavioral health support for veterans; and collaboration among community care partners.

"Monarch is honored to receive this significant grant allowing our dedicated staff to expand mental health and addiction services to the Stanly County community. We appreciate the confidence placed in us by the federal government to continue providing valuable assistance to individuals and families who will benefit from this expansion of services," said Monarch President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Peggy Terhune.

Monarch's CCBHC includes the following services at the Stanly County location:

- Crisis services to encompass a telephone hotline, in-person crisis response and same-day appointment access
- Comprehensive clinical assessments addressing both physical and behavioral health needs
- Coordination of services with primary care physicians
- Person and family centered treatment plans
- Introduction of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) model as an outpatient, office-based opioid treatment program
- Tailored care for active duty military and veterans to ensure they receive the unique health support essential to their treatment.

"Statistics indicate that Monarch serves the most severely impacted communities across North Carolina, many of which are rural and where support is critical, like Stanly County. Recent research suggests that mental health and substance use disorders are likely to worsen in the next few years, so the grant comes at a pivotal time to immediately address those needs," Terhune noted.

According to a June 2018 report from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health, Stanly County has the state's highest rate for all opioid overdoses that resulted in emergency room visits. A similar report from the same agency ranks the county 18th in the state for suicide rates. From 2012-2016, the health department recorded 47 such deaths, an average of 11 per year.

"We are thankful to our federal partners for granting us this significant award, and U.S. Representative Richard Hudson and Cardinal Innovations Healthcare for entrusting Monarch in delivering this expansion of services to help the people who live in Stanly County – our community," Terhune said. "If we can save just one life, our efforts will be more than worth it"

The Excellence in Mental Health Act initially offered funding to support CCBHC services to a limited number of states, excluding North Carolina. The SAMHSA grant will offer continued support of Monarch's CCBHC effort with the possibility of an additional award of \$1.5 million for the program's second year, and the project is 100 percent federally funded. ●

## THE GIFT OF SERVICE: Monarch's volunteer impact in numbers

Monarch volunteers have collected canned goods and served food for the homeless in soup kitchens, performed and sang for seniors at nursing centers, participated in Adopt-A-Street programs, delivered Meals on Wheels, sponsored blood drives, planted seedlings at public state parks, worked with master gardeners to beautify senior centers, and baked treats for animals at Humane Societies among so many other good deeds.

Last year, people with disabilities supported by Monarch gave their talent, energy and time – exactly 28,099 hours of their time.

From the mountains to the coast, that dedication and level of service to communities across the state yielded an economic impact of \$657,797.59, according to the Independent Sector, a national organization that estimates the value of volunteer time for North Carolina at \$23.41 per service hour.

"We are extremely proud of the people supported by Monarch for tirelessly working in their communities as volunteers," said Jim Kelley, chief operations officer – long-term services and support. "I am always amazed each year at the economic impact and the difference the people

we support make in our communities statewide."

Passionately speaking about his volunteer service, it is visible how important it is to Bobby Grose to somehow, some way give back.

Grose, 54, who resides at the Oakwood Acres group residence in Randolph County, was employed within a vocational workshop for about 34 years before retiring this past March. Without the workshop opportunity and newly retired, Grose immersed himself in his volunteer work.

"Bobby loves being part of the community. He likes to have fun, as well as talk to and ask people questions when he is volunteering," says Residential Development Specialist Betty McDowell, who works one-on-one with Grose.

For the past two years, Grose, along with McDowell, volunteer at Christians United Outreach Center's (CUOC) food pantry in Asheboro. Randolph County's CUOC assists the working poor, temporarily unemployed, disabled and elderly. It is a collaborative, urban ministry of area churches with the CUOC providing furniture, household items, clothing, appliances and financial assistance to those in need.



*Betty McDowell, a residential developmental specialist at Monarch, and Bobby Grose, a person supported by Monarch, give two thumbs up to the importance of volunteering. Grose's service to his community has made a tremendous impact.*

Grose volunteers at CUOC three days a week for three-hour shifts, making boxes so it easier for families to carry out canned goods. McDowell explains that Grose is a pro at constructing the boxes that help make the food pantry run smoothly, assembling about 200 during each shift. McDowell has even given him the nickname, the Box Man, which makes Grose smile wide while giving two thumbs-up. ●

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ROUNDUP:

### Monarch launches life-saving initiatives in Stanly and Wake Counties

Monarch has launched two new behavioral health programs to address dire community health needs in Stanly and Wake Counties. In Stanly County, Monarch started implementing the Medicated Assistant Treatment (MAT) model in late fall, which is an outpatient, office-based opioid treatment program. Along with medication to help alleviate withdrawal symptoms and cravings, the MAT program provides ongoing individual and group therapy services and case management to increase the recovery skills needed to maintain recovery.

"As an organization, we have an obligation to be more actively involved in offering solutions to opioid-related health issues occurring in our community. Stanly County had the highest rate of opioid-related deaths in June 2018 – more than any other county in North Carolina and we have made a commitment to adjust our service offerings to keep up with the demand," said Chris Thompson, senior vice president

of operations for behavioral health at Monarch.

In Wake County, Monarch was asked by Alliance Behavioral Health to open a Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the second program of its kind in the state. The projected opening date is January 2019. The new program will offer a diversion from the use of emergency departments or hospitals in order to better serve individuals experiencing behavioral health crises. Citizens from Wake will receive a rapid assessment by a licensed clinician and a psychiatrist; stabilization of their mental health or substance use condition; and disposition to the proper level of care within a targeted two-hour time frame.

"Our goal is to continue to evolve our service delivery so that we are available where and when people need us. Both the MAT and Urgent Care programs will help us do just that," explained Thompson. ●



## HOME AT LAST: Columbus Industries settles into new location after being displaced by hurricane

June 1 was a warm, sunny day for the 37 Columbus Industries participants and staff because after nearly two years of searching, they officially moved into their new home. Beautifully crafted artwork adorns walls and nearly every corner of the new facility and the new location is reflective of the high-spirited people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and programs offered at Columbus Industries.

“This new location is like a new beginning for all of us. It is an opportunity to come with new ideas and foster new community relationships,” says Susie Nathan, community engagement team leader at Columbus Industries.

More than two years ago, the Monarch team was in search of a new home to relocate Columbus Industries. Little did they know, that need would become more urgent as Hurricane Matthew strengthened and plowed toward the North Carolina coast in October 2016 resulting

in loss of life, leaving thousands without homes and more than a billion dollars in damage across the state. Columbus Industries also sustained damage.

Several Monarch homes, day programs and outpatient offices in eastern North Carolina were flooded and many staff members and people we support were completely displaced. Despite losing so much themselves, the people supported and staff members at Columbus Industries helped others in need within the community by assisting with clean up, as well as delivering food and water.

More than 60 people including local elected officials, community partners, people we support, staff, family and friends gathered in August during an open house to celebrate the new, beautiful location and a bright, fresh beginning for the Monarch day program in Whiteville and its participants who have happily settled in at 1222 South Madison St.

Just as many were recovering from

Hurricane Matthew, another powerful storm – Hurricane Florence – blew through North Carolina with powerful winds that made its way inland. The state took a severe hit and Monarch facilities themselves experienced damage and losses. Dozens of residents of Monarch homes in the eastern part of the state were evacuated, but most people and employees were able to safely return to their homes and to program sites. Some Monarch properties sustained damages during Hurricane Florence, and Columbus Industries and several other Monarch day programs in affected areas, were closed for several days after the hurricane due to power outages or some water damage. Columbus Industries reopened a short time after the storm and has been operating seamlessly since that time.

“We are grateful to be able to develop a real sense of togetherness now that we’re stable in our new home,” adds Nathan. ●

## EXPANDING OUR REACH: Monarch alongside community partners host "Beyond Behaviors" and "Suicide: The Ripple Effect" events

On July 31, David Pitonyak Ph.D. presented "Beyond Behaviors: Supporting Competence, Confidence and Well-Being," to more than 200 people at Alliance Behavioral Healthcare in Durham, North Carolina. Monarch partnered with Cardinal Innovations Healthcare, North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities, Vaya Health, Alliance Behavioral Healthcare and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to bring Pitonyak to North Carolina to host the workshop on how to deal with the difficult behaviors often experienced by people who care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Pitonyak has provided consultation and training for people, families and professionals throughout the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico, England and Ireland. His experience includes working with people in a variety of settings including home and professionally staffed residential settings and schools; supported, competitive job sites; sheltered workshops; and, day activity programs.

"We were very fortunate to bring David



to North Carolina and learned so much from his presentation," said Monarch President/CEO Dr. Peggy Terhune. "He helped us to reaffirm that the work we all do as providers is to help people find meaningful and enduring relationships. I am grateful to our partners

who helped us to organize this event, all who attended and to our friend David."

This fall, Monarch also partnered with the Mecklenburg, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) and other partners to showcase Kevin Hines' film "Suicide: The Ripple Effect." The documentary focuses on the devastating effects of suicide and the journey of Kevin Hines, who at age 19, attempted to take his life by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge. Hines is now a world-renowned mental health advocate, motivational speaker and author who travels the globe spreading a message of hope, recovery and wellness. The film addresses the positive ripple effects of advocacy, inspiration and hope that are helping millions of people heal and stay alive.

Monarch and its partners will host a series of community screenings of the film in Charlotte in November for student leaders from area high schools, parents, teachers and the general public. Experts will be available to answer questions and initiate discussions about suicide prevention and mental health services. ●

## THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES: Monarch and Arc of Stanly Boards host 60th Anniversary reception

"This has been an extraordinary year of celebration for Monarch. This reception honored the visionary leaders, families and community members who laid the foundation for all that Monarch has become."

— LEE ALLEN, chair of the Monarch Board of Directors

On Wednesday, Oct. 17, more than 50 current and past board members, current and past Arc of Stanly members, individual and business donors in Stanly County and surrounding areas, and community leaders gathered for Monarch's 60th Anniversary reception at Lucky Clay's

Farm in Norwood, North Carolina. The evening offered a chance for those who have long been committed to Monarch to celebrate the many milestones the company has experienced over the years. Attendees were also treated to a performance by the SIS "Singing in Style" Choir from Monarch's day program in Albemarle. ●

► See Monarch's Facebook page for event photos.

# 'HERE'S TO STARTING OVER'

**MONARCH AND GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN HELPS VERONICA TIM 'FEEL ALIVE,' SHATTER CULTURAL BARRIERS AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS**

Veronica Tim literally lights up when she discusses the mental health awareness campaign she's created called: "Here's to Starting Over (HTSO)." Through the grassroots effort, she hopes to change attitudes about mental illness and raise funds to support treatment.

The Lexington, N.C. resident, wife and mother of two young children, is in a great place, but she has experienced some darkness. She is using her experience and voice to help others to get support, find hope and help put an end to the discrimination and shame that surrounds mental illness, especially among populations where mental health is sometimes ignored.

Cultural influences can affect how people cope with mental illness and seek treatment. Studies show some Asian communities prefer avoidance of upsetting thoughts with regard to personal problems rather than outwardly expressing that distress. African-American groups have been shown to be more likely than whites to handle personal problems and distress



on their own, or to rely on their spirituality for support. Cultural factors often determine how much support people have from their families and communities, as well as where they seek treatment – a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, primary care physician, clergy member or other provider.

"I understand how sad and frustrating and dark it can get," explained Tim, who is Cambodian

suicide and 'went away' for a week, and it was very hard to be away from my home and my family... but even that didn't push me to get help the way I should have."

According to the National Institute of Mental Health and the World Health Organization, Tim's story is not unique. Minorities' mental health experience has been greatly affected by culture and how society views that culture. Racial and

and re-engage within their communities, White said.

"I don't encourage people to disconnect from their communities because that's part of their identity," White explained. "Disconnecting from the community is disconnecting from themselves. I want to teach people about healthy boundaries and help them to identify how to integrate into their environments, so they can maintain healthy relationships despite the fear of seeking the needed treatment!"

## DISPARITIES IN MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Although Debra Hopkins credits Monarch for being the "springboard for her recovery," she said there are people in minority or marginalized communities who don't get the behavioral health care they need because they lack transportation, access, health insurance or information.

"I'm so grateful for what the organization [Monarch] has done for me," said Hopkins, who is African American. "People of color, or minorities in general, experience a hidden fear. And stigma prevents many of us from getting the necessary exams and follow-up treatment. We are often told we shouldn't see that doctor or take that medication, and it keeps us away from getting well."

Although anyone can develop a mental health disorder, African Americans sometimes experience more severe forms of mental health conditions due to unmet needs and other barriers. According to a report from the Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, African Americans are 20 percent more likely to experience serious mental health problems than the general population and also are more likely to experience certain risk factors, such as homelessness or exposure to violence, that increase the risk for developing a mental health condition.

As difficult as it is for anyone to get proper mental health care in the United States, it's even harder for racial, ethnic, religious and gender minorities. In addition to the issues Hopkins described, there are added burdens of access to quality care.

Jackie Garcia, LCSW, a behavioral health therapist in Monarch's Charlotte outpatient office, said Monarch provides a safe space for people to seek treatment, despite who they are and how they come to Monarch. She said by "creating the right atmosphere, the person does feel safe to share and to get well."

Garcia, who has been a therapist for nearly a decade, has lived in New York and moved to Charlotte from Connecticut three years ago.



*Tim debuted her campaign during this year's National Night Out event in Lexington.*

American. "My goal with this campaign is to help others, let them know they are not alone. There is help. Resources are available. I want to help end the stigma. I want those who don't understand to know just how real it can get. I want them to know that it could be anyone."

Tim knows firsthand. She struggled with anxiety and depression as early as middle school, and her illness worsened throughout high school. At 25, she continues her battle and was recently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Hearing that news was surprising, but added stress came from the stigma she feared from her community. She sought help from Monarch after realizing she could not face the journey alone.

"In the Asian-American community, mental illness is very frowned upon," Tim says. "Before I went to Monarch, I was trying to handle my battles by myself. I thought I was strong enough. I constantly have replays about the sadness from not having family here with me, the nasty words my mom used to say to me, and it was just a number of things that gave me a mental breakdown. A few years ago, I almost committed

ethnic minorities in the United States are less likely than white counterparts to seek mental health treatment, or they often delay treatment until symptoms are severe.

When Tim arrived at Monarch, she was looking for support during a critical time in her life. Her family and community were not open to discussing issues of mental health, according to Niah White, LCSW, a Monarch behavioral health therapist in Lexington.

"Her courage to come in was critical, and one of her challenges was feeling that she was being disrespectful to her parents, in-laws and her husband," White said. "In realizing that she needs treatment right now and now feels she has what she needs and being able to move forward was imperative."

Often, people who live in small communities that are not culturally diverse struggle to find resources. When help is available, the barrier is the perceived backlash from the community or having to seek support elsewhere. Understanding barriers people may feel in seeking treatment is paramount to being able to help them find healthy, safe ways to heal

She knows some of the reasons Latinos avoid mental health treatment. She said stigma, language, immigration status, fear of future negative consequences of receiving mental health treatment, lack of understanding about mental health, and culture are often barriers.

"Some people don't get support because they can't find therapists who speak their language," explained Garcia, who speaks fluent Spanish. "Others don't want to burden their families and don't want to add one more thing to their parents' plate, because their parents might already have enough to deal with or parents may feel guilty for their children's mental illness. Family is very important and mental health issues may be kept a secret."

Garcia said she provided support to an adult patient who brought his mom to an appointment. The patient worked with another therapist, who did not speak Spanish, prior to Garcia and the mom did not engage during the session due to the language. However, when the patient shared his feelings of sadness, depression and anxiety and he and Garcia began their exchange in Spanish, his mother's native language. The following session, Garcia said the patient shared his preference to meet with her without his mother who expressed concern during the last session.

"He said he did not want his mom to worry,

because she was very sad to hear this," Garcia said. "It's easier for Latinos to use church, pastors, family members and friends as a support system rather than mental health services."

### YOU CAN'T PRAY IT AWAY

Research reveals many minority communities rely on faith, family and social communities for emotional support rather than turning to health care professionals, even though medical or therapeutic treatment may be necessary.

Mary Locklear, a dually licensed mental health and substance use specialist, is a behavioral health therapist in Monarch's facility-based crisis center in Lumberton. She said people who are religious seek alternatives to treatment because mental illness is often a mystery.

"Some believe mental illness might be a choice, because they lack information," Locklear said. "Religion is very important to people. Some look for the church to fix challenges and see it as more of a moral choice, especially when it comes to addiction. They want to just go to church, leave it on the altar and pray it away. Not enough is known, but we work constantly to identify ways to provide education."

In her nearly 20 years of experience as a mental health professional, Locklear, who works in a largely populated Native American community,

said some people don't believe therapy or treatment works. Locklear says about 50 percent of the patients she sees are Native American and cite transportation, child care issues, lack of access and stigma as barriers to treatment – the same as other minority populations. But Locklear said popular culture may also prevent people from seeking treatment, because some think of rehabilitation for celebrities and believe it's opulent and luxurious, not affordable. "Again, lack of awareness, because people who have no money think it costs lots of money to get well," she said.

Fear and trust are two more barriers that prevent some minority communities from seeking support.

"People are scared, plain and simple. They think they can handle addiction on their own and fear reaching out to someone who won't listen," Locklear said. "They want to get support, but 'Do you know my culture?' and 'Do you understand where I'm coming from?' are some questions that are asked. Cultural identity is important"

Faith and spirituality can help in the recovery process but should not be the sole option. Locklear said some local churches in her area have embraced a recovery movement. It may be largely due to her push for greater education and outreach within her own Native American community.



*Veronica Tim said her husband, Chris (pictured left), encouraged her to seek treatment at Monarch. She describes him as "patient and supportive" and said he has always been the proponent for her mental health.*

*Chris and Veronica Tim.*



*Rev. Debra J. Hopkins shares her story of discrimination, mental illness and a transgender's reality*

After her mom suffered a heart attack and she traveled to South Carolina to be by her side, a cousin suggested Rev. Debra Hopkins relocate to the Carolinas from Alabama to be closer to family. Charlotte felt like a great escape and a new beginning after the hell the New York native had suffered. Hopkins has been falsely accused of a crime, served a two-year prison sentence, and sexually assaulted during her imprisonment. A former middle school teacher, Hopkins lost her home, savings and everything she owned before she cleared her name and was released.

Unfortunately, her torment didn't end with an address change. Within months of arriving in her new city, she was homeless and described 2012-13 as the most "turbulent" years of her life. The support system she moved hundreds of miles to be near vanished.

"Everything from a secular standpoint was taken from me, even the rapid decline of my health. Knowing God during this time was ever present, yet I still felt completely lost and alone. Trying to survive while living in a deep, dark hole filled with loneliness, loss and despair." remembers the ordained minister.

She said despite working her entire life,

**NOT UNTIL YOU HAVE  
WALKED IN MY SHOES**

she was denied public assistance and forced to live in her vehicle and a storage unit. She believes because she was born male, shelters either denied her entrance or eventually asked her to leave, because she refused to be strip searched by an official. "The system denied me every way possible: food stamps, housing, or even a shelter to take a bath," she says. "I was being denied at every turn. It put me on the streets and kept me on the streets. My feelings turned into real anger..."

Yashia Durham, LCSW, LCAS, a behavioral health therapist in Monarch's Cary outpatient office, and Brian Maxey, practice administrator, agree there is no other way than to treat people with dignity and respect, accept who they are and provide individualized care that can positively impact a person's recovery.

Prejudice and discrimination, often termed "minority stress," are disparities in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Allies (LGBTQIA) community and can stem from a variety of factors including social stigma, denial of civil and human rights, abuse, harassment, victimization, social exclusion and family rejection. The effects of this dual stigma can cause anger and be harmful, especially when someone seeks treatment, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Between 38 and 65 percent of transgender people experience suicidal ideation.

"In speaking with a current [LGBTQIA] patient, I have learned that therapists can bring their own personal biases and are seemingly not open or receptive to their lifestyles," explained Durham. "Some therapists who maintain certain religions or ideologies may not respect the person and may use improper pronouns or address the person intentionally by the wrong gender. This is counterproductive for a person's treatment."

Hopkins said the disrespect and discrimination she felt as a transgender woman – along with her other struggles

– sent her to rock bottom. After her second suicide attempt, she sought help at Monarch, a trauma-informed organization. She said the Charlotte team treated her respectfully and helped her to get medication and treatment for bi-polar disorder and the "downward mental health spiral." She also entered Monarch's transitional housing program while she proactively searched for work.

She refuses to allow her mental illness and abusive past change who she is and how she responds. Hopkins has spent her adult life advocating for the underserved and challenging two evils she endured: discrimination and homelessness.

"I can take the hurt, the pain, the discrimination and be angry," shares a very poised Hopkins, who chooses her words carefully, because she knows "words have power." "But, I now choose to take the spirit of love and be loving. I am proud of what I've accomplished – to help others have hope and that's important."

Today, Hopkins, 62, continues her work as an activist, motivational speaker and author of three books. One is a memoir titled: *Not Until You Have Walked In My Shoes*. She is the founder of Essentials for Life Ministries and spends a lot of her time traveling the country addressing LGBTQIA inequality issues, facilitating workshops, conferences and community conversations.

"Charlotte was the battleground for me. It was meant to be," said Hopkins through a radiant smile. "I am a voice for change. As long as I have breath in my body, I am going to continue to speak against injustice and discrimination. Mental illness is very serious, and many people don't know how to ask for help or where to find assistance. I thank Monarch for helping me to get where I am and turning my life around." ●

*By Natasha A. Suber, Vice President, Marketing and Communications at Monarch*

## **"HERE'S TO STARTING OVER"**

Veronica Tim's husband, Chris, a probation officer, encouraged his wife to seek treatment at Monarch's outpatient office in Lexington. She describes him as "patient and supportive" and said he has always been the proponent for her mental health. His mantra, "Here's to Starting Over," was the impetus for her grassroots campaign.

Tim's initiative will include T-shirt designs that feature forget-me-not flowers and a cardinal. The flowers are a symbol that people with mental illness don't want to be marginalized or overlooked, and the cardinal, the North Carolina official state bird, will be accompanied with the phrases "stand up to stigma" and "mental health matters." She plans to donate the proceeds to local mental health organizations.

"After receiving support from Monarch, I was on my feet and I actually felt alive!" she exclaimed. "Although that feeling went away after two weeks, it hit me that I am capable of feeling alive again, and now my goal is to keep this routine going and to show others that it is so, so hard, but there is help out there. I want to do something to help others!"

Tim is enjoying life now. She recently started a new job as a state deputy clerk and officially launched her campaign during Lexington's National Night Out Event this summer. She wants to continue to share her story and volunteer for mental health organizations.

## **REWRITING THE NARRATIVE?**

Brian Maxey said he, Durham and others will continue to create an inclusive environment in the outpatient office in Cary, as is Monarch's policy, so all patients, especially people who represent underserved communities, feel comfortable when seeking treatment.

"It is incumbent upon us to make all people feel welcome. We need to make the effort to include LGBTQIA, people of color, different genders, ages and all communities to ensure we are doing our job to make people feel comfortable when they enter our doors," Maxey said. "We need to do more to encourage their treatment and recovery. I feel strongly as a professional mental health community, we must do a better job exploring all avenues and making decisions that are optimal and in the patients' best interest. We're doing our best to rewrite the narrative." ●

*By Natasha A. Suber, Vice President, Marketing and Communications at Monarch*

# WHY I SUPPORT **MONARCH**



## **big idea group**, a *Monarch 60th Anniversary sponsor*

For seven years we've been behind the camera, visually telling Monarch's story about the people it supports. We've filmed a home for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We've told the story of someone suffering from bi-polar and schizophrenia disorders, who now serves as a peer support specialist for Monarch. We've filmed stories of people who have struggled with and recovered from depression, overcome addiction, and still others who needed help finding employment, or housing, or both. We here at big (big idea group), find it very gratifying work, and we are proud of everything we've done for Monarch. But now we find ourselves on the other side of the camera, because we are also a sponsor of Monarch's 60th anniversary; 60 years of Monarch helping others help themselves to reach their dreams. And, as you can see from our photo, we're also pretty proud of that. ●

► For a complete list of Monarch sponsors and donors, visit: [MonarchNC.org/Donate](https://MonarchNC.org/Donate)

## MAKING MUSIC: *Monarch Creative Arts and Community Center embraces new music therapy program*



Music Therapist Rachel Shell stands near the piano, her guitar in place, leading the class in learning the lyrics to a new song. Her eager participants clap, sway side to side and sing passionately.

Voices, the music therapy program at Monarch's Creative Arts and Community Center (MCACC) in Moore County's Southern Pines, is providing men and women the opportunity to learn lyrics, play instruments and dance. Voices was made possible through the Moore County Unrestricted Endowment Fund, a component of the North Carolina Community Foundation, as well as contributions from individual donors.

Harmonious music can now be heard throughout center which also

offers pottery, art and dance programs to the 60 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who attend.

Shell, a board-certified music therapist who owns Birdsong Music Therapy, leads the music therapy program that provides focused opportunities for learning, skill development and engagement. The year-long curriculum is designed to bring out self-expression, enhanced communication and speech.

Content covered during the Voices sessions vary but include vocal choir, music and movement, an instrumental group and tone chime group. At the end of the program, participants will showcase their skills during a community performance

MCACC's Community Engagement Team Leader Bob Huber, who usually accompanies Shell on the piano during lessons, knew that music therapy would be well received. Huber and Shell can already see the benefits of the music therapy program.

"The power of music is incredible. Participants have built self-confidence, improved self-esteem, accomplished problem-solving skills and collaborated," says Huber.

Participants love being part of Voices. Lisa Rosy recently designed Shell a collage and presented it to her with a hug. "It's to show you how much I love you," Rosy told Shell. ●

*By Melissa Tanferno, Senior Communications Specialist*

## RIDING FOR A CAUSE: *Motorcycle club funds new outdoor pavilion at Pence Place*

Engines roared as more than 50 motorcycles departed from the Rockingham Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) organization on a sunny Saturday afternoon in late April. The OI Skool Tribe, a group of motorcycle enthusiasts from Richmond County, held its fifth annual "Ride for a Cause," with proceeds benefitting Pence Place, Monarch's home for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Rockingham. The group raised \$6,759.

"Our group loves to ride," said Gary Holt, president of the OI Skool Tribe, "And our members really have a heart for children, so this is our way of giving back. It's all about the kids and what we can do for them."

Kids and staff from Pence Place sent the riders off with a cheer as they began the trip from Rockingham to Town Creek Indian Mound in Mt. Gilead, some 25 miles away.

Fast forward five months to a lovely fall day when members of the OI Skool Tribe visited Pence Place to see the new outdoor

pavilion, swing set and sandbox built with their donation.

"We are so grateful to the OI Skool Tribe," said Beth Tyler, residential team leader at Pence Place. "This new outdoor pavilion provides a perfect shaded spot for the kids to enjoy picnics, recreational therapy and quiet time outdoors when they need it"

In addition, during the project local Boy Scout Troop 64 from Rockingham got involved to help revitalize existing playground equipment and trim back lower limbs on surrounding trees to increase safety. They also made a donation that was used to buy additional outdoor recreational equipment.

"It takes a village to raise children," said Tyler. "And we are thankful for all of these people who are now a part of Pence Place's village." ●

*By Laurie Weaver, Senior Director of Philanthropy*



# WHY I SUPPORT MONARCH

## Cone Health Foundation funds continuation of co-occurring disorders initiative in Greensboro

Monarch has received a three-year, \$195,000 grant from the Cone Health Foundation to support the continued expansion of co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders treatment at its Greensboro behavioral health clinic. Research has shown that as many as 50 percent of people with a severe mental illness also have a co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness and addictive behaviors can often be intertwined. According to local estimates, in Guilford County, there are more than 30,000 individuals living with co-occurring disorders.

This second grant from Cone Health Foundation comes following the successful

launch of a new evidence-based practice called Integrated Dual Diagnosis Treatment (IDDT). During the pilot effort, also funded by Cone Health Foundation from 2015 to 2018, Monarch expanded training for clinical staff on diagnosing and treating dual disorders and increased group therapy options for people living with mental illness and substance use disorders. Overall, more than 300 people living with mental illness and substance use disorders were assessed and treated through the new model. Monarch also saw marked improvement in Dual Diagnosis Capability in Mental Health Treatment (DDCMHT) scores, moving from a 2.55 on

a scale of 5 to a 4.69 by year three. The DDCMHT Scale measures an organization's ability to assess, diagnose and successfully treat co-occurring disorders.

"With this additional funding we will continue to expand the depth and breadth of co-occurring disorders treatment in Greensboro," said Bill Garrot, MA, LPC, LCSW, LCAS, behavioral health therapist and team leader for the co-occurring disorders initiative. "We are excited to continue this partnership with Cone Health Foundation as we work together to strengthen these services. ●



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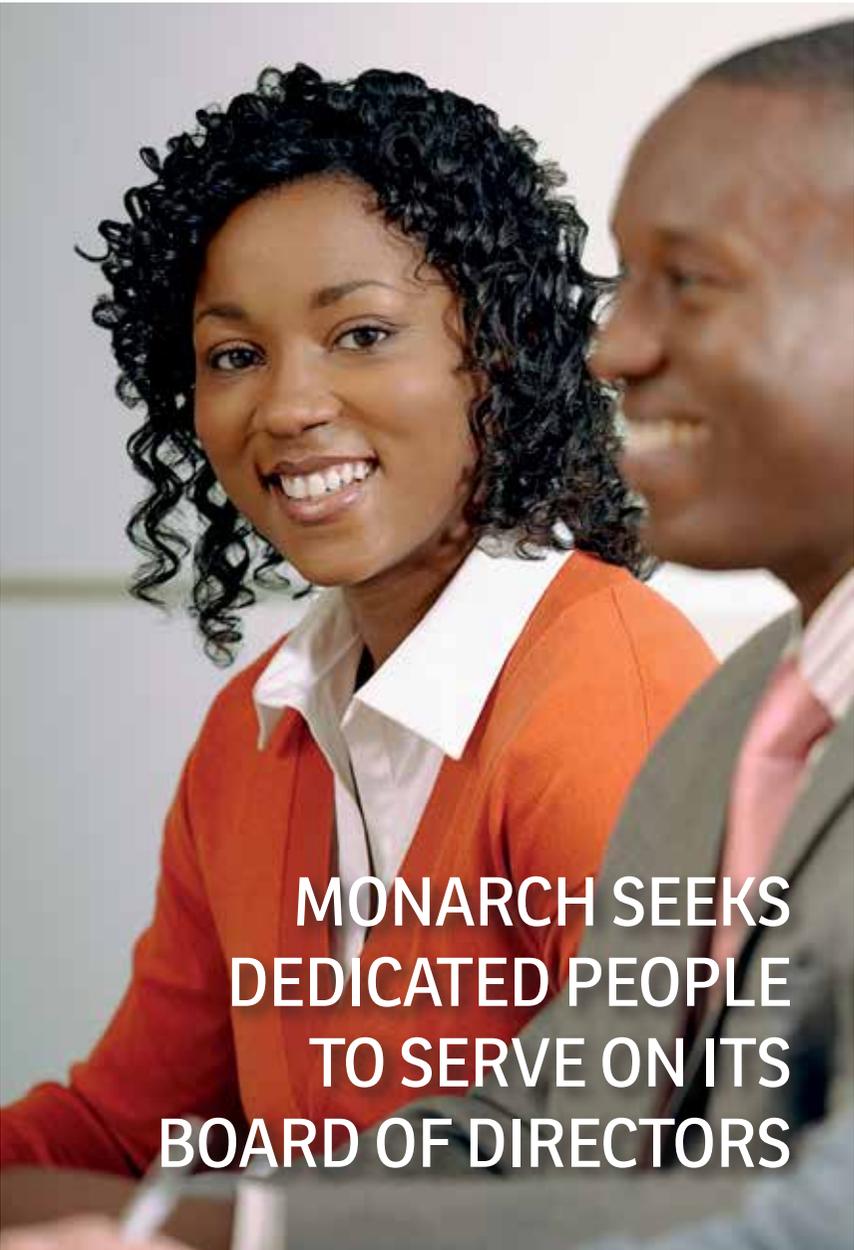
  
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- Support a cause you care about while planning ahead
- Put your assets to work with tax-efficient charitable strategies
- Take advantage of the many tax benefits of making a gift

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



## MONARCH SEEKS DEDICATED PEOPLE TO SERVE ON ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Monarch seeks dedicated people to serve on its Board of Directors. Serving as a Monarch board member is a unique opportunity to work at the highest level of the organization alongside company leaders and other key stakeholders to help shape the strategic goals and the future of patient access for people with mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Monarch embraces diversity and inclusion and maintains its commitment to a diverse workforce and board.

As a large, leading provider of mental health and human services, Monarch is a highly-respected statewide organization that supports nearly 30,000 people and employs 1,800 professionals. To submit your interest to serve as a Monarch board member, please contact Jeanette Wilhelm at [Jeanette.Wilhelm@MonarchNC.org](mailto:Jeanette.Wilhelm@MonarchNC.org) for more details and to request an official application. Nominations will be accepted through January 31, 2019.



## JOIN OUR TEAM

Monarch, a growing Joint Commission-certified mental health and human services organization, is hiring professionals to work in many of our locations across North Carolina. If you care as much as we do about people and want to join a growing, dynamic team, contact us at [Jobs@MonarchNC.org](mailto:Jobs@MonarchNC.org) or (704) 986-1550 to start your application.





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