



THE CHALLENGER

SPRING 2022

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

A Publication of the Darlington County Disabilities & Special Needs Board

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Our Mission: To enhance the lives, develop the abilities, and promote the independence of people with disabilities.

An article from:  **ASAN**
AUTISTIC SELF ADVOCACY NETWORK

April is Autism Acceptance Month!

AUTISM "AWARENESS"

A lot of autism organizations focus on raising "awareness" of autism. Autism awareness campaigns can make people afraid of autism. They treat autistic people like burdens on society, and ask people to donate money to get rid of autism. It isn't fair to autistic people to raise money by making people scared of us. That isn't a good way to raise "awareness" of autism.

ASAN thinks people should learn more about autism. But people need to learn what autistic people ourselves want them to know. That is why ASAN talks about autism acceptance instead of autism awareness.

Autism is a developmental disability that affects how we experience the world around us. Autistic people are an important part of the world. Autism is a normal part of life, and makes us who we are.

Autism has always existed. Autistic people are born autistic and we will be autistic our whole lives. Autism can be diagnosed by a doctor, but you can be autistic even if you don't have a formal diagnosis. Because of myths about autism, it can be harder for autistic adults, autistic girls, and autistic people of color to get a diagnosis. But anyone can be autistic, regardless of race, gender, or age.

Autistic people are in every community, and we always have been. Autistic people are people of color. Autistic people are immigrants. Autistic people are a part of every religion, every income level, and every age group. Autistic people are women. Autistic people are straight, and autistic people are queer. Autistic people are often many of these things at once. The communities we are a part of and the ways we are treated shape what autism is like for us.

There is no one way to be autistic. Some autistic people can speak, and some autistic people need to communicate in other ways. Some autistic people also have intellectual disabilities, and some autistic people don't. Some autistic people need a lot of help in their day-to-day lives, and some autistic people only need a little help. All of these people are autistic, because there is no right or wrong way to be autistic. All of us experience autism differently, but we all contribute to the world in meaningful ways. We all deserve understanding and acceptance."


We all think differently

Tim Tebow Prom: A Night to Shine Parade Feb 11, 2022



NtS Greeters and Cheerleaders



Larry always looks amazing in his suits!



Charles



Jennifer



Tony



GiGi



Jimmy, Kevin, and Anthony



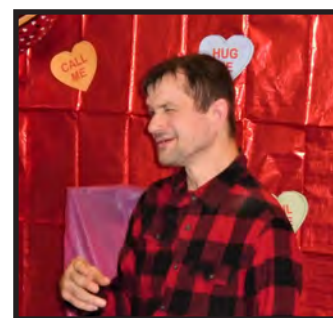
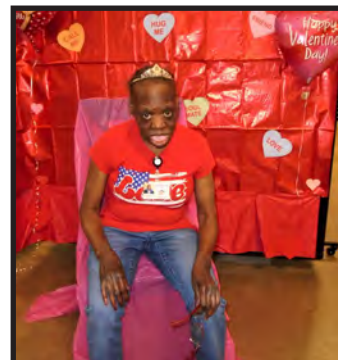
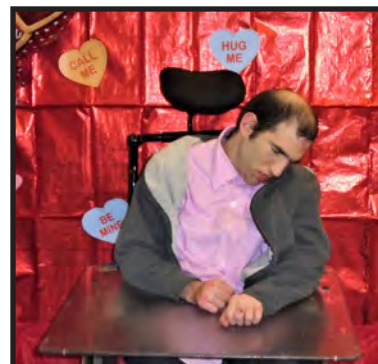
Eugene



Benji always makes a splash.



Valentine Social February 2022



March is Disability Advocacy Month!

Disability Advocacy Day in Columbia



Disability Advocacy Quotes:

“If you’re always trying to be normal, you will never know how amazing you can be.” — Maya Angelou

“The only disability in life is a bad attitude.” — Scott Hamilton

“I am different, not less.” — Temple Grandin

“Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you’re needed by someone.” — Martina Navratilova

“My ability is stronger than my disability.” — Luke Watson

Mayoral Proclamations for Disability Advocacy Month



DCDSNB Executive Director Ruth Blocker,
Darlington Mayor Curtis Boyd, and
DCDSNB Board Chair Dorene Hughes



(Starting 2nd from Left) DCDSNB Executive Director Ruth Blocker,
Hartsville Mayor Casey Hancock, and
DCDSNB Board Vice Chair Brenda Ferguson

Happy National Doctor's Day! March 30, 2022



Left to Right: Executive Director Ruth Blocker, Physician Consultant Dr. Mac Chapman, and Nursing Director Dawanda Brown

DCDSNB Executive Director Ruth Blocker, DCDSNB Nursing Director Dawanda Brown, and DCDSNB Board of Directors Chair Dorene Hughes dropped by DCDSNB Physician Consultant Dr. Mac Chapman's office to surprise him with a gift basket as a token of their deep appreciation for his service to DCDSNB on National Doctor Appreciation Day.

Dr. Chapman has been the agency physician for more than **31 years!**

National Doctor's Day is observed annually on March 30.

April is Autism Acceptance Month!



An article from:

Every autistic person experiences autism differently, but there are some things that many of us have in common.

1. We think differently. We may have very strong interests in things other people don't understand or seem to care about. We might be great problem-solvers, or pay close attention to detail. It might take us longer to think about things. We might have trouble with executive functioning, like figuring out how to start and finish a task, moving on to a new task, or making decisions.

Routines are important for many autistic people. It can be hard for us to deal with surprises or unexpected changes. When we get overwhelmed, we might not be able to process our thoughts, feelings, and surroundings, which can make us lose control of our body.

2. We process our senses differently. We might be extra sensitive to things like bright lights or loud sounds. We might have trouble understanding what we hear or what our senses tell us. We might not notice if we are in pain or hungry. We might do the same movement over and over again. This is called "stimming," and it helps us regulate our senses. For example, we might rock back and forth, play with our hands, or hum.

3. We move differently. We might have trouble with fine motor skills or coordination. It can feel like our minds and bodies are disconnected. It can be hard for us to start or stop moving. Speech can be extra hard because it requires a lot of coordination. We might not be able to

control how loud our voices

are, or we might not be able to speak at all – even though we can understand what other people say.

4. We communicate differently. We might talk using echolalia (repeating things we have heard before), or by scripting out what we want to say. Some autistic people use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to communicate. For example, we may communicate by typing on a computer, spelling on a letter board, or pointing to pictures on an iPad. Some people may also communicate with behavior or the way we act. Not every autistic person can talk, but we all have important things to say.



Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.

The word "**neurotypical**" may be used to describe individuals whose brain develops and functions in ways that are considered usual or expected by society.

"**Neurodiverse**" refers to people as a whole whose brains work differently. The term "**neurodivergent**" may be used to describe an individual and the way they navigate the world. Neurodivergent describes an individual who has variations in their brain. Some variations are generally considered to be developmental or learning disabilities such as autism, ADHD, Down Syndrome, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dysphasia, Tourette's, etc. However, other variations are considered to be medical diagnoses that are not usually considered as disabilities such as anxiety or are often celebrated such as giftedness.

AUTISM AWARENESS VERSUS AUTISM ACCEPTANCE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

"Autism Awareness" centers the experiences of non autistic people and how they feel about autism & disability. "Awareness" is based on fear, pity, and furthers stigma against us. It's about us, without us! "Awareness" HURTS autistic people!

"Autism Acceptance" centers the voices of autistic people. It celebrates autistic culture, and tells others that we are valuable to our families, our communities and to the world exactly as we are! Acceptance is creating a better, fairer and more inclusive world for all of us!

AS YOU CAN SEE, IT'S ACTUALLY A PRETTY BIG DEAL!

CELEBRATE AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH THIS APRIL!

neurodiversitylibrary.org

April is Autism Acceptance Month!

5. We socialize differently. Some of us might not understand or follow social rules that non-autistic people made up. We might be more direct than other people. Eye contact might make us uncomfortable. We might have a hard time controlling our body language or facial expressions, which can confuse non-autistic people or make it hard to socialize.

Some of us might not be able to guess how people feel. This doesn't mean we don't care how people feel! We just need people to tell us how they feel so we don't have to guess. Some autistic people are extra sensitive to other people's feelings.

6. We might need help with daily living. It can take a lot of energy to live in a society built for non-autistic people. We may not have the energy to do some things in our daily lives. Or, parts of being autistic can make doing those things too hard. We may need help with things like cooking, doing our jobs, or going out. We might be able to do things on our own sometimes, but need help other times. We might need to take more breaks so we can recover our energy.

Not every autistic person will relate to all of these things. There are lots of different ways to be autistic. That is okay!

Autism affects how we think, how we communicate, and how we interact with the world. Autistic people are different than non-autistic people, and that's okay. ASAN advocates for a world where all autistic people have equal access, rights, and opportunities. Nothing About Us, Without Us!

(This is ASAN's short definition of autism. If you want to know more, check out their book, [Welcome To The Autistic Community!](#))

EXCERPT FROM HARVARD HEALTH PUBLISHING BLOG - [What is neurodiversity?](#)

By Nicole Baumer, MD, MEd, Contributor, and Julia Frueh, MD, Guest Contributor

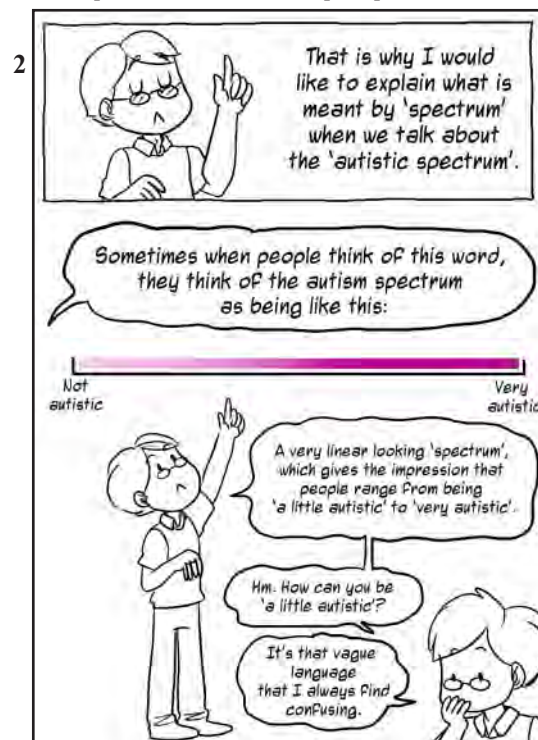
Neurodiversity and autism spectrum disorder

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is associated with differences in communication, learning, and behavior, though it can look different from person to person. People with ASD may have a wide range of strengths, abilities, needs, and challenges. For example, some autistic people are able to communicate verbally, have a normal or above average IQ, and [live independently](#). Others might not be able to communicate their needs or feelings, may struggle with impairing and harmful behaviors that impact their safety and well-being, and may be dependent on support in all areas of their life. Additionally, for some people with autism, differences may not cause any suffering to the person themselves. Instead, the suffering may result from the barriers imposed by societal norms, causing social exclusion and inequity.

Medical evaluation and treatment is important for individuals with ASD. For example, establishing a formal diagnosis may enable access to social and medical services if needed. A diagnostic explanation may help the individual or their family understand their differences better and enable community connections. Additionally, neurodevelopmental conditions may also be associated with other health issues that require extra monitoring or treatment. It is important that people who need and desire behavioral supports or interventions to promote communication, social, academic, and daily living skills have access to those services in order to maximize their quality of life and developmental potential. However, approaches to interventions [cannot be one-size-fits-all](#), as all individuals will have different goals, desires, and needs.



<https://www.kidshealth.org.nz/understanding-autism-spectrum-comic-strip-explanation>



4

Ah.

Ahh!

Aah!

How can you be tired? Everyone does this every day, you're just being lazy.

ACT LIKE EVERYONE ELSE BUT CONCEAL IT IN HARDER TOX MORE INFORMATION AND LOOK NORMAL WITH DOING IT OTHERWISE PEOPLE GET ANGRY

Wow you're being so over dramatic, get over it!

Wow, you're more autistic than I thought.

And if you're seen as being on the 'high end' of this spectrum-

I'm gonna re-label you on this spectrum... Since you're very autistic I don't think you should have a job, just to be safe y'know?

It can lead to some people labeling you as being incapable of doing anything at all.

Not autistic

Very autistic

April is Autism Acceptance Month!

<https://www.kidshealth.org.nz/understanding-autism-spectrum-comic-strip-explanation>

5

The truth is though, someone who is neurodiverse in some areas of their brain, will also be no different to your average person in other areas of their brain.



You see, the autistic spectrum looks something more like this.

6

The spectrum consists of many different 'traits', or ways in which the brain processes information.

Some traits create difficulties in every day life. (hence being diagnosed)



But also many traits are useful in every day life.

Each person with autism will have a set of traits all in different areas of the spectrum. The areas where they don't have a trait will function no differently to a neurotypical brain, but may be affected by circumstances. In example, I am good at making conversation (language). But I get sensory overload in loud and crowded spaces, which then makes conversation very hard for me.

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And so, another autistic person might be very happy in loud crowds, but find conversation hard in general.



You could say I'm just a real 'party animal'!

You can see with this spectrum then, that not every autistic person has 'savant skills'. Or that someone who can't communicate verbally might still understand what you're saying, but just need a different way to communicate, such as sign language.

It shows how not every autistic person acts the same way, and we are all capable of varying strengths and weaknesses.

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Sometimes, if someone is diagnosed as being 'on the spectrum', and informs another person of this, it's so that they can get some understanding and respect for the things they are unable to do. **But**, it is also so that they can cooperate with the world around them- so that they can be the best in the things they **can** do.



I hope that in the future, people will better understand the term 'spectrum', and continue to respect the differences **and** similarities we all share in how we experience the world.



Service Awards 2022



Day Program Director Devin Hunte and BTG DSP Lakasha Reed (5 years)

5 years



Executive Director Ruth Blocker, CTH Residential Director Byron Wilson, Register House DSP Sequoia Mills (5 years), Register & Jones House Manager Nicole Lee, and Board Chair Dorene Hughes



Day Program Director Devin Hunte and BTG DSP Lorraine Harrington (5 years)

10 years



Executive Director Ruth Blocker, CTH Residential Director Byron Wilson, Yarborough House Manager Alfreda Williams (10 years), & Board Chair Dorene Hughes



Executive Director Ruth Blocker, QIDP Faye Davis, Reagan DSP Carrie Johnson (10 years), Reagan House Manager Verniell Hannibal, Nursing Director Dawanda Brown, & Board Chair Dorene Hughes

Service Awards 2022



Executive Director Ruth Blocker,
Nursing Director Dawanda Brown (15 years),
and Board Chair Dorene Hughes



CTH Residential Director Byron Wilson and
Trantham House Manager Rochelle Moses (15 years)

15 years

Not pictured:
Vonoka Kind Award Winner
King House DSP Brandy McRae



Executive Director Ruth Blocker,
CTH Residential Director Byron Wilson,
2022 Employee of the Year Award Winner
Residential Admin/Training Coordinator
Candy Wyrick,
and Board Chair Dorene Hughes



EI Supervisor Joni Pendergrass, 2022 Sue Woodham
Award Winner Early Interventionist Sheril Strong,
and Executive Director Ruth Blocker



2022 Lou Scott Award Winner
Executive Director Ruth Blocker
and Board Chair Dorene Hughes

Easter April 2022



Human Resources Corner



**WELCOME
TO THE TEAM!**

January 2022

Cricket Porter

Early Interventionist

Samantha Gainey DSP/Reagan

March 2022

Sheila Bell	Devin Hunte	BTG Day Program Director	
Gregory Carter	DSP/Shaw	Dominique Harris	DSP/Bowen
Denita Gary	DSP/Bowen	Keshonda Thomas	DSP/Bowen
	DSP/Reagan		

April 2022

Fredrick Singletary	DSP/Bowen	Timothy Bishop	DSP/BTG
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WE'RE HIRING DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

At DCDSNB, we continuously accept applications for Direct Support Professionals who wish to work Part-time or on a PRN basis. This position requires exceptional people who are experienced caregivers with tireless patience. Caregiving is a calling, not just a job. If this is you, we welcome your interest by completing an employment application today! Visit us at www.dcdsnb.org or contact us at 843-332-7252 for additional information.

The Staff Support Team (SST)



EMPLOYEE ANNIVERSARY

Candace Graham	January 4
Sequoia Mills	January 9
Barbara Rushdan	January 22
Felecia Scott	January 22
Teressa Williams	January 22
Ce'Quaya Resper	January 25
Shenetta Harkless	January 28
Jennis Johnson	February 8
Alfreda Williams	February 20
Rochelle Moses	February 20
Capricia Gary	March 15
Danika Streater	March 15
Essence Neddham	March 15
Jukira Windham	March 15
Madison Baker	March 15
Carrie Chenard	March 30
Simone Taylor	March 31
Tina Esaw	April 8



EMPLOYEE

BIRTHDAY

Eleasha Smith	January 2
Glynn Willis	January 2
Evone Graham	January 3
Jukira Windham	January 5
Samantha Gainey	January 5
Makayla Tyndall	January 12
Danika Streater	January 26
Candace Wyrick	January 28
Janay Bishop	January 28
Janika Ross	February 4
Nicole Lee	February 4
Kewanda Hunter	February 5
Shenetta Harkless	February 15
Yoko Miller	February 26
Wendy Coward	February 28
Simone Taylor	March 5
Nieka Pendergrass	March 8
Timika Short	March 8
Devin Hunte	March 27
Bonnie Ellison	March 29
Dawanda Brown	March 31
Talyric Toney	April 1
Sheril Strong	April 5
Michele Ratliff	April 22
Vanessa Cabbagestalk	April 25



In Loving Memory of:

Mr. Allen E. "Jock" Joyner, Jr., Yarborough House DSP Bessie Patterson;

Tyrone T.T. Thomas III, grandson of BTG DSP Jennie McQueen and nephew of Pauley House DSP Timika Short;

Ms. Juanita Thomas, aunt of BTG DSP Felecia Scott and King House DSP Ganera Scott;

Mr. Alphonso Allen Byrd Jr., uncle of Jasmine Miller (House Manager of Pauley and Washington) and Shaw House DSP Nikesha Wingate;

Mr. Thomas Curtis Smith Sr., father-in-law of Washington House DSP Glynn Willis Jr;

Ms. Phostine (Shaw) Baldwin, sister of Board member Rev. Troy Shaw;

Mr. Roosevelt Bradley, husband of Reagan House DSP Teressa Williams;

Mrs. Pearl Lee Dawson, mother of Register House DSP Annie Dawson and grandmother of Yarborough House DSP Roneka Dawson

Our Condolences to their families and friends.

*The Darlington County Disabilities Foundation
appreciates all of our generous donors.*

The following Donations were received after the last printing of the Challenger.

INDIVIDUALS:

*Dr. & Mrs. Tammie Robinson
Andrew Nelson
Edie Kelley
Hattie Hughes
Lucy Davis*

*Elizabeth Register
John & Elaine Nichols
Christy Moody
Julius & Carolyn Black
Paul Vincent Cannarella*

*Dr. & Mrs. Joe McCullough
Stephen Twelkemeier
Debbie Fink
Ann Easterling
Diana Norris*

Anonymous Donations: \$500

BUSINESSES:

*United Way of Hartsville
Byerly Foundation
Hartsville Kiwanis Club
Manheim Darlington
Maxie's Auto Sales, Inc.
Fink Rentals
Knights of Columbus
American Heritage Girls*

*Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center
Wesley United Methodist Church Women's Group
Price's Automotive Investments
Lakeview Baptist Church
Hartsville Lions Club
Triplets A/S, Inc.
Terry Harrelson Auto Sales
West Hartsville Baptist Church*

*AO Smith
Fairfield Company Two*



We appreciate all donations and use them as we strive to provide services to over 500 individuals with Disabilities and or Special Needs in Darlington County. Thank you for enriching the lives of our individuals. We appreciate your generosity.



"A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles."

—Christopher Reeve



Darlington County Disabilities & Special Needs Board

201 North Damascus Church Road
Hartsville, SC 29550

Telephone: 843-332-7252 • Fax: 843-309-9965 • Website: www.dcdsnb.org

Mrs. Ruth Blocker, M.A.
Executive Director

Board Members:

Ms. Dorene B. Hughes, Chair
Mrs. Brenda Ferguson, Vice-Chair
Rev. Troy Shaw
Mrs. Mary Alice T. King
Mrs. Carolyn Black
Mrs. Hattie E. Hughes
Mrs. Tammie Robinson



Foundation Members:

Mrs. Penelope Bright
Mrs. Debbie Fink
Mrs. Hattie Hughes
Mrs. Mary Alice T. King
Dr. Joe McCullough
Mrs. Patricia Toney