



THE

SUMMER/FALL 2023

# CHALLENGER

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.*



The heat of autumn is different from the heat of summer. One ripens apples, the other turns them to cider.

JANE HIRSHFIELD

Southern Living

## 2023 Deborah Newsome Award



Pictured above, left to right: Mrs. Joni Pendergrass, (EI Supervisor), Mrs. Wanda Dixon (Deb Newsome Award recipient) Ms. Lucy Brown (of Brown & Coker Realty and sister of Deborah Newsome) Mrs. Ruth Blocker (Executive Director)

In this field, we work with many great parents, grandparents, and caretakers. Mrs. Wanda Dixon is one of them. In August, Mrs. Wanda Dixon was presented with the Deborah Newsome Award. She received a plaque and a check for \$300 that's given by the family of my previous awesome supervisor, Deborah Newsome, who lost her battle to Leukemia in 2014.

By Joni Pendergrass, EI Supervisor

## Summer/Fall Promotion Announcement

**Shermeka Brown (pictured right) is approaching her 7<sup>th</sup> year of service with the agency, and previously served as a Direct Support Professional at Trantham. In her new role as Residential House Manager at Shaw CTH II she will provide leadership and direction to the Direct Support Staff while continuing to provide care and supervision to the individuals that she serves.**



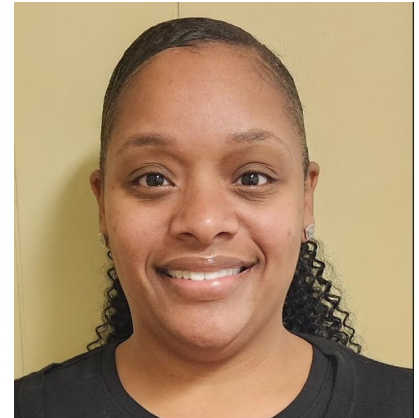
**YOU SHOULD BE REALLY  
HAPPY AND PROUD OF  
YOUR SUCCESS.**

**Miriam Anderson (pictured right) has been employed with the agency for almost one year as the Residential and Training Administrator. She has been promoted to Executive Assistant. In her new role, she will coordinate administrative and clerical activities to ensure the efficient functioning of the office of our Executive Director.**



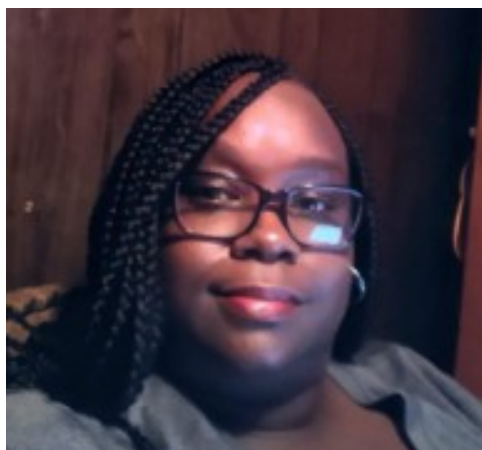
## Newest Additions to the Team

**Mrs. Brandolyn Moore, Day Program Director (pictured right) is a graduate of Coker University where she received her Bachelor's degree in Business Management. She was most recently employed with Chesco Services and has over 10 years of experience within organizations that serve individuals with disabilities and special needs.**



**Mrs. Kimeesha Wheeler-McCray, Residential Director, (pictured left) received her Bachelor's Degree in Childhood Development from Claflin University. Mrs. McCray has served in various leadership roles and has over 14 years of experience as a Residential Coordinator with Chesco Services.**

**Mr. David McFarland, Day Program Coordinator is a graduate of Benedict College where he received his bachelor's degree in social work. He was most recently employed with the Department of Social Services and has over 20 years of experience that serves individuals with disabilities and special needs.**



**Deedra Johnson, Human Resources Assistant, (pictured left) has an AAS in Medical Billing & Coding from Stratford University and four years of HR experience. She recently worked as a Document Review Associate for Signature Consultants.**

*Welcome to the Team! We're so honored to have you!*

# October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month!

<https://ndss.org/> In every cell in the human body there is a nucleus, where genetic material is stored in genes. Genes carry the codes responsible for all of our inherited traits and are grouped along rod-like structures called chromosomes. Typically, the nucleus of each cell contains 23 pairs of chromosomes, half of which are inherited from each parent. Down syndrome occurs when an individual has a full or partial extra copy of chromosome 21. This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with Down syndrome. A few of the common physical traits of Down syndrome are low muscle tone, small stature, an upward slant to the eyes, and a single deep crease across the center of the palm – although each person with Down syndrome is a unique individual and may possess these characteristics to different degrees, or not at all.



## How common is Down syndrome?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately one in every 772 babies in the United States is born with Down syndrome, making Down syndrome the most common chromosomal condition. About 5,100 babies with Down syndrome are born in the United States each year. (De Graaf et al., 2022). There are three different types of Down Syndrome. Trisomy 21 (Nondisjunction), which accounts for 95% of cases, results in an embryo with three copies of chromosome 21 instead of the usual two. Mosaicism (or mosaic Down syndrome) is diagnosed when there is a mixture of two types of cells, some containing the usual 46 chromosomes and some containing 47. Those cells with 47 chromosomes contain an extra chromosome 21. In Translocation, which accounts for about 3% of cases of DS, the total number of chromosomes in the cells remains 46; however, an additional full or partial copy of chromosome 21 attaches to another chromosome, usually chromosome 14 (Facts and Down syndrome, 2021).

## When was Down syndrome discovered?

For centuries, people with Down syndrome have been alluded to in art, literature, and science. It wasn't until the late nineteenth century, however, that John Langdon Down, an English physician, published an accurate description of a person with Down syndrome. It was this scholarly work, published in 1866, that earned Down the recognition as the "father" of the syndrome. Although other people had previously recognized the characteristics of the syndrome, it was Down who described the condition as a distinct and separate entity.

In recent history, advances in medicine and science have enabled researchers to investigate the characteristics of people with Down syndrome. In 1959, the French physician Jérôme Lejeune identified Down syndrome as a chromosomal condition. Instead of the usual 46 chromosomes present in each cell, Lejeune observed 47 in the cells of individuals with Down syndrome. It was later determined that an extra partial or whole copy of chromosome 21 results in the characteristics associated with Down syndrome. In the year 2000, an international team of scientists successfully identified and catalogued each of the approximately 329 genes on chromosome 21. This accomplishment opened the door to great advances in Down syndrome research.

## What causes Down syndrome?

Regardless of the type of Down syndrome a person may have, all people with Down syndrome have an extra, critical portion of chromosome 21 present in all or some of their cells.

The cause of the extra full or partial chromosome is still unknown. Maternal age is the only factor that has been linked to an increased chance of having a baby with Down syndrome resulting from nondisjunction or mosaicism. However, due to higher birth rates in younger women, 51% of children with Down syndrome are born to women under 35 years of age. (De Graaf et al., 2022).

There is no definitive scientific research that indicates that Down syndrome is caused by environmental factors or the parents' activities before or during pregnancy.

The additional partial or full copy of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome can originate from either the father or the mother. Approximately 5% of the cases have been traced to the father.

## What impact does Down syndrome have on society?

Individuals with Down syndrome are becoming increasingly integrated into society and the community. Individuals with Down syndrome possess varying degrees of cognitive delays, from very mild to severe. Most people with Down syndrome have cognitive delays that are mild to moderate.

Due to advances in medical technology, individuals with Down syndrome are living longer than ever before. In 1910, children with Down syndrome were expected to survive to age nine. Now, with recent advancements in clinical treatment, most particularly corrective heart surgeries, as many as 80% of adults with Down syndrome reach age 60, and many live even longer (Down syndrome, 2018). More and more Americans are interacting with individuals with Down syndrome, increasing the need for widespread public education and acceptance.

# Early Intervention Professional Week July 24-28, 2023

## State of South Carolina Governor's Proclamation

WHEREAS, early intervention professionals, including early interventionists, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and service coordinators are the primary providers of federal and state funded services for thousands of children with developmental delays; and

WHEREAS, BabyNet and the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs provide early intervention services to over 11,000 infants and young children through private and county providers in every county in the Palmetto State; and

WHEREAS, partnerships between stakeholders help ensure the continuation of early intervention services that enhance development and promote the health and well-being of South Carolina's children and their families; and

WHEREAS, early intervention providers offer coaching support and services to families with children, from birth to age five, with developmental delays and disabilities, building upon the natural learning opportunities that occur within the daily routines of a child and their family as well as support children and their families and enhance the opportunity for them to reach their greatest potential; and

WHEREAS, early intervention mitigates the factors that place children at risk of poor outcomes and provides economic gains by investing in young children and their families.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Henry McMaster, Governor of the great State of South Carolina, do hereby proclaim July 24 - 28, 2023, as

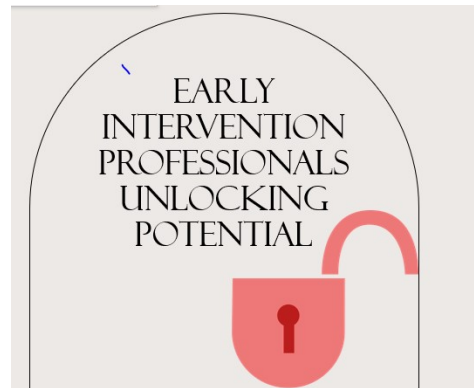
### EARLY INTERVENTION PROFESSIONALS WEEK

throughout the state and encourage all South Carolinians to honor our early intervention professionals for their dedication, compassion, integrity, and contributions that enhance the quality of life for South Carolina children and their families.



HENRY McMASTER  
GOVERNOR  
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster  
proclaimed July 24-28, 2023 Early Intervention  
Professionals Week!!!



DCDSNB Early Intervention Professionals pic-  
tured from left to right Cricket Porter, Joni  
Pendergrass  
and Sheril Strong

# Case Manager Appreciation Week!



**Pictured above are Ms. Tina Esaw and Ms. Jodi Hopkins receiving gifts from Executive Director, Ruth Blocker.**



## Human Resources Appreciation Day!



**Pictured to the left are Mrs. Candace Graham and Mrs. Deedra Johnson receiving gifts from Executive Director, Ruth Blocker.**

# BTG Wild West Fall Festival



***Residents, Service Participants and DCDSNB Staff had a fun time!***





## Human Resources Corner



### MAY 2023

Courtney McDowell, DSP  
Lauryn Simon, DSP  
Jamecia Thomas, DSP  
Daisenika Wheeler, DSP

### JULY 2023

Audrey Corey, DSP  
Brenda Johnson, DSP  
Nikesha Wingate, DSP  
La'Tice Wright, DSP

### AUGUST 2023

Dominique Harris, DSP  
Brittney Gibson, DSP  
Kericka Jackson, DSP  
Tyasia Moses, DSP  
Restine Pettus, DSP  
Shakeria Robinson, DSP  
Jalisa Smith, DSP  
Shaquina Swinney, DSP  
Keshira Thompson, DSP

### SEPTEMBER 2023

Unique Watson, DSP

### OCTOBER 2023

Ladrececa Carroway, DSP  
Takisha Decessard, House Manager  
Titeanna Grant, DSP  
Taylor Johnson, DSP  
Alexis Martin, DSP  
Chardwadulyn Washington, DSP

### NOVEMBER 2023

Shaquavia Cooks, DSP  
Ebony Jett, DSP  
Demeterrian Rose, DSP  
Kadijah Toney, DSP  
Dontrell McRae, DSP  
Kenyetta Young, DSP

**We couldn't  
have done it  
without you!**

# **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 with tireless patience. Caregiving is a calling, not just a job. If this is you, we welcome your interest and encourage you to complete an employment application today! Visit us at [www.dcdsnb.org](http://www.dcdsnb.org) or contact us at 843-332-7252 for additional information.

# New Vehicles!



**BEEP**

**Pictured right, is Pauley's House Manager, Annie Dawson**



**BEEP**



**Pictured left, is King's House Manager, Eleasha Joye Smith**

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

*The following Donations (including Angel Tree Donations) were received  
after the last printing of the Challenger.*

**Individuals:**

Judy Ratley  
Leatrice Taylor  
Dr. & Mrs. Joe McCollough  
Julius & Carolyn Black  
Patricia Cannon  
Allan & Eddie Kelley  
Lucy Davis  
Hattie Hughes

Dr. & Mrs. Tammie Robinson  
Edie Kelley  
Rev. & Mrs. Troy Shaw  
Debbie Fink

**Businesses:**

Norton Funeral Home  
Wesley Chapel United Methodist  
Church  
AO Smith  
Vaughan Insurance Agency  
Nicholson Business Systems  
YMCA of Hartsville

Darlington Veneer Company  
Faith Baptist Church  
Kindred Healthcare  
Liberty Chapel  
Lakeview Baptist Church  
Manheim (Darlington)  
Carolina Pines Regional



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***

Christopher Reeve was an American actor, film director, author, and activist, best known for playing the title character in the film Superman and three sequels. Born in New York City and raised in Princeton, New Jersey, Reeve discovered a passion for acting and theater at the age of nine.



**Darlington County Disabilities & Special Needs Board**

201 North Damascus Church Road  
Hartsville, SC 29550

**Mrs. Ruth Blocker, M.A.**  
Executive Director

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Mrs. Brenda Ferguson, Chair  
Mrs. Carolyn Black– Vice Chair  
Mrs. Tammie Robinson  
(Secretary)  
Mrs. Mary Alice T. King  
Mrs. Hattie E. Hughes  
Rev. Troy Shaw



**Foundation Members:**

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Mrs. Debbie Fink  
Mrs. Hattie Hughes  
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Dr. Joe McCullough  
Mrs. Patricia Toney