

The Outlook

Alabama Department of Mental Health Newsletter



Developmental Disability Awareness Month

March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, with this year's campaign theme being "A World of Opportunities."

The initiative promotes awareness of the contributions of individuals with developmental disabilities and emphasizes collaborative efforts to eliminate barriers.

Approximately 2.5 percent – or 120,000 – of Alabamians are either born with or develop a disability. Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month underscores the importance of understanding the connection between individuals' functioning and their participation in society, aiming to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to function at his or her full potential.

Alabamians with developmental disabilities should be given the chance to lead fulfilling lives, fostering independence and productivity within local communities. This includes access to supported employment, housing, education and recreation.

For further information on support services for individuals with disabilities, please visit <https://mh.alabama.gov/division-of-developmental-disabilities/>.

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Want to be included in the next issue?

Send us your stories, achievements and events!

publicinformation.dmh@mh.alabama.gov

334-242-3417



Independence. Community. Life!

Here are few of the individuals who make life great in our communities! Thanks to Full Life Ahead Foundation for the photos and information.

1. Adam is the glue that holds our team together when things get tough. He seems quiet, but always knows the right thing to say to keep us motivated and laughing!

2. Michelle has an inquisitive mind and a kind heart. She boldly pursues her goals with courage and energy. Michelle's fortitude is an inspiration to her friends.
3. Mya is an accomplished spiritual dancer. Her joy is contagious and a blessing to all!
4. Braydon is always a team player, keeping the peace and going with the flow.

Tuscaloosa Pilot Club recognizes ADMH Nursing Staff with a "Pick-Me-Up"

In honor of Brain Awareness Week from March 13 to 19, the Tuscaloosa Pilot Club delivered snack baskets to every ADMH nursing station as part of a program called "Pick-Me-Up's."

The vision of the Pick-Me-Up program is to acknowledge the needs of caregivers by providing random acts of kindness for their work. Cindy Shrum, IT manager for the Bureau of Information Technology at ADMH, personally delivered the baskets to each nursing station.

Pilot International was founded in 1921 with the mission of influencing positive change in communities throughout the world. To do this, members come together in friendship and service, focusing on encouraging brain safety and health and supporting those who care for others. The Tuscaloosa Pilot Club is a small one with a big heart. Its signature projects are BrainMinders & Helmets, Pick-Me-Up, Project Lifesaver, Safe Kids, Caring Days and other projects dealing with brain safety and awareness.



Held annually, Brain Awareness Week to showcase the wonders and importance of brain research and education.

Call 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

For anyone in a crisis of mental health, substance use, or having thoughts of self-harm: a trained crisis counselor is ready to speak with you. There's no shame in sharing how you feel. It's private and available 24/7.



STAFF SHOWCASE:

Niles Valentine



My name is Niles Valentine, and I was raised in Mobile, Alabama. I was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the age of 13, which explained my interests and hobbies. I'm a man who can keep his courage and smile through even the worst situations. Therefore, I am also a man who can appreciate the bright side of life and can also see that even the bad situations are temporary.

My one true goal in life is to fulfill my dreams, and hopefully do as much good as I possibly can on the way there.

My favorite pastimes are coding video games and writing books. I like to boast that I have a creative mind, and some would agree with me on that assessment. Perhaps one day, I could even have my own gaming studio.

Before I took the position of Director of Self-Advocacy, I had worked as a contract Full-Stack Developer and then as a Scrum Master for Revature Software Development. Later, I would become a Peer Advocacy Specialist for the Center of Independent Living in Mobile. I believe my true calling is in leadership, and I hope to have a long fruitful career as the Director of Self-Advocacy.

My current work is that of Director of Self-Advocacy. I support the Division of Developmental Disabilities by ensuring the individuals served not only have a voice but also a vote in the services they receive. I essentially take the temperature of the advocacy movement in Alabama, and greatly assist in ensuring the rights of those just like myself are respected and upheld.

I chose advocacy because I myself am autistic, amongst other diagnoses. The rights of the neurovariant and neurodivergent are not only my rights, but the rights of my loved ones and especially my family. I am not only helping myself, but I am also helping my community and my future children.



Did you know?

Children who receive an Autism diagnosis by age 4 are 50x more likely to receive services.



The connection is you.™

Autism Acceptance Month

This April, the Autism Society of America is proud to conduct its fifth annual #CelebrateDifferences campaign in honor of Autism Acceptance Month.

This April, the Autism Society of America is proud to conduct its fifth annual #CelebrateDifferences campaign in honor of Autism Acceptance Month. Every day, we all work to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community to live fully. We believe that acceptance is creating a world where everyone in the Autism community is connected to the support they need, when they need it. And by everyone, we mean every unique individual: the implacable, inimitable and irreplaceable you.

Learn more about services in Alabama by visiting <https://mh.alabama.gov/autism-services/>.

SAVE THE DATE

Strike  Out
Stigma

Mental Health & Substance Use

MONTGOMERY BISCUITS
RIVERWALK STADIUM
FRIDAY, MAY 3



WHO WE SERVE:

Alabama's RAN serves those who have questions, concerns, or resource needs regarding themselves, a family member, friend, client, patient, or a student with diagnosed or suspected Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

WHAT WE DO:

- Professional training programs
- Technical assistance and consultation services
- Individual and direct family assistance in the home, community, and school
- Public education programs

WHO WE ARE:

Alabama's RAN is staffed by experts in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorder. Each RAN strives to connect people with ASD, their families, educators, and service providers to the information and/or services that best meet their needs.

CONTACT US:

- | | |
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| Region I—University of Alabama in Huntsville | 256-824-5700
uahran@uah.edu |
| Region II—University of Alabama | 205-348-3131
ua-ran@ua.edu |
| Region III—University of South Alabama | 251-410-4533
usaran@health.southalabama.edu |
| Region IV—Auburn University | 334-844-2004
auran@auburn.edu |
| Region V—University of Alabama at Birmingham | 205-934-1112
uabran@uab.edu |





The Alabama Institute for Recovery

The 2024 Alabama Institute for Recovery (AIR) will be held April 1 to 3 at Shocco Springs.

Click [HERE](#) to view documents for registration. Questions? Please call the Office of Peer Programs at 1-800-832-0952 or 334-242-3456, or email nicholas.snead@mh.alabama.gov.





Participants at Strolling Thunder 2023.

Strolling Thunder April 9, 2024

We invite all who advocate for young children to walk with ADMH as we walk along with babies and toddlers in strollers to bring awareness to the vital investments needed in programs for Alabama's children from birth to age 3. There will be events for children and information for adults on helping young children thrive. Advocates also will deliver handmade handprints from children all over the state to our state lawmakers.

To learn more, visit <https://alabamapartnershipforchildren.org/strolling-thunder/>



Our partners play a powerful part in NAMIWalks.

Mental health presents greater challenges and opportunities every year.

Your commitment makes a distinct difference in our local community and inside your organization — with your company culture and the pride your contributions inspire in each and every member of your team.

Mental Health for All includes giving our all — as sponsors, as participants, as donors. Thank you for everything you offer to our effort in 2024.

NAMIWalks
Alabama

Saturday, April 27

AWF Lanark
Millbrook, Alabama

THREE pillars to support ONE goal:



To promote awareness of mental health and reduce stigma



To raise funds for NAMI's free, top-rated mental health programs



To build community and let people know they are not alone



About us

Our award-winning NAMIWalks is the largest, most vibrant mental health event series in the country. It is presented by NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, known locally as NAMI Alabama.

Taking place in more than 130 locations, NAMIWalks invites participants to share their stories, build community and walk together to achieve Mental Health for All.

Funds raised directly support NAMI Alabama's mission of education, advocacy, support and public awareness. We are grateful to our partners for helping to make our goal of Mental Health for All possible.



NAMIWalks Alabama | 2024 Sponsorship Opportunities

JANICE WASHINGTON 1

Congrats to Janice Washington, HIM director at Taylor Hardin Secure Medical. On January 15, she successfully defended her PhD proposal and progressed as a PhD candidate. She is studying Health Education and Health Promotion at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

Congratulations!

SHALANDRA ROGERS 2

Congratulations to Shalandra Rogers being promoted from a MH Specialist III to MH Specialist IV on July 16!

JENNIFER KUYRKENDALL-WATTS 3 & CLAUDIA MANSILLA 3

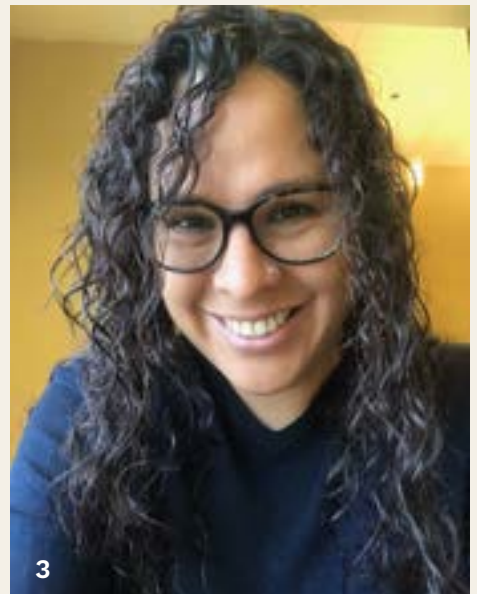
Congrats to Jennifer Kuyrkendall-Watts (Birmingham) and Claudia Mansilla (Mobile), both regional interpreter coordinators for the Office of Deaf Services, who have been accepted into the Southeastern Interpreter Guidance Network (SIGN) Legal Interpreter Training Series taking place in Huntsville. This training will include interpreting for families who are involved in the juvenile system, interpreting for law enforcement from first contact to the booking system, interpreting depositions and interpreting in the courtroom.

AMBER BECK 4

Congratulations to Amber Beck, who successfully completed her Master of Science in Human Services program at Capella University, graduating with distinction.

CHELSEA TAYLOR 5

Congrats to Dr. Chelsea Taylor, who received her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology in January. Her dissertation was on "Parent's Perceptions of Hardships Associated with Transitioning Their Child with Disabilities from Early Intervention to the Local Education Agency."

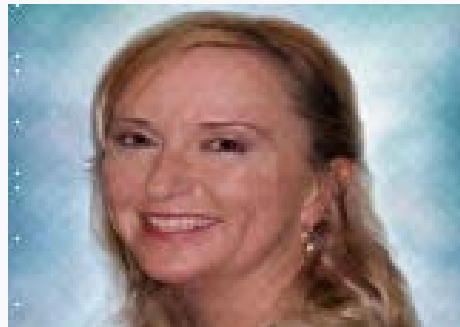


In Memoriam

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WILLIAM OAKLEY BINGHAM III

William Oakley Bingham III, ADMH Registered Nurse Senior, passed away on February 9.



JODIE BUSH CLANTON

Jodie Bush Clanton, ADMH Dietician II, passed away on March 13.



JAMES FINLEY

James Finley, retired ADMH Administrator II Clinical Investigator, passed away on February 16.



ADAM BRAD KONESKY

Adam Brad Konesky, ADMH, Registered Nurse II, passed away on February 20.



Grief Counseling for ADMH staff is available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), managed by Behavioral Health Systems, Inc. (BHS). Staff can directly contact BHS at 800-245-1150 or 205-879-1150. In situations where group grief counseling may be most beneficial, department heads should contact the relevant HR Office to coordinate this service through EAP.

Serve.
Empower.
Support.

ADMH Office of Public Information
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