

Lead Story

Josh Edwards Goes Back to School With Enthusiasm and Style



There's a feeling of excitement at the Karen Lane group home in Monroe, but not for the reason you might expect. While many young adults are savoring the last weeks of summer, Josh Edwards is looking forward to classes this fall at South Piedmont Community College.

"I like to read the books, and write papers," said Josh. "I write about the Carolina Panthers and the Tar Heels. And I get to see my friends," said Edwards.

The Harry Potter book series is one of his favorites, as well as math, science and art subjects. It's not all work and no play though. Edwards keeps up with his friends and his favorite sports. He even coordinates his newest clothes for school to match the colors of his top teams. Just like most other students, the back-to-school fun and excitement starts at the mall.

“He was all over that mall! We went to a few different stores to find his shoes. He knew I had the red Nike shoes and he wanted them, but we found the blue ones. He likes the blues ones more because of the Tar Heels,” said Sametreous Tillman, developmental specialist at Monarch.

It was also a lesson in money management, another responsibility that Josh gets just as excited about.

“He wanted Jordan’s, but I told him, save your money because then we can come back and get more shoes. Then you can say you bought your own shoes. I remember the first time I bought something on my own, that pride. I think those are the kinds of things we should nurture in all the people we support,” said Tillman.

Edwards and Tillman are the same age, with Edwards turning 25 just a couple months before Tillman. She says the days when she can join him on campus are fun, but she also tries to give him as much independence as possible. Edwards is the youngest person supported in his home, which makes it all the more important for him to go to school and socialize with others his age.



“I think Josh has come out of his shell a lot since being able to interact with people other than the staff here and the people he lives with. He communicates better and I think he seems happier overall. His friends from school even call him on the phone,” said Tillman.

Edwards graduated from nearby Parkwood High School in Monroe, and while that was an accomplishment, the staff at Karen Lane say they noticed a greater sense of enthusiasm when he found out he could go to college.

“He went to high school and graduated, but it seemed like when he was able to go to college it was a major thing to him,” said Julia Peay, residential team lead at Monarch. “It was a step up for him and he’s doing really great. He loves school, he’s overwhelmed with excitement when he’s there.”

Edwards continues to take classes through much of the summer, so his backpack is already filled with supplies and projects. In just a few short weeks, new projects will come up and new friends will be waiting on campus.

Photo 1: Josh Edwards and Monarch Developmental Specialist Sametreous Tillman show off their new kicks.

Photo 2: Josh Edwards color coordinates his new school wardrobe to match the colors of his favorite teams.

Headlines

It's That Time of Year Again: Let's Celebrate Exceptional Direct Support Professionals



Monarch's more than 900 direct support professionals (DSPs) across the state help dreams come true for the people we support, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

And the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) together with the U.S. Senate organize an entire week each year to celebrate the incredible work DSPs do. This year, we will celebrate from September 10-16.

"Our exceptional direct support professionals are what make our long-term services and support programs thrive. They ensure day in and day out that the people we support have all the recourses they need to achieve their goals," said Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Jim Kelley. "They are truly the heartbeat of our organization."

Recognizing the level of dedication direct support professionals offer Monarch, managers of direct support staff are encouraged to celebrate the teams in different ways throughout the month. President/CEO Dr. Peggy Terhune continues to randomly hand-pick 10 DSPs from a list of MERAC award recipients to attend The North Carolina Alliance of Direct Support Professionals Conference at Great Wolf Lodge in September. She will announce them on Monday Memo throughout the month of August.

“Direct support professionals maintain the most trusted relationships at Monarch – with the people we support, their families and the communities our folks live in. They assist the people we support with tasks like medication management, meal preparation, and dressing, to more elaborate support like helping with mobility, vocational training, and respite services. That requires an intimate level of selflessness that deserves to be celebrated and honored,” adds Kelley.

Monarch’s managers will organize and host a series of celebrations next month. If you capture photos or videos, please share them with sarah.piscuineri@monarch.org for a chance to be featured on Monarch’s social media channels as we celebrate the amazing work DSPs do throughout the month of September.

Photo: David and Direct Support Professional, Leslie McBride enjoy a fun game of connect four at Ridgefield.

Ways to Reduce Anxiety for Both Children and Parents Before Going Back to School



Just the thought of going back to school is enough to cause anxiety for many young people and their parents, especially when the transition involves a new grade level or a different school with new people and an unfamiliar environment.

The change from a summer schedule, back into a new routine with added expectations is one that everyone involved can be mindful of and take some proactive approaches to reduce the levels of anxiety.

“The people we support are individuals with the same preferences, anxieties and anticipations as everyone else, but sometimes those can be amplified because they have a pretty accurate view of the environment, which isn’t always as accommodating to them as it should be,” said Amanda Matthews, a psychologist at Monarch.

For parents, being as proactive as possible during summer months is important. Talking with their children about what their feelings are and being open with them to come up with real solutions is one way to get a head start. It’s also important to consider peer pressure and the

fact that it doesn't stop when school is out. Checking in with them regularly is crucial to identifying what ongoing triggers may be happening in the summer that can carry over into the school year.

"We're all so busy with our different schedules and plans, it's so easy to just get into the routine of dropping the kids off at their summer camps, their social engagements or athletic competitions and not really check in with them," said Matthews. "The social circles and pressures are still happening during the summer, talking behind the back, rumors or indirect aggression doesn't stop in the summer."

The most appropriate way for parents to bring these topics up depends on the child. The more time parents spend with their child, the better they can know them, understand them and communicate with them more effectively.

"You have to have that foundation and rapport with your child. If you don't have that, the child is going to view attempts to communicate as trying to sneak into their business and they'll get more secretive," said Matthews. "Giving them time and letting them know, they're the experts, they need to teach the parents what they're experiencing."

According to the Child Mind Institute, anxiety associated with going to school can manifest in physical symptoms as well. If stomachaches and headaches, for example, persist even after the possibility of a medical problem has been cleared, it could be a sign on an anxiety disorder. For example:

- A child with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) might avoid going to school because it's hard for him to manage his anxiety there.
- A child who's been bullied may be afraid to go to school because his tormenters are there.
- A child with separation anxiety might be afraid something terrible will happen to mom if they're apart.
- A child with an undiagnosed learning disorder might be avoiding shame and embarrassment.

Matthews also says it's important to note that a diagnosis can become a label, but it's important to remember that every person regardless of their diagnosis is an individual. People with the same clinical diagnosis can be very different people in their thoughts, their feelings and their behavior. Helping the child's school staff and teachers understand this as well is just as important. Meeting with teachers and communicating a child's specialized needs can be done in the summer months, just as it can during the school year.

"Make sure that they're not falling into the trap of labeling individuals. Just because a child can't do one thing well, doesn't mean they can't do another thing well," said Matthews. "Rehearse with your child the one, two, or three points they'd like to get across and what they would find helpful. Maybe even have them write those down and bring them to the meeting, so

you can really tackle what's most important and show that they shouldn't be labeled based on a clinical diagnosis."

Inside Monarch

New Bern Golf Tournament Kicks-Off its Fourth Edition Next Month



Monarch will host its annual fall Dreams Take Flight Golf Tournament in New Bern on Thursday, September 14.

Drawing in players and sponsors from across the local New Bern-area community and beyond, the tournament in New Bern raises money for Monarch's programs and services that benefit the people we support.

"Last year, this tournament combined with the spring event in Albemarle helped Monarch raise more than \$80,000 in support for our programs and services," said Laurie Weaver, senior

director of philanthropy. “We have great donors, players and sponsors who make it happen every year.”

Sylvia Hancock, human resources director, coordinates the tournament which will occur again this year at the New Bern Golf and Country Club. The tournament will be one of the first hosted at the club following a significant course renovation.

“Players and sponsors will get a first look at the course improvements before others and it’s exciting for players to have access so soon after renovations are complete,” said Hancock.

This year marks the fourth year that Monarch has hosted this New Bern Dreams Take Flight Golf Tournament. For more information about the tournament, [click here](#).

Picture: Gary Barattini (blue shirt) and Mike Lynn (pink shirt) were joined by Jim Kelley and Andy Basinger on the Washington National Insurance team at the 2016 New Bern Tournament.

An Important Message From IT

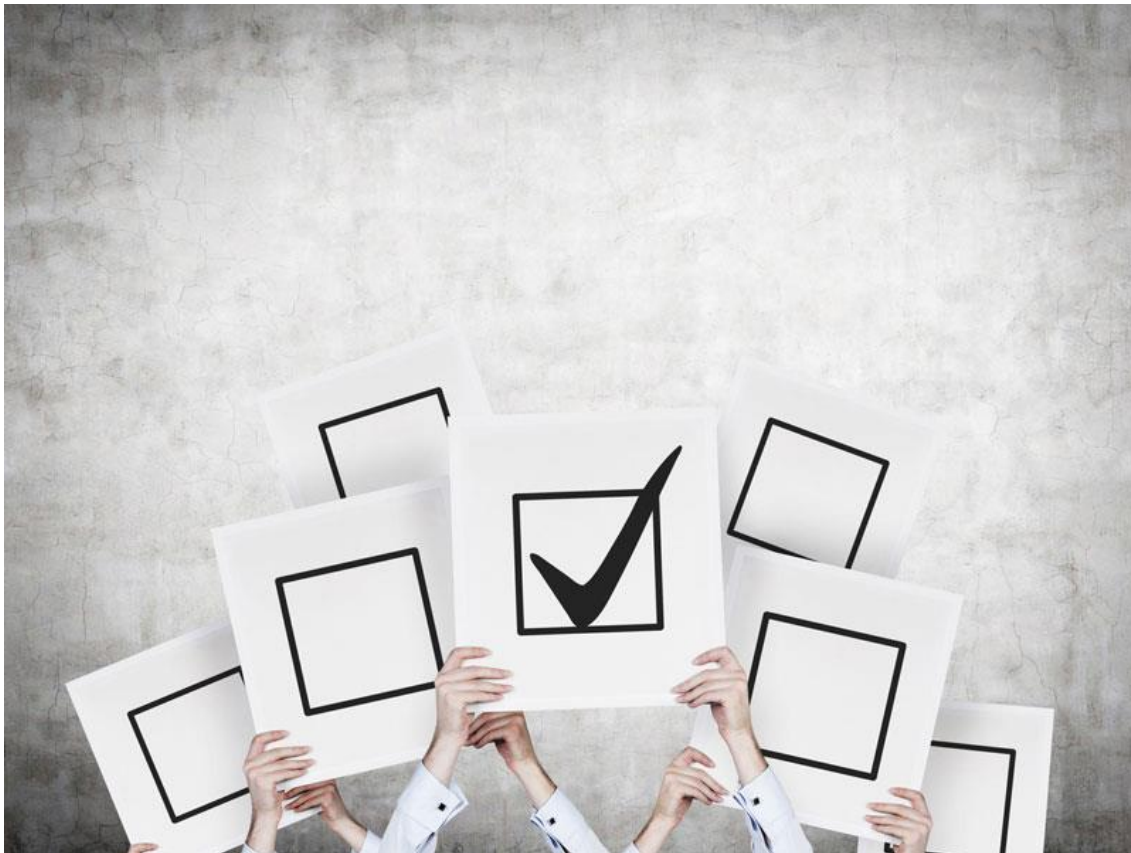


The Information Technology (IT) Helpdesk has seen several recent issues where staff are moving or unplugging IT equipment and not reconnecting the same items properly and it is causing IT outages.

These outages cause significant downtime and connectivity interruptions. Before unplugging any equipment, please contact IT and the team will assist you in properly reconnecting the equipment.

Please submit an IT Helpdesk ticket on my.monarchnc.org or call (800) 230-4187 for assistance.

Joint Commission Surveyors Continue to Visit Monarch Sites until Friday, August 17



Officially reaching the half-way mark in our accreditation journey, we're happy to report that surveyors and the Joint Commission (JC) Prep Team have been impressed with just how much our staff knows about the people we support and the level of care we are providing.

While the official findings report may take a couple of weeks to generate after the surveyors finish visiting some of our sites next week, the JC Prep Team wants to emphasize a couple of easy, fixable items and topics hosts and cohosts have seen come up during the first three days of the survey.

If your site has not yet been visited, please ensure your team is aware and well versed on the following:

1. **Smoke Detectors and Fire Extinguishers:** Make sure all staff know how to check their respective site's smoke detectors (if applicable) and that each site's fire extinguishers are tagged and labeled.
2. **Egress Lights:** Test them and make sure they are working. Surveyors may shut off the breaker and test them in action.
3. **Emergency Shut-offs:** All team members need to know where the emergency shut-off is (example: power, water, gas).
4. **Activities:** All activity calendars need to be up to date for August.
5. **Hand Hygiene:** Use soap and water or hand sanitizer – especially before and after dispensing medications.
6. **Locked Doors:** Please ensure we have keys and can easily access any locked doors at our sites.
7. **Documentation:** All of the surveyors are looking very closely at documentation. From how easily team members can access ECHO and physical intake forms, to tracing how suicide assessments, admission assessments, and overall health assessments are reported and documented. For example, they may pull up a record and make sure the MAR matches the physician's order. Also, NO white-out should be used on ANY documentation.
8. **Goals:** It is imperative that all team members track and log goals appropriately. Daily grid sheets and overall goal assessments need to show progress and be consistent.
9. **Pantry, Disaster Food Storage, and Fridge:** This is being checked in every home. Please ensure that all the food in the pantry is not expired and all the items in the fridge are properly labeled with open date and expiration date.
10. **Temperature Logs:** Are your temperature logs up to date? Some sites have not had updated temperature logs or they are the same for weeks without fluctuation. All team members need to know where to find old logs and know how to log temperatures correctly.
11. **Freezer Logs:** The correct range is 0 to -10. Let's make sure those logs are accurate with the negative sign.
12. **Medications:** All medications need to be labeled on the bottle with the opened date and the expiration date. They may ask you questions about procedures and a 'what would you do' if a medication tablet fell on the floor, or if a medication was discontinued.
13. **Waived Testing:** Be sure to check on glucometer cleanliness and competencies. Are there open dates and expiration dates noted on control solutions?
14. **Fire Drill, Emergency Plans, and Disaster Drills:** All team members need to know where to find emergency plans and be prepared to communicate what steps they'd need to take in case of an emergency.
15. **Cleanliness:** Surveyors may look at common items like behind the dryer for lint or inside the stove, but please make sure to look at not so common areas, too, like below the changing table or the underside of the hood above the stove.

16. **Cleaning Supplies:** All team members need to know what products are used where, and how long they need to be applied to each area. (The Huddle Sheet on Sharepoint has all of these details).
17. **Sprinkler Heads:** Look up and make sure sprinkler heads around your site are not dusty and items are at least 18 inches away.

If you have any questions about the topics listed above, please contact your direct supervisor or Angie Bjorklund from the JC Prep Team at angie.bjorklund@monarchnc.org.

Keep up the good work everyone!

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Natasha Black

Natasha Black is a service manager covering Union, Stanly, Montgomery and Anson counties, primarily at Monarch's Campus Park Drive office in Monroe. She has enjoyed her work with us over the last 15 years.



What does a typical workday look like for you?

During a typical workday, my biggest task is ensuring that I provide support to the managers in different aspects. My schedule varies widely every day, from managing the hiring process, coordination and completion of Housing and Urban Development packets, monitoring budgets and plans of improvement, and completing service billing in our ECHO system.

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

Providing support and training to the managers and working as part of a team supporting other team members.

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

The most rewarding part of my job is meeting the great people we support. To have amazing staff and co-workers who are dedicated to their jobs and truly care about them and their families. My proudest moment on the job was during my first year as a group home manager when I received the Staff Member of the Year Award. I was so excited and it gave me encouragement that my work is not in vain.

What do you enjoy when you aren't working?

I enjoy my family. I have a wonderful husband and two boys that I truly adore. They keep me extremely busy! I enjoy going to church, cooking, shopping, decorating and planting flowers.

What movie or song best describes you?

The song that best describes me would be the gospel song [I Know Too Much About Him](#) by Smokie Norful because despite all that I have been through nothing can destroy my peace of mind. I have tried God for myself. He's been good to me even when I didn't deserve it! No one can waver my faith in knowing what He can do for me.

MONARCH IN THE NEWS

News & Record - [UNCG selects Monarch](#)

Sun Journal - [Club donates to local nonprofits](#)

Fox 8 - [Suicide rate among teen girls is the highest it's been in 40 years](#)