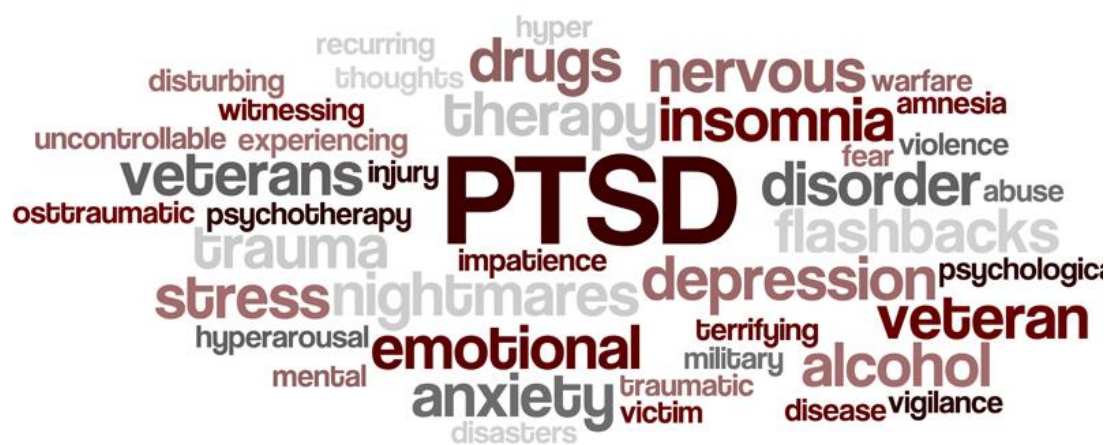


Lead Story

“I Was in My Own 15-year Battle,” Rita Carpenter Talks About Living with PTSD



When Rita Carpenter first arrived at Monarch she was at her breaking point. She got a ride from a relative to an outpatient office because her car had broken down. It was the last straw. She was already a victim of domestic violence and suffering the loss of both of her parents, while raising a teenage son and concerned about how he, too, was handling these circumstances.

“When I first got to Monarch, I was a mess. I was crying at the drop of a hat. I didn’t know which way to go or what to do,” said Carpenter.

Just hearing a certain song or someone saying certain words would trigger a feeling of being overwhelmed for Carpenter. Things started changing for the better once she had her first outpatient appointment.

“After I was assessed and prescribed medication that worked for me, I got in and saw a great therapist. She walked me through different steps to help manage my anxiety and cope with things,” said Carpenter.

Carpenter and her son, whose name is not being used to protect his privacy, would both be diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, PTSD can manifest after you have been through a trauma. A trauma is a shocking and dangerous event that you see or that happens to you. During this type of event, you think that your life or others' lives are in danger. The clues to a diagnosis are found in how someone is coping with a trauma. People can experience the same trauma, but cope with it differently.

“It’s hard to go through life and not experience trauma,” said Amy Dellinger, an outpatient therapist at Monarch who treated Carpenter and her son. “Anytime someone comes in with a PTSD diagnosis, I like to talk to them about it and try to educate them on it because there is a stigma that post-traumatic stress only happens to people in the military,” said Dellinger.

PTSD is not uncommon. The National Alliance on Mental Illness states that PTSD affects 3.5 percent of adults in the U.S., which is almost eight million Americans. Other traumatic events that can lead to PTSD are assault, accidents or natural disasters. Symptoms include intrusive memories like flashbacks and nightmares, avoidance, dissociation and hypervigilance.

Symptoms in children can differ from those in adults. Excessive attachment with adults can be a sign, something Carpenter experienced with her son, who refused to leave the home to protect his mother.

“Sometimes it happens directly to us, sometimes it can be what we witness, even just what we watch on television,” said Dellinger. “Just because someone goes through a trauma doesn’t mean they will have PTSD, it depends on how they cope with it,” she added.

Dellinger said the best way to start coping with trauma is to talk to a professional like a therapist, since talking about it with friends or family members can sometimes trigger symptoms for them as well. Carpenter decided to share her story so that others know there are better ways manage symptoms and there is hope.

“I’m glad I went to Monarch, I recommend it to anyone who is having a hard time coping. They care and they will help. People who have PTSD sometimes don’t realize they can have it. Trauma can bring you down, especially so many things happening at once, but that doesn’t mean there is no hope for you,” said Carpenter. “I didn’t think I had PTSD, because I haven’t experienced war, but I also didn’t realize I was in my own 15-year battle,” said Carpenter. “I came out with some battle scars, but I’m getting through it,” she added.

Dellinger said Carpenter and her son are continuing to see her for follow-up sessions, with a goal to discharge Jay from treatment once he starts high school in the fall. He is more social

now, and his grades have improved. He is already planning and focused on getting into college at N.C. State in four years to study Veterinary Medicine.

National PTSD Awareness Day is June 27th.

Headlines

Harmony at the Ridgefield House is at Olivia Walker's Fingertips



Residents at the Ridgefield group home are gathered at the dining room table for a morning snack. As Olivia Walker finishes, she walks over to her Hamilton upright piano in the living room.

"Give me a pitch," she says. A reference to one of her favorite movies *Pitch Perfect*. There is no pitch pipe, but the residents and staff enjoy mimicking the sound of one for her.

"Tell me if I kill it," she said, before playing Whitney Houston's [I Will Always Love You](#), a popular request in the house. "I will, you know I will," said Kathy Reid, a residential manager at Monarch.

Walker has always had musical talents, whether it be playing the piccolo, flute or guitar. On the piano, she plays everything from classical masterpieces to Christian hymns and even Happy Birthday for each of the housemates and staff members when their birthday arrives.

But you won't find sheet music anywhere. Olivia is blind, but hasn't allowed her impaired vision to minimize her talent. She's been playing side-by-side with her mother at Lick Creek Baptist Church in Benton, North Carolina since she was a child.

"Olivia plays all instruments by pure natural talent and feels her way through the song until she masters it on the instrument," said Kim Goff, director of program operations. "She voiced an interest in taking lessons from an instructor about 10 years ago. But after the first piano lesson, the instructor walked out and said she had never met anyone like Olivia. Everything the instructor presented to her, Olivia could already play," added Goff.

Harmony in the home isn't just heard resonating from the piano's soundboard, it permeates through to the long-standing relationships there. Olivia and her five housemates have lived together at Ridgefield for the last 25 years. Staff members believe her talent is a major piece of creating the home's outgoing, but relaxed and loving atmosphere.

"They sing together often. At dinner, sometimes they all get together and sing. Someone requests a song for her to play and they all sing it," said Reid. "It brings great joy to this house. [The staff] sings along as well sometimes. It can shift the atmosphere too. If someone in the house is feeling sad, it brings the joy and laughter and unity back to the house, because they all come together when they hear the music playing," she added.

Olivia has had concert performances, and has also played for church events, nursing homes, funerals and even performed at the opening session for Monarch's initial Council on Quality and Leadership accreditation, never letting nerves shake her.

"I get happy. I like to hear the crowd giving a stand ovation," Olivia said. "Guess what's next on my repertoire?" she asked before turning back to her keys to play a favorite hymn, *Into My Heart*.

"She wants to make people happy. She wants people to applaud, but she also wants to give her audience good music. It's how she knows she's giving a good quality performance. It's meaningful for her," said Reid.

The most meaningful performances may be the ones at home for holidays, birthdays and special requests.

"At holidays, she brings more to the feeling in the house. For Christmas, they all decorate with Kathy and the staff and Olivia plays Christmas songs so it brings them together and brings awareness of holidays and it's something she wants to do for her housemates," said Team Lead

Tara Sellers. “Rita said the other day she wants to hear *Jesus Loves Me*, and Olivia went straight to the piano and played it twice, just for Rita, so it made Rita’s day,” said Sellers.

Because Olivia loves to sing while she plays, she has expressed a great interest in taking voice lessons, something Monarch staff is working to coordinate.

Inside Monarch

Preparation is Key for Monarch’s Upcoming Joint Commission Survey



Joint Commission continues to be the buzz catch phrase at Monarch and with good reason.

Anticipation regarding when the initial Joint Commission survey will take place is still top of mind at our group homes, behavioral health offices and day programs. While the exact Joint

Commission survey date is not yet scheduled, we will receive a 30-day notice and should continue to prepare.

Whether by weekly updates via Hot Topics (all available on Sharepoint), mock surveys and evaluations, and supervisor training and procedure dissemination, Monarch's Joint Commission Prep team, led by Director of Accreditation and Infection Control, Angie Bjorklund, has worked diligently to make sure every employee at Monarch is well-informed on procedures in preparation for the survey.

The following are some imperative aspects Joint Commission Prep Team wants to emphasize with everyone to ensure we have we have a successful survey:

- **Let's clean!** Are the tubs and linens in the bathroom free of mold? Are the baseboards dusted and clean? Have the carpets been vacuumed behind and under furniture? Overall cleanliness is vital and it is important for everyone to know what cleaning agents should be used and when to use them. Everyone should have completed an assessment on ESS regarding standardized cleaning supplies.
- **Toss it or Leave It?** Food storage also is an important part of the survey. Clearing out any expired food items and ensuring everything is labeled is critical. Make sure the disaster food storage is also looked at!
- **Is it hot in here?** Any sites that are closed for a holiday or over the weekend need to ensure their refrigerator temperature logs are up to date. Especially in areas where food and medication is stored. Digital refrigerator thermometers are required in these areas.
- **Post this!** Medication posters re: high-alert medications, hand washing procedures are sound alike/look alike meds should be posted in all locations that dispense medications. Continuously check for expired medications and sample medication and ensure there are two signatures during shift changes when handing over the key for controlled medications.
- **Where's the fire?** Are you checking the fire extinguisher monthly and logging them? How about the required monthly fire drills for residential locations and annual fire drills for behavioral health locations? Don't forget to check egress lights (fire drill flashers), too. Fire safety is important for everyone!

"Achieving accreditation will take commitment from each of our employees to do the right thing and make the right choice for the care and safety of the people we support. This isn't something that ends after the initial survey is complete," emphasizes Bjorklund.

The Joint Commission seal is not the end goal. This initial survey opens the door to continual evaluation and readiness for our organization. Once Monarch receives its results, everyone will take part in the action plans and sustainability planning to make the improvements that are recommended. Year-round, continual readiness is the objective to pursuing this accreditation

and ensuring everyone is on board with providing the best possible care to the people we support.

If you have any questions about the upcoming Joint Commission survey, contact Angie Bjorklund at angie.bjorklund@monarchnc.org or any of the Joint Commission Prep Team Members: Amy Davis, Terri Bernhardt, Connie Brown or Kara Froberg.

Monarch Expands Its Support Services for Beyond Academics at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro



Over the last 10 years, Monarch has offered post-graduation support services for students who graduate from the Beyond Academics Comprehensive Transition Program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Beyond Academics was the first post-secondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in North Carolina, with its inaugural class graduating in 2007.

Monarch has recently been chosen as the partnering non-profit and will also begin offering support services to enrolled students beginning July 1, 2017.

Monarch's support services offered to students that are enrolled in the Integrative Community Studies (ICS) program are specifically designed for students with I/DD to maintain or enhance their ability to live independently while living on a college campus or in their desired community during their college experience.

"Offering quality support services tailored to college students with I/DD ensures they have all the resources they need to succeed during and after their formative college years," said Shelia Lee, director of program operations at Monarch.

More than 20 staff members will assist almost 60 students in the upcoming 2017-2018 academic year in a series of ways including:

- Healthy Lifestyle: exercise, nutrition, home maintenance
- Academic Support: development of routines, organization skills, study habits
- Inclusion: campus and community involvement, recreation/leisure exploration and service learning
- Post-Graduation: locating/maintaining off-campus housing, securing employment, maintaining independence

Beyond Academics assists students through the comprehensive four-year college experience, prepares them for life after graduation, and encourages the development of natural supports. The following data comparisons from the 2016 Think College Insights Brief compares ICS graduates to non-ICS individuals with I/DD across the nation.

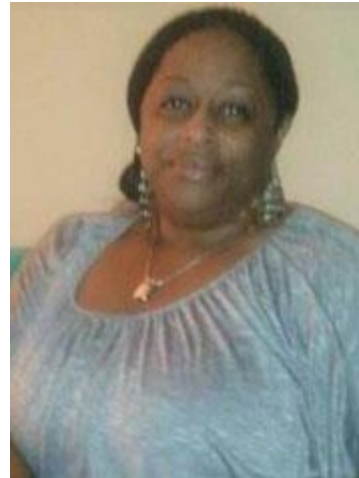
- 61.5 percent of ICS students are employed vs. 38 percent nationwide
- 54 percent live independently vs. 36.3 percent nationwide
- 77 percent had their own checking account and write their own checks vs. 29 percent nationwide

*"Beyond Academics is a unique program that shapes future community leaders and we're thrilled to be expanding our partnership with the university to ensure students have access to the support they need to achieve complete independence," added Lee.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Dwan Wall

Dwan Wall, a director of program operations for long term services and supports, has worked for more than six years covering Monarch's group homes in Randolph, Guilford, Forsyth and Stokes counties. She takes great pride in promoting community development and giving support and guidance to her local area teams to enrich the lives of the people supported.



What does a typical workday look like for you?

Any combination of phone calls, emails, supervisions, observations, reports and/or meetings for people we support, staffing, schedules, budgets, billing, crisis management, etc., but always supporting, team building and planning ways to help myself, the people we support, my team and Monarch be the best we can be!

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

Knowing that I'm able to, in so many ways, support the staff who are essential to making a difference in the lives of individuals we support in the residential setting.

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

There are so many, but what is always most rewarding for me is seeing the people supported make progress toward their dreams and goals and knowing that my work here has helped play a role in that success.

What do you enjoy when you aren't working?

I spend a lot of time with my son, who is my heartbeat and time with my family and close friends. I love traveling, shopping and reading (not necessarily in that order) and I love music, so listening to music is something I enjoy often.

What movie or song best describes you?

My mommy says there are a lot of songs that describe me especially anything associated with being happy, but my favorite is "[Imagine Me](#)" by Kirk Franklin.

MONARCH IN THE NEWS

NewsCycleCloud.com - [Putting Stamp of Approval on Food Drive](#)

Stokes News - [Monarch Hosts Art Programming Workshop at SOC](#)

PILOT - [CINC Presents Annual Spring Gala](#)