

Spring 2026

A photograph of two women sitting outdoors in a park-like setting. The woman on the left is Black, wearing glasses and a green sleeveless top, smiling towards the other woman. The woman on the right is white, also wearing glasses and a light pink top, smiling back. They are positioned in front of a red planter box containing a green topiary bush decorated with colorful butterfly cutouts. In the background, there are bare trees and a wooden gazebo structure.

The Crossroads

A North Mississippi Regional Center Publication

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Editor: Katherine Gonzalez
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A LETTER FROM *Dr Hayles*



Dear NMRC Family and Friends,

Spring is a beautiful renewal season. It is a joyful time to reset, refocus, and push forward. During this time of the year, nature provides us all with colorful lessons on renewal, growth, and resiliency. Spring gives so much warmth, fragrance, color, and light that it serves as a reminder on the importance of inspiring hope and offering encouragement to others.

Just think, only a few months ago, North Mississippi was in the depths of a terrible ice event while the earliest flower buds and green grass made a failed attempt to emerge from winter slumber. Mother nature has a remarkable way of reminding us to remain persistent and to not give up regardless of the challenges we face. I reflected on this lesson and the ongoing persistence of nature while admiring the flowers now in full bloom on the NMRC campus.

As I continued to appreciate the beauty around me and drove across NMRC's Jerry Wilburn Memorial Bridge and Service Road, I was further reminded of the importance of continuing to hope and moving forward with persistence. The Honorable Representative Wilburn's life and legacy is a testimony to his conviction and determination. As a member of the House of Representatives from 1964 to 1980 and again, from 1984 to 1988, for Itawamba and Lee counties, he was instrumental in the legislation creating a North Mississippi mental health facility for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Although it took several attempts for the bill's passage, Representative Wilburn did not stop trying. Then, in 1968, he introduced House Bill 374 which was successfully passed by the Mississippi Legislature to create, construct, equip, and maintain a center, to provide care, treatment, training, and education. I am very thankful for his persistence and for the number of lives that have been blessed because of his strength. In closing, I hope everyone enjoys the 2026 Spring Edition of the NMRC Crossroads. Remember too that no winter is forever and our challenges are never too large for a united NMRC team. "Never, never, never, give up." - Winston Churchill

DMH Board Meeting at NIMRC

NMRC was pleased to host the Mississippi Department of Mental Health Board Meeting in December. Dr. Edith Hayles and Dr. Susan Jenkins were honored to present to the distinguished board members providing updates on NMRC's strategic use of professional development and employee recognition as retention tools.

Capitol IDD DAY



Mental HEALTH DAY

at the Capitol

Professional Development & Employee Recognition
as a strategic RETENTION TOOL

Dr. Edith Hayles, North MS Regional Center Director

Dr. Susan Jenkins, Chief of Staff

Expanding Employee RECOGNITION

LISA MOORE

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT
Hailey Milam

Happy National Environmental Services Week

Expanding Employee RECOGNITION

Traditional NMRC Employee Recognition Efforts

- Annual Employee Milestone Recognition Program
- Employee of the Year Banquet
- Employee of the Month

Introducing New Ways to Recognize Employees

- Posting on Friends of NMRC Facebook to showcase staff skills, talents, accomplishments, accolades, certifications, training, etc. Also gives staff the opportunity share the posts on their own social media and have others in their friend group congratulate them.
- Employee Spotlights (e-mail & Facebook)
- Employee Appreciation Days/Weeks/Months
- The Crossroads Quarterly Publication
- SPB Certification Recognition Program
- “Rising Star” Recognition (Employee less than 1 year)

Amanda Pounds
Occupational Therapist

IT PROFESSIONALS

15 YEARS





SPB CERTIFICATION RECIPIENTS

Administrative Services Certification Program

Shana Gooch
Charisse Shaw
Shamia Wadley
Shantorrius Wright
Desia Tyler
Amelia Pratt

Certificate in Supervisory Management

DaPorshia Tellis
Misael Bautista

Certified Public Manager

Rachel Davidson

Certified Public Manager *with Excellence*

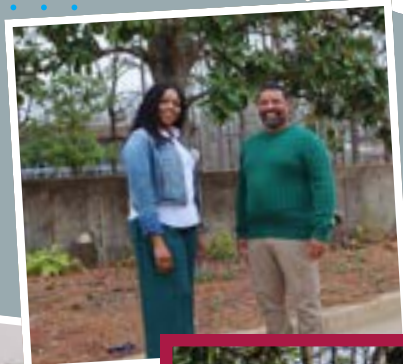
Crystal Bell
April Vanderford

Executive Services Certification Program

LaTasha Martin

Human Resource Certification Program

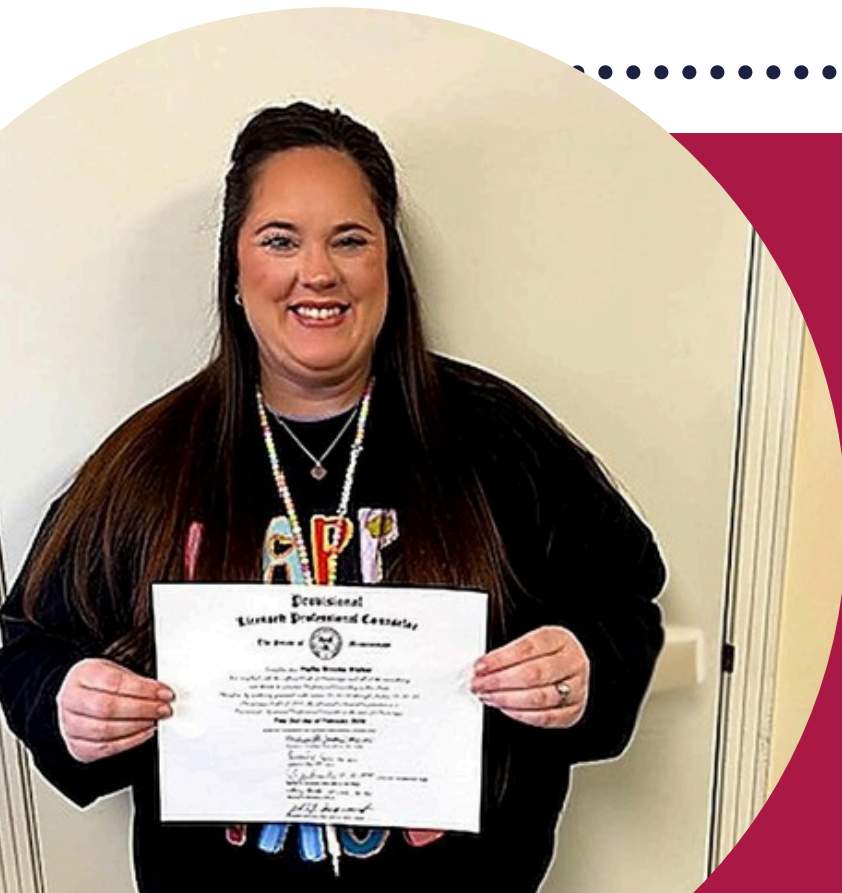
Cozette Wilborn
Tabitha Ivy
Katherine Gonzalez
Cheryl Anderson





JOHN C. STENNIS STATE EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Allen Rooker



P-LPC

Hallie Brooke Walker, Behavioral Health Specialist at Poplar Point Community Homes in Corinth, was recently awarded the Provisional-Licensed Practical Counselor certification.

34 Years Strong: A Commitment to Safety and Leadership

Cheryl Anderson

When uncertainty arises, strong leadership makes all the difference and for Cheryl Anderson, that means staying prepared, steady, and always focused on people. As NMRC's Safety Coordinator, Cheryl plays a vital role in creating and maintaining a safe environment for both clients and staff. With an impressive 34 years of service and a military background that shaped her sense of discipline and awareness, she approaches safety as a shared responsibility. "Everyone is considered a safety officer," she explains. "If you see something unsafe, report it immediately." For Cheryl, safety isn't just part of the job, it's a mindset built on accountability and care.

Her approach to leadership reflects that same mindset. Cheryl believes in leading by example and encouraging others to stay engaged and prepared, even in ever-changing situations. That steady leadership became especially important during Winter Storm Fern. As icy conditions began to impact the area, Cheryl focused on clear communication, preparation, and ensuring staff could continue supporting clients safely. By closely monitoring forecasts and working alongside leadership, she helped develop a plan that kept staff nearby and out of hazardous travel conditions—securing hotel rooms and on-campus accommodations when they were needed most.



Coordinating logistics, meals, and communication with multiple agencies came with its challenges, but through teamwork and preparation, the organization remained steady. Most importantly, there were no life-threatening injuries and no vehicle accidents during an unpredictable and potentially dangerous storm.

Looking back, Cheryl is most proud of the outcome and the collective effort behind it. "Your plan is as good as it can be until its implementation," she shares, emphasizing the importance of learning and improving with every experience. Her advice to those stepping into leadership roles is grounded in responsibility: understand the weight of the role, prepare as much as possible, and be ready to lead through both challenges and successes.

While her role requires focus and precision, Cheryl also brings a personal side to her work—one that might surprise some. Outside of her responsibilities, she enjoys spending time at Topgolf, a simple reminder that even the most dedicated leaders know how to unwind. Cheryl's leadership is a reflection of service, strength, and commitment—an example of what it means to lead with purpose and care for others every step of the way.

Landry in Full Swing

On a sunny afternoon, if you follow the sound of laughter drifting across the yard towards Sunshine, you will likely find Landry on her favorite swing. Back and forth she goes, singing at the top of her lungs, her bright blue eyes shining and her smile stretching from ear to ear. In those moments, it's easy to see what makes Landry so special—her joy is genuine, her heart is big, and the happiness she brings to the people around her is something truly unforgettable.



Landry's bright blue eyes light up even more when she sees "Mrs. Willis" (as Landry lovingly calls Michiria) and Dominique first thing in the morning. She greets them with excitement, eager to start the day and catch up with the people she cares about. Landry is naturally thoughtful and curious about others. When she sees Mrs. Willis, she often asks about her family, how she is doing, and what new things might be happening in the world. Her questions come from a place of genuine care. She loves knowing how the people in her life are doing and takes joy in simply being part of their day.

That caring spirit extends to everyone around her. Landry has a heart for the other clients at Sunshine Cottage and is always ready to help when someone needs it. Whether it's offering encouragement or lending a helping hand, she wants others to feel supported and included. Her kindness shows up in the little things she does every day.



Of course, one of Landry's most well-known talents is something simple but powerful—her hugs. Landry gives the kind of hugs that are tight, warm, and full of love. They are the kind that can turn someone's entire day around. In fact, Dominique will tell you that Landry's hugs are some of her favorites



Family is at the center of Landry’s world and plays a huge role in shaping the person she is. She is the youngest of three sisters. Landry loves her sisters dearly and treasures the time she spends with them. She is also a proud aunt to three nieces and two nephews who she absolutely adores. When Landry talks about her family, it’s easy to see just how much they mean to her.

Landry’s family is also deeply grateful for the care and support she receives at NMRC. Her mother shared how much the organization has meant to their family and the peace it has brought them over the past few years:

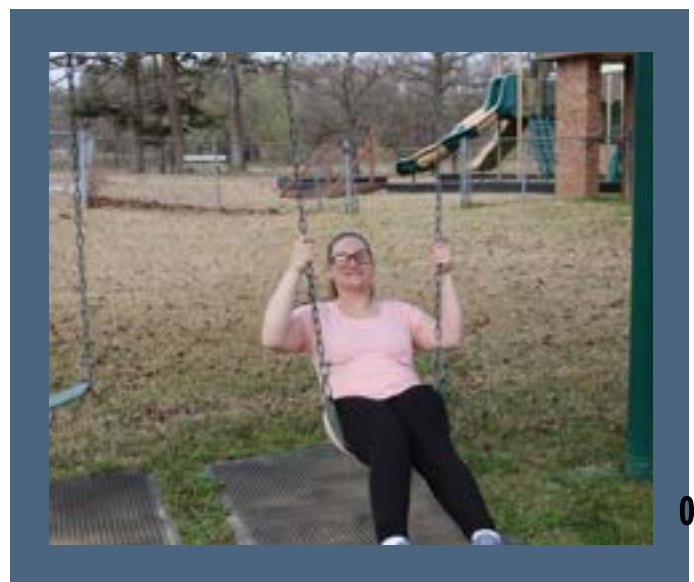


We have been incredibly blessed for Landry to be part of NMRC for the past two and a half years. For the first time ever, I don’t carry constant worry or anxiety about our special needs daughter because I know she is safe, loved, and given opportunities we simply couldn’t provide on our own. The consistency of a daily routine is essential to her success, and NMRC provides that structure so faithfully.

We are beyond grateful to NMRC and the entire staff—especially those in her cottage—for the care and dedication they show her every single day. Knowing we can visit anytime or bring her home when we choose brings such comfort. The peace of mind that comes from knowing our girl is well cared for each day is a blessing her dad and I will always be thankful for.



At NMRC, Landry enjoys learning new things. Recently, she has been working on identifying prices and matching items with their value, and she takes pride in her math skills and reading. Landry approaches learning with enthusiasm and curiosity, always eager to grow and discover something new. Outside of school, Landry enjoys many of life’s simple pleasures. She likes relaxing and watching television. She also loves going on van rides with the Sunshine staff, riding through town and taking in the scenery along the way. Those rides are often filled with laughter, music, and easy conversation, making them some of Landry’s favorite moments.



Landry also enjoys going out to eat, especially at Olive Garden and Chick-fil-A. But as much as she enjoys those meals, nothing beats her dad's cooking. One of her favorite things is when her dad fires up the grill and makes hamburgers for the family. Spending time with her parents during those moments means the world to her, and she especially enjoys the time she gets to share with her mom

She loves swimming and staying active, but nothing quite compares to her love for the swing. The swing is where Landry feels completely free. When the sun is shining bright, you can almost always find her there, swinging higher and higher with pure joy on her face.

Landry is also a huge fan of Dolly Parton, and one of her favorite songs is "Coat of Many Colors." On warm, sunny days, you might hear Landry singing her heart out to the song while she swings, with the Sunshine staff joining in along with her. In those moments, the yard fills with music, laughter, and the kind of happiness that reminds everyone how beautiful the simple things in life can be.

Landry may love her swing, but the joy she brings to the world goes far beyond it. Through her kindness, her curiosity about others, her famous hugs, and her bright spirit, she reminds everyone around her what it means to truly care for people. And if you ever want to understand Landry's joyful heart, you don't have to look far—just follow the sound of laughter on a sunny afternoon, where a girl with bright blue eyes is soaring on her swing, singing her favorite song and making the world around her a little brighter.



Out and About



Toyota



Briar Ridge



Hardy Concert



Toyota



Grammy Musuem



TWO PATHS, one PURPOSE

Desia and Jillian Tyler

At NMRC, growth begins with opportunity and for sisters Desia and Jillian, that opportunity has shaped a shared journey rooted in leadership, purpose, and impact.

Desia, the older sister, began her career in Resident Living, where she developed a strong foundation in hands-on care and person-centered support. Through dedication and a desire to grow, she transitioned to Staff Development as an instructor, where she strengthened her ability to lead, teach, and communicate effectively. Today, she serves as a QIDP in Team Coordination, overseeing client programming and working to ensure positive outcomes across services.

Jillian's journey began while she was a student at Ole Miss, stepping into direct care with little experience but quickly discovering a passion for working with clients. Eager to grow, she expanded her experience into the security department, gaining a broader understanding of campus operations before ultimately transitioning into her role as a QIDP. Her experience across multiple departments has shaped her into a well-rounded leader who serves with both perspective and initiative.

While their paths have been different, both sisters have embraced every opportunity to learn, grow, and step forward when it mattered most.

For Desia, leadership began by recognizing a need—stepping in to strengthen communication and ensure clients received the level of care they deserved. For Jillian, it came when she took on the responsibility of leading her interdisciplinary team, realizing that each experience along the way had prepared her for that moment.

Their leadership was put to the test during Winter Storm Fern, a time that required resilience, teamwork, and unwavering commitment.

Desia remained a steady and dependable presence, helping guide her team through uncertainty while continuing to prioritize both staff and client needs. Jillian stepped in wherever she was needed most—helping prepare meals, running the switchboard, and supporting multiple departments to keep operations moving forward. Together, they showed that leadership is not defined by a role, but by a willingness to serve, adapt, and support others in any situation.

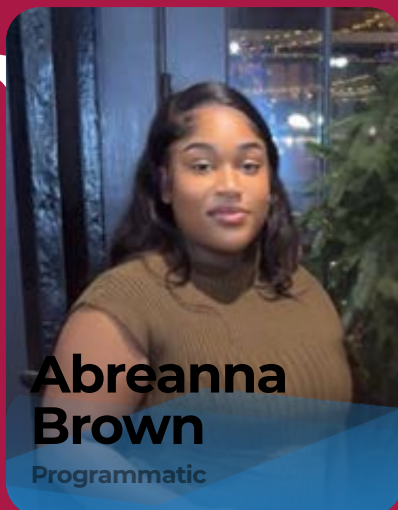
Today, both Desia and Jillian lead with intention, integrity, and heart. They continue to invest in their teams, build meaningful connections, and create positive outcomes for those they serve.

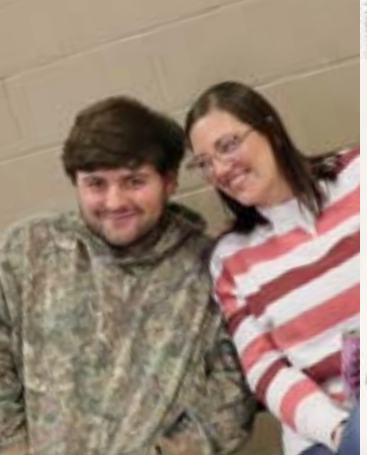
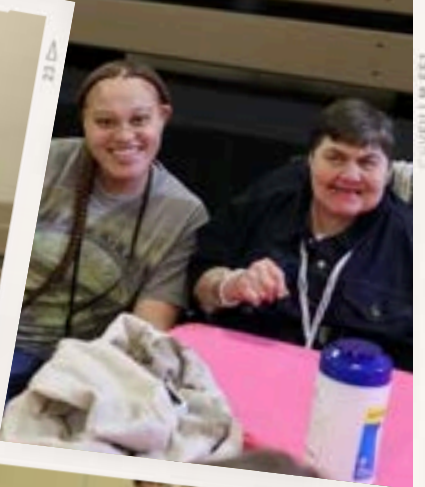
Their journeys reflect what's possible when dedication meets opportunity. Side by side, Desia and Jillian have grown into leaders who not only support their teams, but also inspire those around them. Through every challenge and every success, they continue to make a meaningful and lasting impact at NMRC.



EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

July 2025-2026









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