

SUMMER 2024



THE CROSSROADS

A NORTH MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL CENTER PUBLICATION



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A letter from the Director

Dear Clients, Families, Friends, and Community Partners,

I am happy to announce the return of “The Crossroads” quarterly publication. So many wonderful activities and special events are always occurring at NMRC, and “The Crossroads” is a great opportunity for us to share our joy with others. As the NMRC Director, I am blessed to be part of an amazing team where life-long friendships occur between clients, staff, and families. Highlights from my years of service include watching people with intellectual disabilities develop new skills, increase their independence, and exercise more choices in their lives. Additionally, I have been honored to be present as NMRC celebrated 20, 30, 40, and



50 years of providing quality services across the northern counties of Mississippi. Through the years, our NMRC journey has taken us down many winding roads and with some being more difficult to travel than others. Yet, the remaining constant which endures is the dedication and determination of NMRC employees. Their compassion and wisdom are key points on the roadmap keeping NMRC strong and forever moving forward. With a combination of learning, laughter, and love as our guides, we consistently reach the destination of fulfilling the NMRC mission.

On our incredible NMRC journey thus far, is the steadfast belief in the clients, their abilities, and their contributions to local communities. In closing, I would like to thank the support from the Mississippi Legislature, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) Board Members, and the DMH Leadership Team as well as our many NMRC Community Partners. Hope you enjoy this edition of the “The Crossroads.”



Edith M. Hayles, Ph.D.
NMRC Director



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

NMRC employees hold over 25 types of professional licenses and certifications, such as:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| Nursing Home Administrators | Licensed Teachers | Nurse Practitioners |
| DMH Licensed Administrator | Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities | Licensed Nutritionists |
| Licensed Social Workers | Therapists | Licensed Occupational & Physical |
| Licensed Professional Counselors | Certified Mental Health Therapists | Therapists |
| Licensed School Psychologists | Community Support Specialists | Licensed Audiologist |
| | Registered Nurses | Licensed Pharamacists |



COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

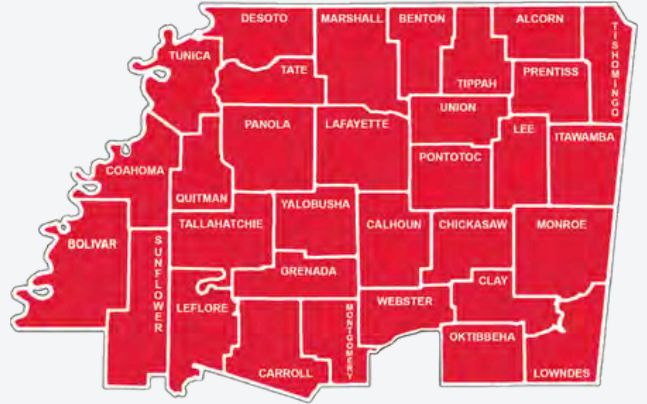
The North Mississippi Regional Center provides an array of services fostering collaboration among various disciplines and professionals in the field including twelve comprehensive departments to meet the physical, behavioral, emotional, social and recreational needs of the people we serve.

**1750****CITIZENS SERVED ANNUALLY****23****ICF/IDD COMMUNITY HOMES****5****COMMUNITY SUPPORTS
DEPARTMENTS**

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES, SUPPORT COORDINATION, TAD CENTER,
TARGETED CASE MANAGEMENT & TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

**6****COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT
PROGRAMS****3****ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS****10****MAIN CAMPUS COTTAGES WITHIN
THE RESIDENTIAL UNITS****25****EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES****188****ASSESSMENTS CONDUCTED**

Specialized licensed residential services and community services for citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the **32 northern counties** of Mississippi.



NMRC has served the community for over 50 years, and community collaboration is a dynamic component for the success of our organization. As the Lafayette Oxford University community grows, so do the opportunities for the clients served by NMRC to be actively involved in the community where they live.

NMRC is among the top four employers in Lafayette County.

57



Student Interns

- General Medicine
- Recreation Therapy
- Pharmacy
- Nursing
- Therapy Services
- Psychology
- Nutrition

91



New Hire Retention Rate %



2023-2024 *Board of Mental Health*



Stewart Rutledge
Chair



Courtney Phillips
Vice Chair



Dr. Sara Gleason



Dr. Alyssa Killebrew



Dr. Manda Griffin



Dr. Jim Herzog



Teresa Mosley



Robert Landrum



Dr. Sampat Shivangi

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health is committed to making available a comprehensive system of services and supports so all Mississippians have access to the least restrictive and most appropriate level of services and supports that will meet their needs. Our system is person-centered and is built on the strengths of individuals and families while meeting their needs for special services. Services should be provided on a continuum of where the person is at that time and what their needs are. Inspiring hope, helping individuals on their road to recovery, and improving resiliency are key factors to the success of the people we serve.



Executive Leadership



Wendy Bailey is the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health. The Chief of Staff, the Deputy Executive Director of Behavioral Health Services, the Deputy Executive Director of IDD Services, the Chief Financial Officer, and the General Counsel report directly to the Executive Director. She has been with DMH for more than 18 years. Prior to being named Executive Directors, she served in the roles of Deputy Executive Director for Administrative Services, Chief of Staff, and more. Her roles have included overseeing strategic planning for the agency, communications and outreach, peer support, legislative affairs, licensure and certification, and more.

Jake Hutchins is Deputy Executive Director of Behavioral Health Services. He administers and monitors the delivery of mental health services at state-operated behavioral health programs and at certified community providers. The primary focus of his tenure with DMH has been coordinating statewide mental health services for adults and children and youth in community-based settings. The Deputy Executive Director of Behavioral Health Services oversees the Bureau of Behavioral Health Services and the Office of Utilization Review within the Central Office.



Craig Kittrell is the Deputy Executive Director for Intellectual & Developmental Disability Services. He oversees the intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities that DMH operates. He has served in several roles at both Behavioral Health and IDD programs that DMH operates, where he oversaw various operations of support services. The Deputy Executive Director for IDD Services also oversees the Community IDD Services that include the ID/DD Waiver Program and the IDD Community Support Program. These services provide care to more than 5,000 Mississippians with IDD.



Remarkable NMRC Connections Illuminate in State Government Award Recipients

Governor Tate Reeves recently honored Dr. Susan Jenkins of the North Mississippi Regional Center and Mayor Dan M. Gibson of the City of Natchez with the 2023 Excellence in Government Awards. The foundation of these awards is to encourage the development of innovative systems of public administration. In 2012, the Mississippi State Personnel Board established and presented the inaugural Mississippi Excellence in Government Awards program at the direction of the Mississippi Legislature.

Dr. Jenkins described her fulfilling career in state services advocating and supporting citizens with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities for NMRC and the MS Department of Mental Health. She stated that she accepted the award as one of many state employees who have devoted their careers to serving this great state. Dr. Jenkins describes the foundations for her professional practice as being rooted in the ideas of accessibility and accountability. These notions come from her personal and professional experiences in encountering individuals who are seeking to improve aspects of life without knowing which path to take to enhance or improve their situation. She considers herself to be a scholarly practitioner as she believes it is part of her duty as a good citizen and state employee to learn and develop herself professionally and personally so that she can grow and share information and experiences with others to benefit the community.



The day became even more special when Mayor Gibson accepted his award and revealed to the audience his special connection with NMRC. Mayor Gibson's brother, Bob, resides in one of the NMRC ICF/IID community programs in Kilmichael. Mayor Gibson and his brother Craig, who was in attendance, glowed as they talked about their brother and how happy he has been at the home in Kilmichael. Both thanked Wendy Bailey, DMH Executive Director and Dr. Edith Hayles, NMRC Director, for the meaningful and quality opportunities Bob has in his community. Bob is a longtime Kilmichael Community Homes resident and is loved by all! He recently won Kilmichael CH's Bulldawg Award at NMRC's Awards Banquet due to his kind spirit, positive attitude and consistent willingness to help in any way asked. He regularly greets staff and peers with a smile and gentle wave. Bob looks up to David Hasselhoff and Superman. He collects Knight Rider, Baywatch and Superman DVDs; in fact, you'll see him watching Baywatch and Knight Rider re-runs on the daily! He prides himself on his taste in music and sings the lyrics to most Santana & Elvis Presley songs by heart. Bob is a huge Mississippi State University fan! He looks forward to cheering for the Bulldogs in football, basketball, baseball and softball games. He enjoys wearing his MSU apparel year-round and gets a kick out of playfully giving Ole Miss fans a hard time.



The support from Bob's family is an important part of his life. He talks to his brothers regularly and looks forward to family visits and trips throughout the year. He is friendly, likes meeting new people and can be a chatterbox when he warms-up to you. Everyone enjoys being around Bob!

Pictured below are Bob and his brothers, Mark, Craig and Dan.





Growth & Development

Part of the NMRC Culture

So much of what NMRC does as an organization is focused on growth and development for the clients served. But employee growth and development are also highly valued within the organization. NMRC staff regularly participate in professional development opportunities throughout the state. The professional development of NMRC staff benefits the organization and ultimately the clients we serve.

The Mississippi State Personnel Board's Office of Training and Development offers training to any state and city or county employees in Mississippi. We train over 2,500 students every year. Among the agencies that send employees to our training, the North Mississippi Regional Center has been a great partner with us over the years. In the last two years alone, participation from NMRC has been about 17% of our entire student population. The outstanding participation from NMRC in our training programs is due to exceptional leadership, a culture that stresses personal and professional development, and a willingness to learn. The MSPB Office of Training and Development recognizes NMRC as one of our premier training partners, and we hope our partnership continues for many years to come.



Michael Finley

**Director of Training and Development
Mississippi State Personnel Board**



50 Years of NMRC Friends

The Parents and Friends Organization of the North Mississippi Regional Center, also known as the “Friends of NMRC,” is a non-profit group organized in 1974 to support the mission and work of our organization. Membership is open to all, with the majority of the group members being the parents, family, and friends of our clients.

For dues of only \$10 per year, you can join the Friends of NMRC and demonstrate your support for the programs and services of our organization, and the special population we serve. Additional contributions may be made to the Friends of NMRC to ensure the ongoing support of special activities and events. The Friends of NMRC is registered as a Charitable Organization by the Mississippi Secretary of State.

A heartfelt gratitude to the officers of the Friends Organization for their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts in upholding the mission and values of this group.



William Dunn
President



Lee Winstead
Vice President



Clients and staff benefit from the generosity of the Friends Organization as various opportunities are offered for supporting NMRC and the special population it serves. A great deal of the employee recognition efforts are made possible thanks to the Friends Organization.



Various professional development opportunities have also been made attainable because of the Friends Organization. A group of NMRC employees who provide supports for the Fernwood clients were given the chance to attend the Prader-Willi Syndrome Association National Convention in Orlando, Florida.
Top photo



In 1980, Chris Dale and her husband moved to Oxford so he could teach at the University of Mississippi. She had been an Occupational Therapist for 7 years and had worked in a variety of settings. She found her way to NMRC seeking part time work.

Chris was interviewed by NMRC Director, Randy Hendrix and cleared-in for hire by Ed LeGrand, NMRC Personnel Director. Randy Hendrix later went on to become the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, and Ed LeGrand left shortly after to become the director at Hudspeth Regional Center in Whitfield, MS. When Chris reflects on the time, she realizes that NMRC had only been serving individuals for 7 years. Everything was very new, and many of the clients were generally more independent.

The cottages had “wards” instead of individual rooms. Swaying Cypress and Maple Point had not been built and NMRC had not yet expanded into community services.

As an Occupational Therapist, Chris aimed to provide treatment to clients on campus and the outpatient pediatric clients who came to the center for treatment through Project Run, an early intervention program. In 1980, services for children with developmental delays were not available through the schools. Woodlea North and Woodlea South served clients who were limited in their physical abilities and it was often challenging to position them when seated. From the beginning, Chris wanted to figure out a way to get these clients seated comfortably in a wheelchair so that they could experience the world.

There are long standing health benefits for respiration, digestion and cognition. This interest and focus determined her future in Occupational Therapy. With a focus on seating and positioning, Chris earned an advanced certification to help increase the independence of clients at NMRC.

Reflecting on 40 years of serving NMRC clients:

Chris Dale

Chris oversees the Therapy Services Department at NMRC which consists of dedicated and experienced employees. The technicians in Therapy Services have a reputation for being self starters. The licensed staff within the department are some of the best in the field. The combined number of years of service to NMRC in the department is 89 years for the technicians and 97 years for the licensed staff.

Chris and the Therapy services staff have grown close to the clients seeing some of them daily. She recalled a client who was nearing the end of his life and requested bacon. The Therapy Services staff fried a pound of bacon for him, with the permission of his family who were at his bedside. "Before he passed away, he ate as much bacon as he wanted," Chris said. Another beloved client was a huge Elvis fan, so every January Therapy Services made Elvis' favorite cake, played Elvis movies, and sang Elvis songs all day.

Chris believes that the clients are precious to all NMRC staff and they make working in this loving environment a real joy. She quoted Dr. Eric Dahl, former NMRC medical director...



..... “
**WHAT A PLACE,
 YOU GET PAID TO
 HELP PEOPLE.**
 ”

PUBLIC INFORMATION

SHA' SIMPSON



Among NMRC's numerable leaders, Sha' Simpson's resilience and heart for community have given her the opportunity to make a difference here in Lafayette County. She started her journey at NMRC on C-shift in Resident Living. By finding her community, she was able to reach out and make connections with organizations that reflect her goal of investing into the community she serves. The positive results that these organization have makes Sha's leadership at NMRC that much more impactful. In Leadership Lafayette she serves on the Steering Committee that picks the 25 candidates to be a part of the program

and coordinates sessions that are designed for active community leaders. When Sha' went through the 9-month program, she gained insight about Lafayette Oxford University's (LOU) current community needs. Her driving force of duty has distinguished her from others when she was selected for the with the Overall Leadership Award in 2017.

Her leadership did not stop there as she rose to become the Director of Public Information at NMRC in 2020. Not only was this a professional achievement; it was a testament for her to continue to spread joy and positive energy to the clients and staff. Sha' has a unique ability to demonstrate the importance of NMRC by capturing our beautiful moments together.





The profound sense of duty to NMRC's clients is the foundation our leadership team influences to leaders like Sha' that have always gone above and beyond.

Sha' is not confined to her role at Leadership Lafayette and NMRC. She is also the President of the Executive Committee for United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County. United Way focuses on promoting the wellbeing of the community by allocating resources and people. These needs can vary from basic needs to health, education or financial stability. Any contribution to United Way is an investment to the community that can fund programs for the population that might not know where else to turn. Sha's achievement of overcoming adversity has set down the path for her to be a leader in United Way for all people as an agent of change to the LOU community.



A prestigious award which highlights Sha's achievements was being selected as Lafayette Oxford Community's Top 20 Under 40. Members of the community nominated her for this award because they know her passion to serve and what a vital role she is as a leader. She aspires to the needs of others which has changed the lives of many. Whether she is collaborating with local organizations or capturing meaningful images, Sha' is an active reminder of how the community has taken steps to make great changes and a reflection of NMRC's reach.



North Mississippi Regional Center is a place where individuals learn to grow more independent and enhance their abilities. For a certain client his dreams couldn't have come at a better time. Everyone meet Casper. Casper initially lived in a cottage at NMRC's main campus before transferring to the Dr. Miranda Griffin community home in Bruce in 2013. After living in the community home, Casper decided to take the next big step to supervised living. In supervised living you have fewer roommates and more freedom over your own schedule. To be accepted in supervised living, a team of individuals have a PSS meeting to discuss anything and everything about the client. Once Casper was ready to make the move, he would start looking where would be the best fit for him. He interviewed roommates and looked at places to live. The transition process is all about the client's choice and in Casper's case he decided to stay local in Oxford.

His new life couldn't have started at a better time, Christmas. Christmas is Casper's favorite time of the year. If it could be Christmas year-round Casper would be all for it. He loves wearing his Santa hat, receiving presents, and going out the Square to see the Christmas lights. Now Casper can also decorate his new home with his own Christmas decorations. What a great Christmas gift his new life turned out be.

He has three roommates who he enjoys hanging out with. They like to plan and cook their own meals, but you'll never catch them saying "no" to eating out, especially if it's for some pizza. They all assist with chores around the house and spend the weekdays at the Day Service Center. which has a theater, different sports equipment, board games, a salon, or whatever hobby Casper prefers. At his house, he can be himself and enjoys his own room which is personalized to his own liking.

He can be quiet at first, but once you get to know him, he is friendly and talented. If there is one thing you should know about Casper, is that he has a keen eye for collectable footballs. He is always carrying one. Casper continues to thrive in his new life and is thankful to live more independently.

Casper



2024 EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

JAN
FEB



MARIO HERRON

JANUARY

Direct Care
Resident Living

TAWANDA MITCHELL-HILL

JANUARY

Programmatic Services
Resident Living



HANNAH JONES

FEBRUARY

Direct Care
Resident Living

VALERIE WRIGHT

FEBRUARY

Programmatic Services
Community Transition Services



2024 EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

MARCH



LADALIAHA PITTMAN

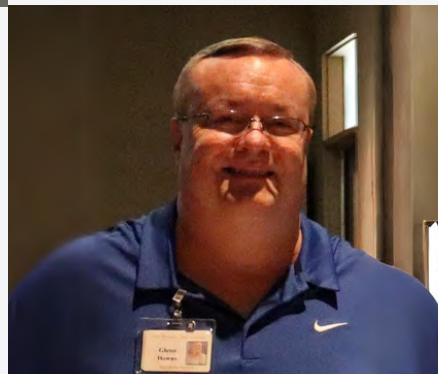
MARCH

Direct Care
Resident Living

GLENN DOWNS

MARCH

Programmatic Services
Resident Living



*Thank you for hard
work at NMRC!*

NMRC FUN







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