

## From Our Offices

April is **Autism Awareness Month**. HomeCARE is proud to support this effort and has scheduled events in April to promote education and awareness. HomeCARE has supported and advocated for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders for 20 years.

- Statesville will offer an in-service training on April 16<sup>th</sup> titled Autism Awareness and Resource Guide at 10am and 5:30pm.
- Boone will host a workshop on What is Sensory Overload? on April 17<sup>th</sup> from 2-4pm.
- The Wilmington office will be participating in the Coastal NC Run/Walk for Autism on Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Tarboro's Autism awareness event "Park-n-Play" will take place on Tuesday, April 15 from 12p-3p at Wilson Toisnot Park in Wilson, NC.
- Whiteville's "Fun in the Sun" will take place on Thursday April 10 from 3p-6p at Daddy Joe's Campground, Tabor City, NC.



I hope to see you at these events across North Carolina.

Margaret Mason, MA  
Chief Operating Officer  
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**"Thank you for welcoming us in your HOME for 20 years."**

## Employee Spotlight

This month's employee spotlight is on Behavior Technician **Lakisha McKoy**. Lakisha has been an employee with HomeCARE Management for 2 ½ years. She currently supports three individuals and is a very **dedicated, compassionate, and flexible** employee.

When asked what she likes about her job, Lakisha said that she loves helping individuals achieve goals.

Lakisha has a Bachelor of Science degree from North Carolina Central in Biology.

Lakisha was raised in Elizabethtown, N.C. with her five sisters. She is the proud mom of her 6-year-old son, Logan.

In Lakisha's leisure time she enjoys having fun with Logan, riding 4-wheelers, dirt bike riding and bowling. Lakisha said that just being in her son's presence brings her a great sense of joy. When she and Logan are ready for vacationing, they enjoy spending time in Florida.



## Client Spotlight

This month's Client Spotlight shines on our Asheville area, which supports 17 **Alternative Family Living (AFL)** homes.

**Anita Smith** has been supporting **Laura Brinkley** (pictured on left) in her home since 1999. Laura and Anita met when Laura needed a respite provider. Laura chose to live with Anita when Laura's prior caregiver moved away.

Since 1999, when Anita became Laura's AFL provider, their relationship has grown. Laura works in a local thrift store and enjoys her independence.



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## Recent changes in the diagnosis of autism



If you're reading this article, chances are you, or someone you know, work with, or love, is impacted by autism. One out of 88 individuals is living with autism and one out of 54 men is diagnosed with some form of autism. Autism has historically been diagnosed amongst a wide spectrum of individuals with varying intellectual abilities. However, there are recent changes that may perhaps lower the statistic slightly.

The new criteria are more thorough and strict compared to the old criteria. For example, more symptoms are needed to meet criteria within the area of fixated interests and repetitive behaviors. Those with higher functioning and only mild impairment socially could possibly no longer meet the criteria for the new autism diagnosis. However, research indicates the very few individuals who meet the criteria for autism will actually lose their diagnosis upon being re-evaluated.

For those who currently hold a diagnosis of autism, a new Autism diagnosis may simply be given when re-evaluated. Until then, all individuals with a current autism spectrum diagnosis will hold their current diagnosis. Current or future diagnosis of autism will be referred to as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), with a specified level of 1,2, or 3, to more accurately indicate levels of impairment and need.

Evidently, reasons for using a more generalized term of "Autism Spectrum Disorder" are multiple:

- 1) the old way isn't precise enough. It resulted in different clinicians diagnosing the same person with different disorders, and some had their diagnosis change from year to year based on the assessment of the same symptoms, and
- 2) autism is defined by a common set of behaviors and it should be characterized by a single name according to severity. There is a hope that new requirements will help ease confusion amongst families and physicians so autism is more comprehensively and accurately diagnosed with a common language. In turn, it should be more efficient to determine an individual's needs and develop treatment plans for those living with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

### Reference:

[www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/facts-about-autism](http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/facts-about-autism)  
[www.johnson-center.org](http://www.johnson-center.org)  
[www.dsm5.org](http://www.dsm5.org)

## Anniversaries

Celebrating **fifteen** years with HOMECARE this month is *Jacqueline McCoy* from Statesville. Celebrating **thirteen** years is *Rose Frazier* and *Margie Rankin* also from Statesville.

Also celebrating anniversaries this month are:

- 9 years: David Fowler and Deborah Lee
- 5 years: Karen Neyland and Connie Wooten

Thank you for putting our mission to practice on a daily basis. *Since 1994, the mission of HOMECARE Management Corporation is to provide the services necessary for people to be as independent as possible in their own homes and communities, rather than having to live in institutions.*



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### Want to learn more about HOMECARE?

[www.homecaremgmt.org](http://www.homecaremgmt.org)

OR

800-223-2841

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### CLIENT SPOTLIGHT (Continued from page 1)

Laura and Anita have a lot of fun. They go shopping and they like to eat out. They sing together in their church choir. Laura likes holidays especially Halloween. Laura and Anita dress up every year. When not busy with church and work, Anita ensures that Laura gets to her favorite TV show, *SpongeBob*

*Squarepants.*

Like *SpongeBob* and *Patrick*, Anita and Laura have a lasting friendship.