



THE GREENSBORO VOICE

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 10

PRINTING NEWS THAT DOESN'T FIT

OCTOBER 2012

Editorial:

The importance of participating in our democracy

By Ryan Swinney

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any"
—Alice Walker

"Why vote?" is a question I frequently hear from people who are negatively impacted by our country's economy. Whether you are experiencing homelessness, unemployment or even just the fear of either of these, finding a way to vote on behalf of your beliefs is a way to ensure security within our nation. There are a handful of other issues that are currently being focused on during this particular election that specific groups of people are raising a voice to address. If you care about Medicare, women's health issues, care for the elderly, immigration policies, and wealth distribution and taxation, you need to vote.



Health Issues

Many people are interested in health issues, such as the elderly, people experiencing health problems or just people who have specific views on how the healthcare system should operate. The particular concerns with the healthcare system for the most part reside with Obamacare and Medicare.

There are many people who are strongly in favor of the new Obamacare system. One reason people support this program is that it allows those who are 26 years old and younger to be able to stay on their parents' health insurance. Obamacare requires people to have insurance, thus requiring the insurance companies to make healthcare affordable. This issue is important to many people who are on tight budgets and are not able to pay exorbitant

medical fees and bills. On the flip side, many Romney supporters fear that making the healthcare system more affordable might mean that people will not get the best treatment from doctors.

There must be some way to compromise. Would the fact that healthcare be cheaper for all allow there to be less discrimination so that a person would not get a better or worse treatment based on his or her financial background?

Medicare Issues

Medicare is another large healthcare concern. When Romney was Governor of Massachusetts, his Romneycare plan seemed very similar to the Obamacare plan. Romney and his running mate,

Continued on page 8

Poverty Tour makes appearance in battleground election states

By Majik Pennix

All communities in the United States are plagued with homelessness and poverty. A recent finding from the Census Bureau reveals that the poverty level in our country is the worst it has been in 50 years. The astonishing fact that 46 million Americans are living in poverty should be an integral part of our national conversation, particularly in this election year.

"The Poverty Tour 2.0: A Call To Conscience" began in September. This tour is traveling to four battleground states: Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Florida. Leaders of the tour hope it encourages these states to address the issues of poverty in their communities. Broadcaster Travis

Smiley and philosopher Cornel West will lead town hall discussions in these states to start the conversation about poverty. The two hosts will interview administrators, local leaders, activist organizations, congressmen and women, the Green Party and former members of the Clinton administration on topics such as, decent jobs, housing, and healthcare.

The tour asks for the public to stand up for change. Before voting in November, Americans should be compelled to do more research about poverty in our country. We should put our minds, power, money and hands together to address this problem, regardless of our own economic circumstances. ■

What is the experience of being homeless like?

By Tony Hodges

I don't know which is worse—the long, summer days with hot, summer nights, or the freezing and sometimes rainy, cold fall and winter days and nights. To be out there, homeless and unemployed with no family to turn to, leaves you feeling afraid and alone, like no one cares. You often wonder if you will ever make it out of the situation. When I was homeless, I, along with many other people experiencing homelessness, had no or little income to buy food, water, clothes or a hotel room to get off the streets for a night.

Being unemployed and homeless presents drawbacks to getting hired because of not having a permanent residence, having bad hygiene and a lack of presentable, clean clothes. In addition, the unemployed most often have no transportation. These missing resources make us angry at being turned down for jobs because at the end of the day, we are still homeless or sleeping in shelters or on the streets, under bridges or in the woods.

Trust is a major issue between the homeless and the housed and many people look down on us like we are the scum of the world. The saying goes, "Try walking in the other people's shoes and see how it feels." The only real way for someone to know what homelessness is like is by being homeless. Despite there being governmental programs and resources, some people experiencing homelessness refuse that help because they do not trust others. Another challenge is that some have mental illnesses that have developed as a result of their situation. Sometimes, these mental illnesses have been a struggle for the person for his or her whole life and become worse because of their homeless condition.



People experiencing homelessness also face challenges accessing healthy food. Even with food stamps, people without a home have no place to cook the food they purchase. This poses a health challenge because it is tough to get a good source of nutrients in foods that do not require cooking. Many people experiencing homelessness have medical conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, low iron or high cholesterol, which makes it even harder to eat well on food stamps or free meals from the community.

"Falling down is easy, getting up is hard." It takes many resources, help and trust to put a person experiencing homelessness back into society. I am fortunate that I now have my own place but I remember well what being homeless was like. ■

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Founder and editor of The Greensboro Voice heads West

By Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater



While a student at Elon University, Mary Yost created The Greensboro Voice and has kept it going for almost two years. Mary organized the paper's layout and design, maintained the website and edited the work of reporters who shared their stories with our paper. Mary graduated from Elon in May and, in the spirit of a great adventure, moved to Denver, Colo., even though she had never visited the city. In September, she began an AmeriCorps job at Urban Peak, an organization that serves youth experiencing homelessness in Denver. Mary will remain connected to issues of poverty and homelessness in the Denver area as well as keeping up with the staff of The Greensboro Voice.

Mary brought the idea of starting a newspaper for the homeless community after interning with Street Sense, a paper for people experiencing homelessness in Washington, D.C. In September 2010, she approached the Interactive Resource Center with the idea of launching a newspaper and, with a dedicated team of volunteers, she recruited reporters, artists and poets to share their talents with our newspaper.

The staff of The Greensboro Voice rotates constantly but Mary has been with the paper from the outset, encouraging contributions from people experiencing homelessness as well as those who help support this community. She has secured grant monies to help sustain the printing costs of the paper and left it with a stable staff that will continue her work.

Here are some comments by those who have worked with Mary during these past two years:

"I remember the afternoon Mary introduced the idea of a street newspaper at the Interactive Resource Center," said Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater, editor and reporter for The Greensboro Voice. "I had no sense that the guests would latch onto a newspaper as a way of presenting their opinions about poverty and homelessness in Greensboro. Mary's genuineness and enthusiasm caught on quickly and many of the homeless guests volunteered to help with the newspaper. In helping to give voice to this population, Mary sparked an untapped energy with the guests and has done so ever since."

"Mary was out of the country when I began to write for The Greensboro Voice. Before I met her in person, I met her online," said Stephanie Thomas, reporter and photographer for our newspaper. "From the first time she e-mailed me, her enthusiasm for everything she did was evident. I was new to writing and Mary always supported and encouraged me. I especially loved it when she'd nudge me to go out and get more for a story, which always meant I had enough facts but needed to include more of what the people in the story were thinking and feeling. I never could say no to Mary, even when it meant going out on the day before Thanksgiving to get quotes from people begging on the corner. The writers, poets, and artists on our staff come from a multitude of backgrounds with a variety of experiences. With an abundance of patience and love, Mary brings out the best in all of us. I miss her terribly." ■



Flowers blooming in the Interactive Resource Center Garden. Thanks to IRC guests and volunteers for their hard work! Photo by Stephanie Thomas

Mission Statement

Our newspaper aims to serve as a vehicle for elevating voices and public discussion on issues that are not frequently covered in mainstream media outlets. These issues include homelessness, facing potential homelessness and the resources available to help those in need. This newspaper is for everyone: people experiencing homelessness, students, parents and anyone else who wants to have his or her voice heard. We hope the awareness gained from our newspaper will encourage the community to have a discussion about issues and people who are normally ignored.

Join Our Team

Members of Greensboro's community who want to end poverty and homelessness publish The Greensboro Voice. We welcome you to our team! Meetings are held at the Interactive Resource Center on Fridays from 1:00–3:00 p.m. The Interactive Resource Center is located at 407 E. Washington Street. Everyone is welcome at our meetings!

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How disability benefits are difficult to obtain

By Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater and Stephanie Thomas

I was shocked to learn how difficult it is for an individual who qualifies to receive disability benefits. I thought if someone applied but didn't get approved, they didn't qualify. The reality is, almost everyone who applies has their first application denied. It isn't uncommon for their first and second applications to also be denied. Many of the homeless people we see on our streets and in our shelters wouldn't need to be there if this process was easier and faster.

It takes an average of 3 months to be notified of the first denial, and then the applicant has to file within 60 days or they must begin the process over from the beginning. The appeal is reconsidered which takes about 6 months. If the appeal is denied, the applicant again has 60 days to appeal and if they miss the deadline, they must start the process over again from the beginning. The hearing for the appeal takes place in 6 to 18 months. The applicant receives their decision in 2 to 6 months and if they are denied they must file in 60 days or start the process over again from the beginning. From there it takes 6 to 24 months to receive a decision and if they are turned down they can appeal again or go to federal court. The entire process takes 2 to 5 years.

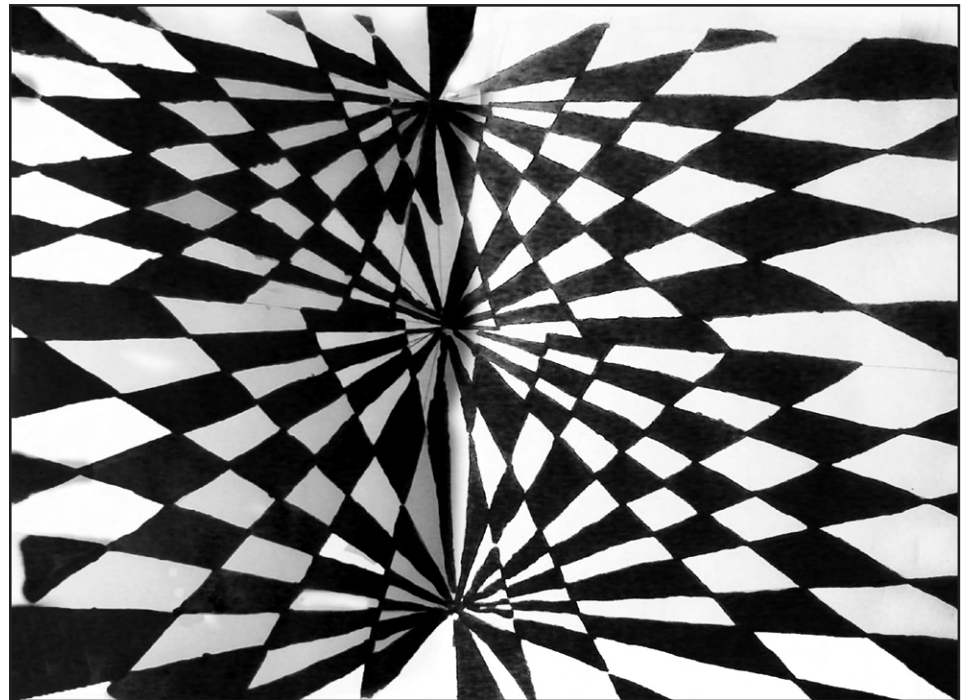
The process goes a little faster if the individual has an attorney or an advocate. I spoke with a disability attorney recently who works with people who are homeless and he said the problems of getting benefits for them are exacerbated by the fact they don't have a place to receive mail and frequently they don't have a phone, which means it is difficult to contact them on time sensitive issues. This makes it easier for them to miss their 60 day window of appeal. Even when everything goes smoothly it can take up to 2 years for an individual to get approved.

Those who are mentally ill or unable to work for other medical conditions, frequently end up living on the street if there is no one to as-

sist them. Many live on the street for years waiting for the disability benefits they are qualified to receive and desperately need.

On a Monday in October, I visited the IRC to take some photos of artwork and find out more about the job skills training. I sat down next to a gentle looking man who was reading the Greensboro Voice and struck up a conversation with him. I wanted to know what types of articles he would like to see in the newspaper and as we talked, I realized that his story was an example of how lack of disability benefits can ruin a person's life. Rick Woods shared that he had owned his own home for twenty years, eleven of those he worked at Page High school as a custodian. Then he hurt his back while moving furniture, subsequently suffering from back pain. He filed for disability and was denied. Not knowing that he should have immediately re-filed, he waited until two and a half years ago to re-file: his court hearing is in December, 2012 where he will have a disability lawyer present his case.

Meanwhile, without income from a job or disability he became four months late on his house payments. Unknown to him, his bank where he had made payments for twenty years sold his mortgage to another bank and his home went into foreclosure. Luckily he was able to move in with his sister and store his furniture in her garage. He has sold over half his belongings and is facing the sale of his truck and a twenty-six year old car to get money to grocery shop and pay for his pain medication. He was waiting to see the nurse about where he could use his orange card to get his medication. Rick says that he prays every day that he will be able to start over and have his own apartment or house. And even though he has transportation, he is unable to use it: "I've never taken a bus in my life until I came to the IRC," over a week ago he said. Disability payments are his only hope for starting over. ■



Dashun Snipes

Gypsy

By David Pigue

I was born in a wagon, traveling out of France
I was taught how to charm the audience, how to sing, how to dance
I always wore colored clothes and bangles on my feet
That is why everyone had called me a gypsy

I was always called a witch because the people said I made their children sick
They said that if they were there, I would need to leave, quick
They used to throw water and stones at me
Why, all because I was born a gypsy

We never stayed long, not anywhere
People helped us out with food, whatever they could spare
They sheltered and clothed us, even gave us a place to sleep
Not too many people would do that, not for a band of gypsies

We made new friends, almost everywhere we went
We never try to force them, we always start off slow
We let them learn our history and let them decide how nice we can be
The ones that were frightened of us now have befriended the gypsies

We gypsies dance on the streets to put food on the table
The money is not a lot, but we get by and are able
So you can now call us names and spit on our faces and feet
But I can't run away from what I am, I am and always will be a gypsy

We are never wanted anywhere so we have to hide
We travel to far away countries, some that are not far and wide
We have now settled in the U.S., all the way in Tennessee
I moved out away from my gypsy members, so in Florida is where I'll be

I plan to start a new life, working with computers and whatnot
From what I have earned from dancing, \$35.00 is all that I've got
I invested my money in the bank and it had increased over the years
I went home to tell my wife and she began to sob happy tears
I even called my mama up and told her what God had done for me
She told me over the telephone, "Still never forget that you were born a gypsy"

How could I forget that I was born a gypsy? We were chased away for months
Nobody ever came near any of us—they treated us like we were skunks
This is now my opportunity to become something important that means more to me
I will never forget one little thing: I will forever and always will remain a gypsy

THE GREENSBORO VOICE

SPEAKER'S BUREAU

The Greensboro Voice is organizing a Speaker's Bureau where our team members will give presentations about the newspaper to your group. For more information, contact us via e-mail at greensborovoice@gmail.com.

A crosswalk to bear: A reflection on pedestrian safety

By Jonathan Fritz



He looked at me, then turned his head and dissed me. The elderly man driving an old pickup truck was just inches away from me. His truck's tires rehearsed a dangerous dance close to my body, which could have landed me in the emergency room if I had decided not to stop in the middle of the crosswalk in downtown Greensboro.

I was already in the crosswalk when the truck sped toward me from the railroad crossing, several feet away. I held out my right arm and hand and formed a stop sign to get his attention and warn him to slow down. To no avail, the truck blocked my path in the crosswalk and I shouted at the driver, "I'm in the crosswalk! I have the right of way!"

He looked at me and abruptly, turned his head forward and ignored me. His two passengers glared at me and one of them had the audacity to ask me, "You said what?"

This near-miss shook me—I no longer felt safe around other vehicles. As soon as the pickup cleared my path, I made sure that all other drivers following that car took note of my firm visual message, since they seemed unwilling to wait for me as well. As I proceeded to attempt my final

passage across Elm Street, I again held out my right arm and hand to form the stop sign and remind them to give me the right-of-way I legally deserve.

No human being can compete with a ton-sized motored horse! It's easy for drivers to forget things like this when they sit behind the wheel. Inside those comfortable traveling cages, they quickly develop a false sense of personal security and independence. To me, this kind of isolation causes car and truck drivers to place less importance on other road users, including bicyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians.

In North Carolina, drivers must yield to everyone walking inside a marked crosswalk, even if the person is walking against the red light. That's why I prefer to almost always cross the street at a marked crosswalk because outside of the crosswalk I have to yield to vehicles.

There is no good reason for drivers to quickly accelerate in the most congested areas of town, especially around Elm Street. If you're driving, please ease off the gas pedal around restaurants, nightclubs and sidewalk food vendors. Human life is more precious than the time a reck-

less driver may or may not save racing through town simply because he or she did not want to stop for someone walking in the crosswalk.

I made the decision to channel my frustration into something more constructive in the week following my near tragedy. I attended one of the Greensboro City Council meetings and expressed my displeasure with the episode I experienced on Elm.

I hope to encourage all pedestrians to consider organizing a pedestrians' rally at every dangerous crosswalk around the central business district. The more people we can sign-up for the event, the more powerful our message will be. If we don't organize and allow the community to hear our voices, a major tragedy may occur.

I welcome your comments on this issue, respond by e-mailing The Greensboro Voice at greensborovoice@gmail.com.

You can see a video of Jonathan's three-minute speech to the City Council by visiting: www.greensboro-nc.gov/index.aspx?page=85. Go to the "Meeting Agendas, Minutes & Videos" page and click on the video link for the Sept. 18, 2012 meeting. ■

Woman

By Maya Everlasting

Woman's power is in her capacity to feel,
To enter the depths with nothing, but
Her multidimensional expansiveness,
With each conscious breath
She creates star systems
And exhales galaxies
Her yoni is the gateway to bliss
Dark passage to the divine
Awakening the kundalini channel
Spiraling sky-dancer embracing existence
Her body is as receptive to her lover
As it is to god, the great beloved
Within and without merge
In every sigh and shudder
The movement of her hips
Mirrors the sacred spiral dance
Of creation, the wonder and oneness

Transmuting it all in her heart-fire
She denies nothing,
She is full and voluptuous
Shadow and light interplay
On the curves of her body
Caressing the all of her
Skeleton woman and goddess

Woman, embrace your Kali-Shakti nature
Deny yourself nothing
For the lover who loves you
Is the one who sees the beauty
In every leaf, that grazes your skin
The grass on which your body rolls
The mud and blood, your bare bones,
Bathed in moon juice the way your spirit shines
The fine lines laughed into existence
The way you growl, and howl, and shake,
and break
And deny yourself nothing
The way the fruit drips from your lips
As you, devour every ounce of bliss
And awaken again to consciousness
With nothing but your naked skin
And a smile that enlivens all creation!

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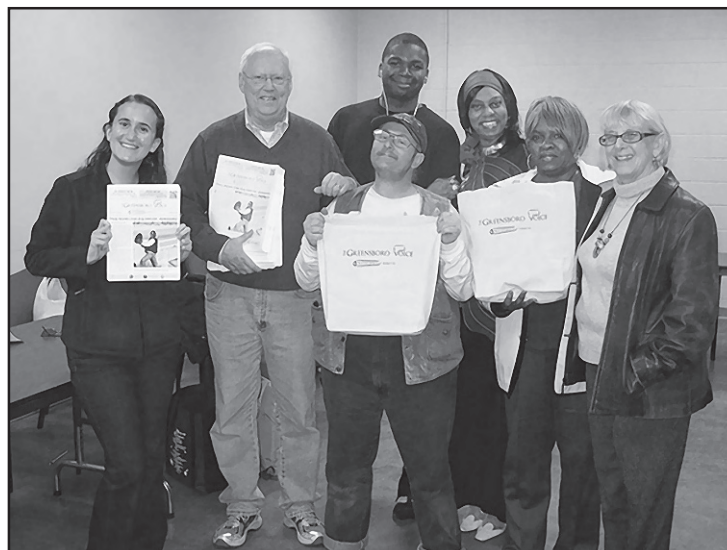
Things Change

By HorseShoe

I wore white on my first day of school.
Then I wore blue when I recited the
golden rule.
I wore black when our President died.
I wore nothing when I went skinny
dipping in a private pool/
I wore denim because they said it was cool
And once I wore stripes because I
broke too many rules.
Funny how things are always changing.

Do you have suggestions for The Greensboro Voice or want to join our newspaper team?

The Greensboro Voice's team welcomes feedback from the community about how we can improve our newspaper. We also always welcome new team members to our group. For more information, visit our website at www.greensborovoice.org or e-mail us at greensborovoice@gmail.com.



Jermaine says “thank you” to his mentors

By Jermaine Zigler



I began my career as a nurse's aide at Britthaven of Madison Nursing Center in North Carolina and I instantly knew that I was in the right job. When I was a little boy, my mother took me to the nursing center to see the elderly folks and I fell in love with them. They always welcomed me with open arms, showed me love, spoiled me, and let me have my way.

After graduating from high school I headed straight for the nursing field where I quickly learned my nursing responsibilities and worked at Britthaven on-and-off for more than seven years. Nursing was a part of my life that I looked forward to every day and I shined with the numerous awards and recognition I received. I loved my patients and they loved me.

Then my life took a downward turn in 2000 and I put my nursing career on hold. I began a battle with some personal demons that lead me to prison and eventually to homelessness. As God started to restore my life I made a promise that I would go back to as many people as I could to tell them what a difference they made in my life.

September 2012 will mark a time that I will always cherish. It was then that I returned to pay honor and give thanks to Sylvia Tyndall, my former director of nursing, who was celebrating her retirement from nursing. I called Sylvia on the phone a few weeks before the celebration to request information, not knowing that she would be leaving soon. We were happy to hear from one another after 15 years. She thought it would be a good idea if I came and picked up the information I requested.

My friends arranged for me to get her a gift and took me to her place of work, where I surprised her! She was truly a blessing in my life and now I had the chance to tell her what she meant to me. Sylvia saw something in me and trusted me with a lot of responsibility, and for that I am thankful. She made a difference in my life.

For those of us who have been homeless and recovered, let us all repay those who helped us and believed in us by writing them a letter, sending an e-mail, or by visiting them. ■

Homeless

By Dashaun Snipes

My face pale of fears.
I'm bound by a disease titled "agony" so my eyes bleed tears.
Half notes, quarter notes, and eight notes of screaming from the terror of night emerges.
I toss and turn, kick and moan to flush the storm out.
Pelts from hatred and discrimination daily make me uneasy.
I cry with disdain and hide my continence.
Inside myself I lie awake, like the creature from the dark lagoon.
All I ever know is the doom of gloom.
Even if there's a brisk brush of fresh air or I cut my hair to raise my self-esteem.
Even if the sun is vibrant and glows bright, inside is still dark as night.
Clouds of dismay begin to grow.
Roaring thunder of doubts begin to flow.
Pity pours down, drowning my will to go on anymore.
My broken soul, wounded, hurt, yet vexed of hard, bitter bondage.
Wonder if this storm will ever subside.
You don't see me past the funk and passivity.
You don't know me anyway—I'm homeless.
No one really cares to stay.
Society even runs astray, but I'm homeless.
Everything stained, old and torn away—I'm homeless.

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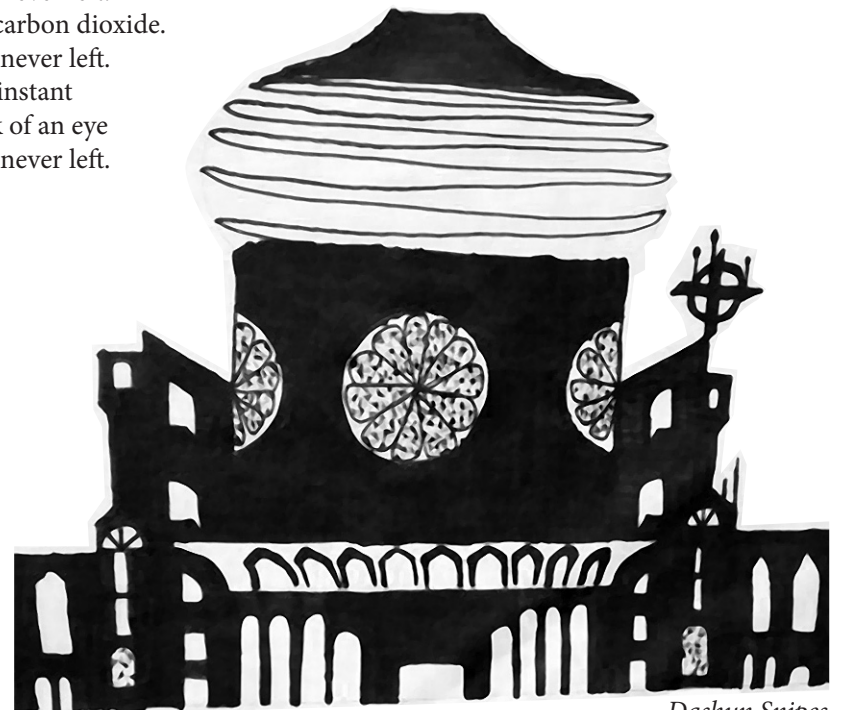
Heaven We Never Left

By James McNair

Heaven: We never left so we don't have to go. We never left.
We are already there.
No way I can be left out because we never left.
It's a civil rights issue.

Does that mean because I'm a homosexual
I can't go to heaven?

Heaven we never really left: It includes everyone, sinners of every ilk.
They'll all be there for we never left Kanuga, the festival of peace
Where the lion and the lamb lie down together.
Heaven we never left on top of the mountain high.
Up in the atmosphere above global warming.
Heaven we never left.
Too much carbon dioxide.
Heaven we never left.
Here in an instant
In the blink of an eye
Heaven we never left.



Dashaun Snipes

Mental Illness a

The manifesto of a noncompliant mental patient

By Aubrey Ellen Shomo

I see it everywhere: *people with mental illness need medication*. It sounds reasonable. Today, there are even political organizations that seek to make it easy to force a person to take it.

It's easy to look at another and assume things like that. It's human. After all, it's compassionate to help someone who isn't able to ask for help, right? They'll thank you in the long run, won't they?

No one asks why their child, sibling or friend refuses to take their meds. Why bother? It's an illness. It's meaningless. The doctors say so and they know these things.

Have you ever questioned the logic of the phrase, "She wouldn't be refusing medication if she wasn't ill?"

I am a noncompliant mental patient and I have been for years. Look into my eyes and see me. Try to understand where I'm coming from. Even a crazy person has a human will. I am someone's sibling, someone's child and someone's friend. I could be yours.

I've been told more times than I can count that I won't make it without medication. I've been told that I have a chemical imbalance and that my brain's broken. Therefore, I need "medication."

Why would I possibly want to be taking these medications that are supposed to be helping me? How could I wish to do so? Let me ask you: have you ever taken these drugs?

They call it anti-psychotic medication. It sounds good enough, but did you know these drugs are also called major tranquilizers? They speak of side effects, but do you know what it feels like to have them? Can you read that on the label? On my label?

Can you learn what it is to be in love from reading a medical description? Can human experience be described in such simple terms? I bet you don't think yours can. Why, then, do you insist on describing mine?

I know how major tranquilizers feel. They change a person. The vigor of human experience fades to shades of gray and life becomes dull, boring and long. Creativity slips into nothingness and the very human spirit is dulled. You can go from the rapture of being alive to wondering if you even are.

They will make you calm. They will make you behave. They might even help with your problems, but they can dampen what really matters—what makes you alive.

"*She prefers her mania—her madness. It's a symptom of the disease.*" How can you say

what matters to me? Is that your right?

For this broken mind of mine, I have been locked up. I have been threatened. I have been restrained. I have suffered at the hands of a system I'm told is helping me. And they wonder why I don't trust them. How could I be hesitant, even bitter?

"*She's paranoid. She won't take her medication.*"

They might be right, but all I ever wanted is to make my own choices. I've only wanted to scream, "What about how I feel?"

I am a noncompliant mental patient. Hear my voice.

A cancer patient can refuse chemotherapy. A religious person can choose to trust God over penicillin. A doctor would call both irrational, but acquiesce. All I ask is the same right.

"She'll decompensate without it. It's the only thing keeping her even remotely sane."

I stopped all my medication twice. I was hoping once would be enough. The first time, I failed. I lost it. They were right: I went crazy. I was strongly encouraged to take my meds. It was a fight I knew I would not win.

"Patient has been compliant—though hostile."

A façade of normalcy regained. High functioning. Working, going to school, socializing. All the things you're supposed to do. All so hollow. The spark was gone.

"The medication is effective."

But the drugs felt the same. So, I stopped again. Lots of people do.

"Compliance is a major problem in the treatment of mental illness."

I was told that I'd need medication forever. The facts spoke clearly—I was mentally ill. As long as I took my medication, I would be fine. Without it, I was doomed. Why did I want to stop? I told them how it feels, but it didn't matter. I told them I would recover through force of will alone.

"Patient is grandiose."

So, I told them I didn't believe I was sick.

"Patient lacks insight."

In truth I was terrified. I believed I was insane, I had failed before, and I wasn't sure I could pull it off on my own. After all, the facts were clear—no one does.

But I did.

Later I learned that many have. No one talks about *them*. John Nash never took medication again—it was key in his recovery. They left that out of the movie.

There are many others who were told no one recovers—told that they would be ill forever, but who proved them wrong.

I am a noncompliant mental patient, yet no one would try to hand me a pill today. To get here, I had to ignore good medical advice. I had to have poor insight and bad judgment. Without it, I would never have achieved what I have in life.

So, now when I hear about family members who *should have* made sure their relatives were taking their medication, or courts that *should have* forced it, I think to myself about doctors who *should have* listened. I often think about people who may have succeeded in stopping their medication, if only they had the necessary support instead of assurances of failure. I wonder how many more I should be able to name.

I wonder why so few people speak of the validity of the desire to not be medicated. Even a crazy person has a human will. ■

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and Medication

Why compliance with drug therapy may be necessary

By Tosca Chiseri

“**T**o take your meds or not, that is the question.” I have been diagnosed with a mental illness. and cannot speak for those who do **Not** take their meds as I am firm believer in the power of psychopharmacology. It has literally saved my life. I know that a vast number of those who find themselves homeless suffer from undiagnosed and untreated mental illnesses. What I hope to do in this article, through a description of my life long struggle with mental illness, is to present a strong case for taking prescribed meds. My hope is that these words may touch someone who is in need of treatment and prompt them to get past any fear surrounding treatment and move forward towards *living* as opposed to *just surviving*.

I can remember being as young as six, lying in my bed, staring at the pale and muted colors of a butterfly motif on my sheets, feeling an overwhelming sense of fear and terror. My small hands would clench my long dirty blonde hair to pull and pull until a sliver of hair, red tipped from blood where I yanked it from my head lay in my palm releasing the invisible energy within me that caused unfounded terror, pain, and humiliation. The painful act of removing hair from my head would temporarily divert me from the anxiety within me by refocusing it. But only until the terror welled up within me again. Next I would focus on my glass animal collection to begin the “rearrangement” where I would meticulously count all fifty three (yes I remember the exact number as I counted and recounted them daily) glass animal figurines and dust them, touch them three times, and then line them up through a painstaking system according to the height of each figurine off set by the length of the tail (no tailless figures made their way into my collection as they eluded my classification). These obsessive compulsive behaviors followed me into young adulthood and took many different forms. Other forms of OCD would include cutting, eating disorders, hand washing and classifying things. Many who suffer from these anxiety-based disorders seek relief through drugs and alcohol, thus masking the real problem and complicating diagnosis and treatment.

I feel it is very important to note that I did not have a terrifying or dangerous childhood. I grew up in an upper middle class family in New Hampshire and had two parents, a younger sister, a grey cat and a golden lab named Felicia. I was not

abused or neglected or hungry or denied educational or social opportunities. I did however suffer from Affected Spectrum Disorder, which basically means I suffer from bouts of extreme anxiety which displays itself through OCD behaviors, suicidal depressive episodes, and Attention Deficit Disorder. I started treatment when I moved to North Carolina and was under the care of a “fresh out of medical school” psychiatrist who took his time with me. This was when I was in my early 20s and I am now at 38 finally on a medication schedule that works for me. Was this easy? Absolutely not. Did I lose years of my life to mental illness? Definitely. Some meds had terrible side effects and, in my opinion, were not really working and I would try periods of time without meds, all with terrible consequences. I ended up causing untold pain to my mother as I would sometimes simply disappear for months at a time. I lost an amazing relationship with my younger sister because she became afraid of my odd behaviors during periods when I was not being medicated. Do some of the medications cause a dulling of your senses and creativity? Possibly. But like any illness that is treated with medication there are positives and negatives. Truly it boils down to the positives outweighing the negatives. The years I went without medications took a toll not just on my mental health but on my personality and how I view myself.

Mental illness is unfair as it can be silent and deceptive at times. There were times when I just decided that I was a bad person and was more or less dammed to a lonely, unproductive life that would probably end in me taking my own life. But with the support of my family I would find

the strength to go back to the doctor and try a new round of medications. It took a long time but I finally found a recipe that keeps me where I want to be. Would I like to toss all my meds out the window and be unchained from the expensive and tedious job of maintaining mental wellness...sometimes. But at 38 I know that it just gets worse, not better. Symptoms become more exaggerated and recovery time from episodes longer. You wear others out, including doctors and therapists. Having mental illness is in some ways akin to being a diabetic or other chronic diseases. If you do not take your medications you **Will** suffer consequences.

I armed myself with knowledge as I found great comfort in exploring the neurological pathways of the brain and understanding how a synapse works and what chemicals I am deficient in at times, while at other times I am over producing. It is science and not based on how good of a soul I have. I think sometimes still a debilitating stigma follows those who have mental illness and it is easily internalized by the sufferer...I have at times felt unworthy of being alive. But I know now that this is simply my brain chemistry talking. I have an imbalance that, like an algebra equation, needs balancing. Thankfully in these modern medicine times there are many choices and arrangements for medication treatment and you do not need to go to a specialist in order to get very fine help. I have for years used a resource right in downtown Greensboro for my mental health needs. The Guilford Center is located at 201 N Eugene Street. You can walk right in and schedule an appointment. If you are in crisis there is an emergency entrance as well. The number is 1-800-853-5163. I highly encourage anyone who feels they need help with mental illness to go. You can always decide Not to take the meds but at least give yourself a fighting chance by seeing what the options are. If I knew twenty years ago what I know now my life would be in an extremely different space. I am at thirty eight starting to rebuild. But that doesn't have to be your story.■

Tosca Chiseri is a writer for *The Greensboro Voice*



Randy Dale brings hope, peace to Weaver House

By Jermaine Zigler

It is 8:00 a.m. on Monday. The staff members at the Weaver House are at the lobby desk helping guests as the quiet sounds of gospel music fill the room. The door opens from behind the desk and out walks the calm spirit of a man heading for a fresh-brewed cup of coffee at the Potter's House. This man is Randy Dale.

After a few minutes he returns to his office "to get caffeinated" before starting his morning work routine. Randy has been the assistant director of Greensboro Urban Ministry's Weaver House for 13 years.

Before coming to Greensboro Urban Ministry, Randy was a social worker. He is proud to work in the human services field and estimates that he has worked with thousands of clients. Randy said his background prepared him for his service to the Weaver House's clients. His daily mission is to provide these clients with a greater measure of respect and dignity than they find "on the street." He has learned to recognize the fragility of life while working at the Weaver House and understands that "many people in Greensboro are just one paycheck away from being homeless," he said.

After interviewing Randy, I spoke with several of his co-workers at the Weaver House about him.

"Randy is a great guy and an excellent supervisor to work for," said Deja Pettaway.

Tony Barnes agrees and appreciates Randy's ability to bring a sense of peace to the guests.

"Randy is a cool, calm laid-back type of



guy," Tony said. "I have known him for years and I have never seen him mistreat anybody or get upset. He always remains calm."

Maggie Colon appreciates the support Randy brings to his fellow Weaver House staff members.

"Randy is compassionate and honest and deals with a lot of things using laughter to

break the ice when tension is in the air," Maggie said. "He is very informative and he helps out in all areas when the department is short-staffed."

The Weaver House is thankful to have Randy on their team and his clients appreciate everything he does to help people experiencing homelessness in Greensboro. ■



Why vote? (Continued from page 1)

Paul Ryan, have recently altered his plan on specifics to make Medicare into a voucher program.

Many Medicare enrollees are concerned about what Medicare would look like as a voucher system. A voucher system is an internal financial control system for cash (or check) payments that relies on vouchers to establish the correctness of transactions. Those who are against the voucher system dislike the fact that it provides built-in profits for private insurance companies. For instance, seniors on Medicare would receive a voucher to buy private insurance and it was estimated that this plan would force seniors to pay an additional \$6,400 a year for their health care. For more information, visit www.politifact.com.

Immigration Issues

Immigration is a big topic during this particular election. Despite our country's debt and unemployment rates, millions of taxpayers' dollars are funneled into U.S. border security.

Personal Responsibility

Regardless of these controversial topics, there are still many people who refuse to raise their voices at the polls. Non-voters reason that the candidates' ideals do not exactly reflect their own or that they feel that voting does not matter.

I have never been a Democrat or a Republican because neither of the candidates will ever be able to perfectly fulfill my ideals. Sometimes it comes down to needing to vote for the *possibility* that my vote will count and to support one or several ideals covered by a candidate. Or you may vote merely so that the other candidate you oppose does not make it into office.

Unfortunately, alterations to voting districts' polls have caused many people in lower-income neighborhoods to be unable to reach the polls because of a lack of transportation. Also, some states are now requiring voter IDs, which may hold some people back from voting. Luckily for us in North Carolina, voter IDs are not required.

So all I'm asking (no matter your political affiliation) is just to go out and vote! ■

Newspaper staff reflects on deaths of 6 homeless individuals

By The Greensboro Voice's Staff

"Why did they die and what could we have done to prevent their deaths?"

This question was the reason Will Howard came to speak to the staff of The Greensboro Voice at our weekly Friday meeting. Howard has many responsibilities at the Interactive Resource Center (IRC), but his job title is overseeing the employment assistance programs at the homeless day center. He works diligently to make sure everyone who wants to have a job is given the opportunity to work successfully toward the goal of securing and maintaining employment.

Our newspaper staff was moved by the obvious concern with which he addressed us. He told us six people who had been served by the IRC, Greensboro Urban Ministry or the Weaver House, died in the past six months. They all struggled with mental illness issues. Three of the six people committed suicide and the other three were struck by cars, including a married couple. This is not an uncommon situation for the homeless in Greensboro.

Everyone at the homeless service organizations did all they could to help these people. However, the question remains, "What more could we have done? What more should we have done? And finally, what more can we do?"

In the next edition of The Greensboro Voice we will address these questions and share with you the stories of those who tragically lost their lives. If you know a person experiencing homelessness who passed away in the last year, or if you would like to share your thoughts with us, please send our newspaper team an e-mail at greensborovoice@gmail.com.

Short takes with Anita: A collection of stories

By Anita Gilmore

Anita Gilmore is a guest at the Interactive Resource Center. Every month she talks to people experiencing homelessness and collects their stories. The following are Anita’s “short takes” for the month of October and include stories from the Interactive Resource Center.

Linda Thompson

I am a native of Greensboro, N.C. I was married three times by the time I was 20 years old and I ended up burying my first husband who was abusive to me. After that it was a spiral effect—my second and third husbands were also very abusive. I raised my two children with my mother and God. I have worked many jobs and am very responsible with my employment. When I experienced homelessness I learned how to survive and care for myself. I ended up at a shelter where I met Jesus and joined a church. For the past two years, I have begun working my way out of my homeless state and received my disability check, causing me to secure room and board. For the past 17 months, I have been working to obtain my GED and have attended classes at the Interactive Resource Center (IRC). Soon I will move into a two-bedroom apartment with the help of God and the IRC. I have met many people who have encouraged me to keep my faith in God so that I can encourage others that are homeless and let them know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. You must pray, praise and give back in return. I am excited about being able to say that I am proud of myself and that my self-esteem is on higher ground.

Richard Alan

I became homeless when I lost my job and could not pay the rent. For me, being homeless meant I was at rock bottom because the situation tests a man’s will to survive and get back on top. I am now using the resources of food stamps, career services and temp agencies. I hope to finish college at A&T University so that I can get into a graduate school and earn my master’s degree in business administration.

Roger Scott

I started out at Greensboro Urban Ministry and Weaver House and things were going well. I took time to do what I needed for myself. The men’s group at Urban Ministry was good for me but I knew that

deep in my heart I was not ready. Today I understand that it’s going to take hard work on my part to stay clean. I learned that I have to dig deeper and take it one day at a time. I also need to take time to think about the past and look at where things went wrong. Today I have picked myself up and I know I can make it since God is with me. I know what I need to do to stay clean. There is good in my heart and I need to believe in myself.

Mike Ellis

My name is Mike Ellis and I became homeless after hanging out with the wrong people. I have made really bad choices in my life that I truly regret. I lived on the streets until I got a bed at the Weaver House where I met a lot of great people. There are things I should have done differently and there are still choices I make that are poor. Being homeless has been a learning experience that I do not regret. I am now working and getting myself back on the right track. I have been able to turn things around and am more focused on being responsible for my actions. I would like to thank God for giving me another chance to prove to myself that I can do anything through Christ. I want the community of Greensboro to know how much I appreciate the resources that helped to bring me out of homelessness. I would like to extend a special thanks to the Weaver House and to Anita for giving me the opportunity to share my story with The Greensboro Voice. Anonymous Homeless Teenager I became homeless because my parents stopped paying the rent so that they could buy drugs. My grandparents are deceased so I cannot turn to them for help. Not all children are homeless because of bad behavior, although there are some that are. What is needed for us homeless youth is guidance and mentors that can lead us in a positive direction. ■

OK, HERE WE GO!

By Maya Everlasting

We are about to pass through a period of transition unlike any other we have seen in our lifetimes. We should rejoice. We have an answer now as to why it is getting harder to understand the sounds of language, when we are actually feeling vibrations. We now know why it is that our eyesight is suddenly like that of an elder. We see in 4D Blurry are the images, but they are glimpses of the 5D We are moving at the speed of Light. This Light is that which we came to the planet with—bright shining as the morning and evening star. We are the Light Bearers. We are the Christos we have been waiting for. Yes, and all that this brings is who we are revealing ourselves to be. Loud. In color. Glorious. A balm to the eyes. We should rejoice. We now know what it is to sacrifice our whole lives to our fellows and sisters of humanity. We gave it our all. We lost a lot of friends, sleep, weight, our homes, our jobs, our whole way of life is now a manifestation of the Tower card at one moment, and the Empress or Emperor the next. It has been psychedelic. We have known the value of Mother Nature’s oils, herbs, plants we smoked, cure-alls; we have become herbologists, counselors, oracles, Kings Queens Ministers of the Black Arts I love you. You look beautiful in your brand new SELF. Rejoice! Our new Terra Firma is in our view—right between our third eye and the Sun. Yes Venus Is YOU. Come forth. Bright shining Ones. We await your words. We await the prayers. We await OUR REDEMPTION. We are waiting for YOU. YOU. ALL OF Who and what you have become. REJOICE! REJOICE! I rejoice!

Upcoming Events: Mark Your Calendars

Saturday, October 20

Car Wash at the Interactive Resource Center 10-4 Help Out!!!!

Monday, October 22

City cleans under Murrow Blvd. Bridge. If you are staying there, remove your belongings

Wednesday, October 24

Depression Screenings

Saturday, October 27

Free Winter Clothing Christ Church 421 West Smith Street

Fridays at 12:00

Creative Writing Workshop led student from UNCG at the Interactive Resource Center

Friday, November 16 and Saturday, November 17 starting at 6AM

Free Dental Clinic at Greensboro Coliseum

Community Resources

SHELTER

Trailways Housing
407 E. Washington Street
336-332-0824

Christian Counseling and Wellness Center
(Temporary housing & counseling services)
1118 Grecale Street
336-273-8305

Greensboro Urban Ministry Weaver House
(Housing, food and clothing assistance)
305 W. Lee Street
336-553-2665

Greensboro Urban Ministry Pathways Housing
(for families with children)
3517 N. Church Street
336-271-5988

Mary’s House
(for single mothers recovering from substance abuse issues)
520 Guilford Avenue
336-275-0820

Room at the Inn of the Triad
(Temporary housing for homeless, pregnant women)
734 Park Avenue
336-275-0206

Salvation Army Center of Hope
1311 S. Eugene Street
336-273-5572

Act Together Crisis Care
(Youth ages 11-17)
1601 Huffine Mill Road
336-375-1332

Joseph’s House
(Youth ages 18-21)
2703 E. Bessemer Avenue
336-389-9880
Hotline: 336-558-1695

FOOD

Breakfast

7:00 – 8:15 a.m. at Beloved Community Center Hospitality House
437 Arlington Street
336-230-0001
Serves on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday

7:30 – 9:00 a.m. at St. Paul Baptist Church
1309 Larkin Street
336-275-4680
Serves on Monday, Wednesday & Friday

8:00 a.m. at Grace United Methodist
438 W. Friendly Avenue
336-272-2171
Serves on Tuesday

Breakfast (continued)

7:00 a.m. at Potter’s House
305 W. Lee Street
336-271-5959
Serves on Wednesday

8:30 a.m. at Nu-Life Church
209 W. Florida Street
336-275-3243
Serves on Saturday

Serves Lunch Every Day

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at Potter’s House Community Kitchen
305 W. Lee Street
336-271-5959

Dinner

5:00 p.m. Worship Service & Meal New Creation Community Presbyterian Church
617 N. Elm Street
336-478-4775
Serves on Sunday

5:30 – 6:30 p.m. at Greensboro Central Library
407 E. Washington Street
Serves on Monday

6:00 – 7:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church’s Mul-lin Life Center (arrive by 6:30 p.m.)
617 N. Elm Street
336-373-0445
Serves on Tuesday & Thursday

6:00 p.m. at Grace Community Church
643 W. Lee Street
336-379-1936
Serves on Wednesday

5:30 p.m. at New Birth Sounds of Thunder
2300 S. Elm-Eugene Street
336-324-7902
Serves on Friday

4:30 p.m. at YWCA
1 YWCA Place
Meal served by REAL OutreachServes on Saturday

RESOURCE CENTERS

Family Service of the Piedmont
315 E. Washington Street
336-387-6161

The Servant Center Grocery Assistance Program
1312 Lexington Avenue
336-275-8585

Beloved Community Center
437 Arlington Street
336-370-4330

RESOURCE CENTERS (continued)

Joseph’s House Resource Center
2703 E. Bessemer Avenue
336-389-9880
Open Monday, Wednesday & Friday
from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Interactive Resource Center
407 E. Washington Street
336-332-0824
Open Monday through Friday
from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Women’s Resource Center
628 Summit Avenue
336-275-6090

Sherri Denese Jackson Foundation for Domestic Violence Prevention
2025 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive (Suite C)
336-510-9292

Malachi House II
3603 Burlington Road
336-375-0900

OTHER RESOURCES

HealthServe
1002 S. Eugene Street
336-271-5999

HealthServe
1439 E. Cone Boulevard
336-375-6104

Joblink Career Center
303 N. Raleigh Street
336-373-5922

Word of Life Food Pantry
Call 336-517-7755
Monday-Thursday from 2:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Focused Sistas Outreach
P.O. Box 3941
336-501-6570 or 336-254-4233
Open Monday through Friday from
8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Goodwill Industries
1235 S. Eugene Street
336-275-9801

Shiloh Baptist Church
1210 South Eugene Street
336-272-1166
Food Pantry open Monday through Friday
from 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Utility assistance may be available

RESOURCE CENTERS (continued)

St. Phillip AME Zion Church

1330 Ashe Street
336-272-1301
Clothing and Food Bank open every Wednesday
from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Prince of Peace Lutheran

1100 Curtis Street
336-378-9738
Farmers Market every other Thursday

St. Paul Missionary Baptist

1309 Larkin Street
336-275-4680
Food bank open on Tuesdays and Thursdays
from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Utility assistance Tuesdays from
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Rabbit Quarter Ministries

2904 Esco Place
High Point, NC 27260
336-307-0119

ACCESS 24 CALL CENTERS

The Guilford Center Information Services
1-800-853-5163

Domestic Violence Line
336-273-7273

NAMI Hotline (Mental Health Services)
336-370-4264

United Way 211
1-888-892-1162

Community service spotlight: NAMI GUILFORD

By Barry Strulson

Mental illness...is a misunderstood term...maybe even a misnomer. We wince at the stigma attached to this term, and we often shudder and feel helpless when we hear this diagnosis of a loved one or ourselves. NAMI GUILFORD is a volunteer organization whose members are changing the public perception of mental illness. NAMI GUILFORD's mission is: "To promote recovery and optimize the quality of life of those living with mental illness by providing education, advocacy, and support for these individuals, their families and others living in Guilford County."

We have learned that through education, advocacy, and support we can effect a positive change in the dynamics of family life. NAMI GUILFORD provides education using several structured programs to ensure that families have an understanding of these medical diagnoses and the resources available for a positive outcome. This is done through NAMI BASICS (a 6-week course) focusing on families with minor children or NAMI Family-to-Family (a 12-week course) that teaches families and friends caring for loved ones how to understand these illnesses, their effects, provides information regarding current medications, communication skills, crisis management, and problem solving. NAMI Guilford also sponsors support groups for families and for individuals as well as Crisis Intervention Training for law enforcement personnel. We are also available to share NAMI GUILFORD'S story with community groups and organizations. In Our Own Voice presentations are made by trained individuals in recovery.

NAMI GUILFORD operates a helpline at 336-370-4264. Please call us for information about these services. We are here for you.

Find NAMI GUILFORD on the web at www.namiguilford.org. ■

Zombie

By Susan Dean Wessells

I lurch through my day,
slack-jawed and unkempt.

No neurotoxins control me;

drugs, nonetheless
tinker with chemistry,

keeping madness at bay,

removed from pain
but also from joy and delight.

Look into my eyes and tell me,

Can you see anyone home?
Is anyone there, there?

Or does the vacancy sign swing in the breeze
of my ambling search for brains.

Loving Me

By Tony Hodges

Loving me isn't easy
Loving me is a war day in, day out
Through the ups and downs you stuck by me
When I am weak you make me strong
You are my strength, my love, my everything
It's easy to leave and walk away
But you stayed and I never asked why
I guess you saw something in me I didn't
When you met me I was a mess
Because of you I am better, I do better
We argue, we fuss over big and little things
We get mad, we get sad and blue in the face
Yet you're still in the race
At the end you turned to me and said
"I'll never leave you
Because I couldn't live in a world
Without you"
Loving Me

**Do you know a
resource we should
add to this page?**

**If so, please e-mail our team at
greensborovoice@gmail.com
and we will include your
information
on our Community
Resources page!**



Mr. Price gives time and equipment to cut hair free of charge. In this photo he is cutting Raymond Corbett's hair. This is much appreciated by the guests at the Interactive Resource Center as having neat hair builds self-esteem.

Reflection: My Little Miracle

Anonymous Submission

Confidence in routine predictability affords us comfort throughout our lives. In our world the stars do not shine at noon nor does water flow uphill. Then inexplicably...a pig takes wings!

One evening, half a lifetime ago, I stepped onto Central Park West heading south to catch a train at Columbus Circle. A young woman asked if I would escort her to "The Lighthouse of the Blind" a few blocks further. She appeared to be congenitally blind as her eyelids were locked within hollow sockets. Of course I agreed. She folded her cane, took my arm and we engaged in formal pleasantries until we parted at her destination. I then went on my way, putting her out of my mind.

A short time later, while waiting on the subway platform, I experienced something that I must relate as extrasensory. That is, my experience did not register through any of my normal five senses. It was only an awareness of which I would speculate, from a purely empirical perspective, never really happened. It was simply a pleasurable

and a comforting awareness of something ethereal passing through me accompanied with the knowledge that the blind girl had prayed for me to a Christian God.

One might reasonably suspect that under those circumstances I would have returned to comfort her. The truly amazing thing is that I did absolutely nothing. I went into immediate denial and buried the experience for about 30 years. Only after a series of events brought me to utter despair and my thoughts turned to self-destruction did I unearth my little miracle to ponder the possibilities therein.

On Christmas 2004 I returned to Church after more than a 40-year lapse. I really have no idea what, if anything, she may have had to say. I laid that opportunity upon the regretful heap of things left undone. I take comfort that it stayed in my hand from the possibility of doing something truly stupid and set me on the road to search for God.

As one not given to the spiritual, I am the last to enjoy this sort of experience beyond the aforementioned event. ■

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