

Life Enrichment Center provides health services, and more

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Walk into The Neisler Life Enrichment Center at 222 Kings Mountain Blvd. in Kings Mountain at any time during the week and you will see busy people involved in a variety of activities.

Look to your left and you will see a classroom full of adults learning to read and write. There are often guest speakers in the main room with an attentive audience. On Wednesdays, a hairdresser is available. There are participants working on their therapy, getting vitals checked by an RN, assisting in the kitchen, or just taking it easy working a puzzle with friends or watching TV. Behind the scenes, there are whirlpool tubs available for participants.

Life Enrichment began in 1980 at Shelby Presbyterian Church, in one room, with two participants two days a week. The center grew to a full sized facility on Life Enrichment Blvd. in Shelby. Because of the numerous participants coming from the Kings Mountain vicinity, it was soon evident that Life Enrichment needed to expand to Kings Mountain.

Starting with just six participants, the Kings Mountain Life Enrichment now provides care for 55 - 60 adults a day. This coming March the center will celebrate its ninth year in operation.

Life Enrichment Center provides adult day care and health services to any adult over the age of 18 regardless of their diagnosis.

Having two full-time RNs on staff is just one of the many things that set the center apart from other adult daycare facilities. Because of the excellent services provided, Life Enrichment Center has been recognized as a "National Model Adult Day Center" by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. As a model facility, people have come from as far as Juneau, AK, to learn how to operate adult day centers.



Mark Ross shared his story about his dream trip to Washington, DC.

Participants at Life Enrichment Center are proud to share their stories.

Mable Spargo was a successful caterer covering three counties for 30 years. Then she discovered that she had to have a leg amputated due to diabetes. For a while after the surgery, Mable felt that she would never be able to do anything again. Then she was introduced to Life Enrichment Center and she started a whole new life. Mable now shares her cooking expertise with the center's chef and assists with many duties. As she sits and cleans collard greens, she shares her story and a glow comes across her face that will really warm your heart. The collards and other produce were donated to the center by Tom's Family Mart.

After hearing about a young lady who was granted her wish before she passed away, participants were asked, "If you could do anything in the world, what would be your wish?" Answers were varied. One girl's greatest wish was to be able to walk. A participant, who is legally blind, answered that they were perfectly happy with their life, and wouldn't change a thing.

Mark Ross had an interesting response. He wished that he could go to Washington, DC, and to the White House. What happened next really was a dream come true.

Debbie Vaughan, Community Outreach Coordina-

tor, was in line at a funeral and began chatting with a lady in front of her. They exchanged stories about their careers, and as fate would have it, the lady works for the Department of Defense and has to travel much of the time. She said she has way more frequent flyer points than she could ever use, and she would feel blessed to be able to share these with Mark to help fulfill his wish.

Because of the generosity of a stranger and Kings Mountain's David Brinkley, Mark's dream trip became a reality. Being a quadriplegic, Mark needed two people to assist him. So thanks to the frequent flyer points, Debbie and another caregiver from the center accompanied Mark on his first trip on a plane to Washington. The points also paid for hotel rooms overlooking the National Monument. David Brinkley's contribution paid for the rental of a handicap accessible van and all meals.

While in Washington, Mark visited the Smithsonian Institute and the Air Museum. Finally, his dream came true with a private tour of the West Wing of the White House. President Obama was in Peru at the time of the visit, so Mark didn't get to meet him, but the tour guide was very helpful and presented Mark with an autographed football from the White House.

Because Mark's chair was sometimes hard to maneuver in smaller spots, it chipped a little paint off the wall of the Joe Biden Hall. It's now a standing joke that "Mark left his mark" at the White House. So, as you can see, dreams can come true.

Debbie just beams as she informs visitors about Life Enrichment Center. She said that the program is still enriching lives after 32 years, and it seems like just yesterday that the Kings Mountain Center was built, and now they will soon be celebrating their ninth year. She stressed that the center is there as much for the caregivers as for the participants. "It helps to ease the caregivers' lives and gives them some breathing time so that when they

are reunited with the participants, the caregivers feel more relaxed and ready to care for them."

Anyone can visit the center at any time. The center offers a half-day trial visit from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. for any

At right: Debbie Vaughan, Community Outreach Coordinator, pointing out the different vegetables in the raised bed. The bed was donated by Elizabeth Baptist Church in Shelby on the United Way "Make a Difference Day."

Below: Sandra Smith (left) and Mable Spargo are busy cleaning collard greens for the New Year.

Photos by Beth Brock



prospective participants. Vaughan said "This helps the workers at the center learn about the participant and decide what type of care is needed to make them as comfortable as possible." After the visit, an assessment is done to see what the participant would need from the center. The caregivers are informed about the results of the assessment and cost. Anyone interested in taking a prospective participant for a trial visit is asked to call several days in advance.

The center is open five days a week, 12 1/2 hours a day, from 5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Participants can go as many

days a week as desired. The center accepts private pay, CAP-MRDD, CAP-DA, and the Veteran's Administration will pay for eligible veterans to attend. A total of 22 veterans attend the Kings Mountain center.

Community Outreach Coordinator Debbie Vaughan visits churches and other organizations to better inform the public on dementia and Alzheimer's. The center offers support meetings the first Tuesday of every month from 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m. A sitter will be provided for the patient, so that the caregiver can attend the meetings. Patients do not

have to be enrolled in the program for their caregivers to attend the meetings. Doctors and attorneys as well as guest speakers come to the meetings to answer questions from caregivers. The Shelby center offers the same support meetings on the third Tuesday of each month.

Vaughan encourages you to drop in at any time at the center. She welcomes volunteers who may serve from several hours to five days a week. For more information call Debbie at 704-739-4858 or e-mail her at Debbie@lifeenrichmentcenter.org.

Greene clips her curls for Locks of Love

Natalie Greene's donated ponytail will help a child fighting cancer.

The Kings Mountain woman surprised her husband, Carl, Thursday morning and had 10 inches of her hair cut which she donated to Locks of Love.

Jennifer Payne, hair stylist at Shear Delight & Spa, cut her blonde hair to shoulder-length and gave her a new hairdo which delighted both Natalie and her husband.

"My hair just kept getting longer and longer," said Natalie, who decided to donate her hair in memory of her mother, the late Sylvia Lysek, a former cancer patient.

The Greens have two grown children.

Ten inches of hair measured tip to tip is the minimum length needed for a hair piece. Locks of Love creates custom hairpieces for each child who receives hair prostheses free of charge or on a sliding scale, based on financial need.

When Locks of Love first began, it was connected with a for-profit wig retailer. In December 1997, the organization obtained its 501(c)(3) certification from the IRS. With the installation of a volunteer board of directors, the charity began operating as an entity unto itself under its by-laws and separated from the for-profit retailer. This initia-



Photos by Lib Stewart

Natalie Greene (in salon chair) with Jennifer Payne ...before her hair cut

tive was spearheaded by Madonna Coffman, a retired cardiac nurse who had a great deal of volunteer experience working for not-for-profits in the surrounding Palm Beach area.

When Mrs. Coffman was in her 20s she developed alopecia after receiving a hepatitis vaccination. With medications, she recovered. 15 years later, her 4-year-old daughter developed alopecia and lost all of her hair.

Madonna said it was difficult to deal with her hair loss, but her daughter's loss was ten times harder. It was at this time that she quit all other charity work and took on Locks of Love as a full time volunteer cheered on by her daughter's recovery as her inspiration.

For some time the contents of Mrs. Coffman's garage contained bins of mail and hair donations. After finally securing donated office



Natalie Greene and hair stylist Jennifer Payne with the donated ponytail

space from a local hospital and locating a manufacturer of the highest quality prosthetics, Locks of Love was off and running. Since the beginning, the charity has received a great deal of support by both the media and its volunteers throughout the country. Locks of Love has been featured or mentioned on television shows such as The Today Show, Entertainment Tonight, Oprah, 20/20, The View, Jay Leno, Maury Povich, Good Morning America, CBS Good Morning, CNN Espanol and

Inside Edition. Also in national publications including USA Today, The NY Times, People, Seventeen, Glamour, CosmoGirl, Self, Redbook, Woman's Day, ElleGirl, Child Magazine, and Ladies Home Journal.

The number of hairpieces provided has increased significantly since its inception. Locks of Love has recipients in all 50 states and Canada and is working toward its goal to help every financially disadvantaged child suffering from long-term hair loss.

More names added to veterans tree

More veterans' names have been added to the American Legion Auxiliary Veterans' tree.

They are: Robert L. Schneider, Otto J. Schneider, Lawrence E. Clunie, Chester Turley, Donald Schultz, James Schultz, Ernest Schultz Jr., Albert Lotich and Philip Lotich.

Two bloodmobiles to visit KM

Two Red Cross bloodmobile visits are scheduled in January in Kings Mountain.

Boy Scouts will sponsor the Jan. 19 visit of the regional blood bank. Donors will be processed from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Royal Praise Ministry Church at 2055 Shelby Road.

H. Lawrence Patrick Senior Center, 909 E. King St. will sponsor the Jan. 25 visit of the bloodmobile. Donors will be processed from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

KM Historical Museum hours

Kings Mountain Historical Museum is OPEN Tuesday - Saturday, 10am - 4pm, and Sunday, 1pm - 4pm. The cost of admission is free, however donations are appreciated.

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