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## At the Pointe

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Ala. Gulf Coast Heart Walk • Sept. 21  
Walk to Stop Diabetes  
Oct. 19  
Call 665-2532.

## Mental Illness Awareness Week

Oct. 6 -12  
AltaPointe CEO Tuerk Schlesinger will be honorary chair for NAMI's "Unmasking Mental Illness Gala" Mobile Art Museum  
Oct. 11

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# Calm, cool, collected Cella Walker— *AltaPointe's Shining Star of 2012*

*Editor's note: The AltaPointe Star of the Year is Cella Walker, Performance Improvement's Consumer Needs Coordinator. Walker's unswerving delivery of exceptional customer service in a professional and calm manner is what caught the attention of the AltaPraise Review Team. AltaNews features Walker in the article that follows. Congratulations, Cella Walker, on being named the 2012 AltaPointe Shining Star.*

**Cella Walker** can remember with clarity her first day on the job with then Mobile Mental Health (MMH) in July of 1996. She can also remember in vivid detail the first call she took as an access-to-care specialist.

That call would mold how she handles herself each time the phone rings. Typically, when Walker's phone rings it is from someone desperate, angry or upset... as was the case the first time she answered.

## A personal philosophy is born

The call was from a man who was suicidal. She recalls talking extensively to him, making sure he was linked with the appropriate services.

"I remember making sure the 9-1-1 call was made and that the information I was giving him was keeping him on the line," Walker added. "I could hear the police arrive and remember the experience of that. I thought that there was more and something else I could be doing."

It was at that moment that Walker says she grew as an access-to-care specialist taking each call with renewed vision, knowing she would try to give each person more than what they needed. Out of that call a personal philosophy was born, one founded on hard work and doing more than expected.

"I really want to do the job; it is not a cliché with me, that is my work ethic," Walker said. "I want to come in here every day and do what I need to do to help the people I come in contact with each day."

Her high standards have not gone unnoticed.

"This is an absolute true statement," **Sonya Sims**, performance improvement assistant director, said. "Cella has impeccable work ethic and always goes the extra mile."

Little did Walker dream back in 1996 that she would one day be named the AltaPointe Shining Star of



Tuerk Schlesinger presents Cella Walker with 2012 AltaPointe Shining Star award.

the Year. When you ask her about this honor, the calm, cool and collected consumer needs coordinator says, "I have one word for that...humbled."

**Tuerk Schlesinger**, AltaPointe CEO, pointed to Walker's professionalism when he presented her with the award at the AltaPointe 2012 Annual Meeting. "Cella resolves problem after problem, defusing tough situations before they can grow tougher. If she needs to work on investigations after hours or weekends, she does it without complaint. She is the epitome of customer service," he said.

## Walker: The 2012 Shining Star

Walker started her career in the children's residential division as an activities coordinator. Over the last decade and a half, she has worn several hats at AltaPointe from adult specialist, day treatment supervisor, access-to-care specialist to consumer needs specialist. Her current position as consumer needs coordinator is one she takes to heart each time she answers the phone.

See *Shining Star* Page 4

# CEO travels the road to healthcare reform



Tuerk Schlesinger,  
CEO

If you haven't seen much of me lately, it's because I've been on the road. I have been representing AltaPointe in discussions with state, regional and national behavioral health, primary health, hospital, and government leaders who are in the midst of determining the future funding and structure of healthcare provision in our nation and state.

The headlines and social media blogs tell the story: Healthcare reform is a reality. Implementation of new federal initiatives mandated by the Affordable Care Act (ACA or "Obamacare") and new laws that change how Medicaid is managed in Alabama either has begun or will begin within the year.

When considering the ramifications of all this, the big question to be answered is, "How will healthcare reform affect our patients, their families and you, our employees?" To answer that question with confidence and to learn as much as possible about reform, I am gathering information about Medicaid, Medicare and healthcare in general, staying up-to-date on the massive changes and trying to figure out where they may take us. It is my responsibility to make sure AltaPointe has a seat at the decision-making table.

It is imperative that AltaPointe staff members are informed about these numerous decisions. To that end, I am addressing a few of these in this column, beginning with the ACA.

## ACA affects everyone

The purpose of ACA is to ensure that every US citizen has access to affordable healthcare coverage. To reach that goal there will be an expansion of the federal Medicaid program, which means many more individuals throughout the country will be eligible for free healthcare coverage.\* Those not eligible for Medicaid or employer-sponsored health plans will be required to purchase private insurance. State-based insurance marketplaces are being established so that individuals can go online to find appropriate coverage at affordable prices.

The news media have emphasized the ACA's effect on employers and the requirements they will need to meet for employee health coverage. Many of you take advantage of AltaPointe's health benefit and should know that our HR department is working to bring our health insurance plan into compliance with the new law. In the coming months, you will hear more from us about how ACA may affect your healthcare coverage.

In addition to affecting AltaPointe as an employer, the ACA will affect us as a healthcare provider. Many more people in our community who have been uninsured or classified as "indigent" will suddenly have health insurance coverage. Some of these individuals have been receiving services from us for years. Others will be coming to us for the first time as newly-insured patients.

No longer will our focus rest entirely on the seriously mentally ill as many of these newly insured may be experiencing less serious behavioral health issues. We want AltaPointe to be the provider of choice and, therefore, must be prepared to meet these needs by designing programs that provide services in all areas of behavioral healthcare.

## Alabama Medicaid changes to managed care

Another major change coming our way is the transition of Alabama Medicaid's delivery and payment model from fee-for-service, or utilization-driven reimbursement, to managed care, or value-based purchasing. In other words, the managed care model should promote value instead of volume of care. Unrelated to the ACA's Medicaid expansion, this change may or may not apply to behavioral health, but we must be ready when and if it does.

Driven by Medicaid's high costs, fragmented care and untracked outcomes, Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley convened a Medicaid Advisory Commission in 2012 to study these problems. The group recommended switching to managed care. Subsequently, the state legislature passed SB 340; Bentley signed it May 31.

The law requires that privately owned, provider-based Regional Care Organizations (RCO) will manage and coordinate care for the majority of the Medicaid population and contract with doctors and other care providers throughout the state. RCOs would manage the full scope of Medicaid benefits, including physical, behavioral, and pharmacy services. They will be required to improve the quality of care, provide better access to services and contain costs.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency would have to determine the makeup of service regions by Oct. 1, 2013, and RCOs must be ready to sign contracts no later than Oct. 1, 2016. AltaPointe will be a part of the RCO that will manage the care within a certain service area to include all services we provide in Mobile and Washington counties and the hospital services we provide in Baldwin County.

RCOs will not be implemented in Alabama until the federal government approves the State's health plan amendment, commonly referred to as the 1115 Waiver, which will allow for the implementation of a new care delivery model for Medicaid.

Other decisions will be made when the RCOs convene, such as, whether behavioral health will continue as a fee-for-service model or change to an outcomes-based managed care model. If the payment methodology changes, it could open the door to a new array of services, some of which are not typically provided in a fee-for-service environment.

As with the ACA, you may be asking how AltaPointe will react to the changes. The answer is simple: We are confident that we will respond effectively and efficiently. You see, we worked under a managed care model from 1999 through 2002. We know how to do this; we were successful. If the State's strategies move forward, we will use the same game plan, broaden the scope of services and adapt as necessary.

You can rest assured we are addressing these changes and developing plans to manage them. So, if you don't see me for a while, I could be in Kansas, Kentucky, Texas or anywhere that can help me glean the best information to keep us at the table. My ultimate goal, as always, is to provide exceptional services and ensure security for our patients, their families and our staff members.

*\*Although several states, including Alabama, have not yet enrolled in the Medicaid expansion program, we must begin to plan as though the expansion will occur.*

# Bravo! Bravo!

**AltaPointe** had its best Joint Commission survey since 1998 this spring. The team lead surveyor said that the care, treatment and services section was the strongest of any organization that they have surveyed. “I want to congratulate all of you as well as encourage you to continue to improve on our treatment to the people we serve,” **Tuerk Schlesinger, AltaPointe CEO said.**

**Susie Boucher, MS, ALC,** CarePointe Admission & Referral Specialist, passed the National Counselor Exam May 17.

**Sherri McIntosh** graduated this May with a master’s degree in family and marriage counseling from the University of Mobile. McIntosh was a behavioral aide at BayPointe Children’s Hospital. She is now a therapist with Transitional Age.



Mark Haygood

**Mark Haygood, MD,** third-year psychiatric resident at the University of South Alabama, was elected the 2014 Chair of the Assembly Committee of Member-in-Training (ACOM) of the American Psychiatric Association. Haygood was one of seven psychiatric residents selected from among 5,000 residents nationwide to serve as a representative to the Assembly, the legislative

body of the American Psychiatric Association. J. Luke Engeriser, MD, AltaPointe Deputy Chief Medical Officer, said Haygood’s election is a remarkable achievement. “Dr. Haygood is well positioned for an exciting future as a leader in our field,” Engeriser said. “His election is a testament to the wonderful collaboration between AltaPointe and the USA College of Medicine.”

**J. Luke Engeriser, MD; W. Bogan Brooks, MD; James Hart, DO; and Bayani Abordo, MD,** each received the Red Sash Award at the USA College of Medicine Honors Convocation. USA’s senior medical students give the award to the faculty members who had the most meaningful impact on their medical education.



Kiana Andrew

**Kiana Andrew, MD, MPH,** a third-year psychiatric resident at the University of South Alabama, received the American Psychiatric Association Child and Adolescent Fellowship Award for 2013-2014. Andrew was one of five selected out of more than 50 residents nationwide for the fellowship.

**The AltaPointe Credentialing Department,** played a key role in getting EastPointe Hospital credentialed as a Medicaid / Medicare provider within three months, where some facilities wait up to a year. This allowed AltaPointe to automatically begin billing and back billing. EastPointe opened in July 2012. **Dwight Lacy,** director of financial operations, credits the expertise and attention to detail of **Burma Bozeman, CS,** with the success.

AltaPointe physicians **Bradley Sadler, MD; Joshua Stephens, MD;** and **Praveen Narahari, MD,** made a presentation at the 2013 Annual Alabama Psychiatry Association Spring Conference in Montgomery. The trio spoke about the new drugs of abuse, such as synthetic cannabinoids, bath salts, ecstasy, and syrups; and the challenges they bring in daily psychiatric practice, diagnosis and treatment.

## AltaPointe staff drop 400 pounds during Scale Back Alabama

Congratulations to the 156 AltaPointe staff members that participated in Scale Back Alabama 2013 losing a combined 400 pounds over a 10-week period. Two four-member teams met their minimum weight-loss goal of 10 pounds each. Jill Harvison, BayPointe Children’s Hospital therapist, lost 30 pounds making her AltaPointe’s “biggest loser.”



‘Flatabulous’ team members lost 52 pounds total and include, from left, Reneta Powe, Cynthia Foster and Danielle James. Robin Lawrence was not available for the photo.

AltaPointe gave away a \$20 cash prize to every participant who reached the 10-pound, weight-loss goal and a \$50 cash prize to each team member on a “winning team,” which means each member met the goal.



Scale Back Scale Breakers team members lost 43 pounds total and include, from left, Jana Young, David Dortch, Torie French and Faye Cowan.

Continued from page 1

# 2012 Shining Star of the Year: Cella Walker

## Walker's job requires long hours

Walker says it's not a hard job. "I tell people anyone could do my job," Walker said jokingly. "They say, 'Cella I don't want to do your job.'" Walker's job as consumer needs specialist requires long hours spent on the phone averaging 20 calls on a work day and 15 on the weekends.



Sherill Alexander, director of performance improvement, left, embraces Cella Walker as she congratulates her on being named the 2012 AltaPointe Shining Star of the Year.

Calls originate from several sources, such as, consumers, their caretakers, and AltaPointe supervisors. The calls may be about linking consumers to services, filing a complaint or requesting an investigation be launched. It is Walker's job to make sure a consumer's rights have not been violated.

"We want to make sure the consumer involved was not abused verbally, physically or emotionally, and that there was no breach of therapeutic boundaries," Walker said. "What I do is similar to customer service. We listen to the complaint, and we try to satisfy the customer."

AltaPointe's policy is to complete an investigation report within 30 days and clear up the matter so staff members can get back to work or human resources can take any action needed. Performance Improvement's goal is to complete an investigation in seven days, a goal the team usually meets.

Walker has been involved in countless investigations. At times every member of the three-person team could be working a separate investigation, or they could all be working on the same one.

"The manpower involved is mighty," Walker said. "You may have to interview a person twice and go back a third time."

Not all of the calls are complaints, some people just need someone to listen, Walker said.

## Sink or swim

It was this tenacity for the job and for consumers that caught the eye of administrators and turned Walker's career in a new and surprising direction.

"I remember being told, 'you are going to be moving from access to care to performance improvement; you are going to be the consumer needs specialist,'" Walker shared. "I said, 'Okay, what does that mean?'"

Walker had to learn consumer needs standards and procedures from the ground up, but she was up for the challenge said Sherill Alexander, AltaPointe Performance Improvement Director.

"I have never heard one complaint from her during what must have been a very uncomfortable position to be placed in," Alexander added.

"My induction into performance improvement was sink or swim," Walker said.

That was February 2003. She's been taking phone calls ever since. It quickly became evident to Alexander that the consumer needs department was Walker's niche.

Alexander says Walker is kind and compassionate by nature and always shows empathy for individuals with mental illness as well as their caretakers.

"She is a champion advocate," Alexander said. "She ensures that our consumers and caretakers' feedback are heard and considered. She is a pleasure to work with." Walker says she is just doing her job.

"When someone comes to consumer needs, they see this as their last resort," Walker said. "The biggest thing is to make sure we don't fail them. That's the last thing I want to do." In the end, Walker describes her job as challenging but equally rewarding.

## Walker's path to mental health work

Born and raised in Pascagoula, Walker found her way to the University of South Alabama Medical Center via Sandhill Hospital in Gulfport. It was a psychiatric/substance abuse hospital for children and adults where Walker managed the geriatric unit.

Walker earned her associate nursing degree from Bishop State Community College, then her bachelor's degree in health and human science from the University of Southern Mississippi. That was followed by a master's degree in rehabilitation in counseling also from USM.

When Walker isn't focusing on her demanding job responsibilities, she devotes her time to Elston, her husband of 19 years, and their three boys, Elston, Jr. (17), Matthew, (15) and Bartholomew (12).

## Future of consumer needs

AltaPointe is growing and that means so are the consumer needs responsibilities.

"We want to increase monitoring our consumers in their programs so they feel they not only have the staff and peer specialists there but also an internal, consumer-focused person keeping up with them as well as the growth of the company."

In the end, Walker describes her job as challenging but equally rewarding.

"I enjoy helping," Walker said. "That is the most enjoyable part of consumer needs, helping someone get what they need."

# Meet the 2012 AltaPointe Stars of the Year

Each year, a group of staff members selects eight coworkers as AltaPointe Stars of the Year. The following individuals were among the 2012 stars honored at the AltaPointe Annual Meeting and special luncheon Feb. 27 at the Bienville Club in downtown Mobile.

## Jessie Wallace, Adult Residential Services Behavioral Aide



Fellow staff members say Wallace is flexible and steadfast. “He always gives 110 percent,” Kara Whitney, Adult Residential Coordinator, said. “If you need something he will drop what he is doing right away and say ‘I will help,’ whether it is a consumer or you just need something from your office.”



The AltaPointe 2012 Stars of the Year posing with their certificates Feb. 27, include, seated, from left, Cella Walker, Anitra Jarreau, Lakeshia Moffett; standing, from left, David Roberts, Jessie Wallace, Corwin Malone, Marty White and Dr. Eric Leonhardt.

## Anitra Jarreau, Transitional Age Assistant Coordinator

Jarreau is praised as steadfast in providing care, such as the time she spent her holiday with an adolescent resident in the hospital. “She exceeds my expectations,” Alexia Martin, an AltaPointe consumer, said. “Every day she comes in with a smile. She always sees the best in me, even when I am at my worse.”



## David Roberts, AltaPointe Messenger



Roberts, known for delivering the mail with a smile, also helps to get doctors’ signatures on after-hour orders. “Mr. David is awesome, he is so dependable,” Donamarie Rawls, Adult Residential Services assessment assistant, said. “We always count on him. He is so sweet to everyone. I enjoy seeing him every day.”

## Lakeshia Moffett, Children’s Outpatient Office Professional

Moffett is praised for her dedication to five-star service. When one parent became irate after missing her child’s appointment, Moffett calmed the parent and rescheduled the appointment, keeping her composure the whole time. “Lakeshia is always gracious, kind and compassionate,” said Stephanie Gatlin, Children’s Outpatient Coordinator. “Consumers know she is on their side.”



## Dr. Eric Leonhardt, Children’s Outpatient Psychiatrist

Patients, their families and his coworkers praise Leonhardt for his compassion and commitment. “We have experienced a lot of doctors,” Gloria Thornton, a consumer’s family member, said. “Dr. Leonhardt stands out from the rest because he really cares and listens. If he treats my child, he is treating my whole family.”



## Marty White, MIS Assistant Systems Administrator



White is praised for understanding how computers deliver exceptional customer service. While tailgating at a USA Jags football game one Saturday, White got a call that AltaPointe had a major computer problem. “We spent four hours rectifying a problem that would have affected every computer,” Ed McGaughy, MIS network technician, said.

## Corwin Malone, BayPointe Children’s Hospital Behavioral Aide (now an EastPointe Security Tech)

Coworkers and patients alike praise Malone for his genuine concern for people in his care. “I don’t have a lot of people like that back home, so it means everything,” one young BayPointe consumer, said. Carla Ladnier, BayPointe Children’s Hospital Assistant Director, said, “He is compassionate, empathetic and responds wonderfully to the kids and his coworkers.”



# EastPointe Hospital: One year at warp speed



*EastPointe's beautiful landscaping and homelike front entrance make a welcoming first impression intended to reduce the anxiety level of both patients and visitors. The hospital observes its first year anniversary of operation this July.*

Things don't always go according to plan. Just ask the staff at EastPointe Hospital in Daphne. For them, the last year has been a whirlwind of preparation, implementation and adjustment required to open a hospital and ramp up service delivery at breakneck speed. But that wasn't the initial plan.

The adult psychiatric facility opened in July 2012, with 12 occupied beds and intentions to grow slowly into their 66-bed capacity as the myriad necessary elements of operation were methodically put into place. All that changed when the state announced Sept. 11, that Searcy Hospital would close in eight weeks.

"Although the closure of Searcy Hospital was long anticipated, the short notice put us into warp speed," said EastPointe Administrator **Jarrett Crum**. "Our initial challenge was to grow this hospital as quickly as we could to accommodate the immediate influx of Searcy patients while filling the existing needs of Mobile, Baldwin and Washington counties."

## Challenges meet solutions

Central to meeting that challenge was attracting and training staff for a 24/7 hospital operation that requires not only professional therapists, nurses and physicians, but front-line employees, kitchen workers, maintenance people, security guards, pharmacy techs, administrative personnel and more.

"We did not have a ready pool of experienced employees, so most of our new hires had to be trained in the basics of working with the mentally ill," Crum explained. From 10-15 employees on opening day, the staff has grown to around 170 today.

Prior to opening, the extensive renovation of the EastPointe facility had been meticulously designed for the utmost in patient and staff safety. From the smallest tamper-resistant screw to the breakaway fixtures, sloping edges and specialized ceiling tiles, all the physical elements were selected with security in mind. Even the

decorative items such as anti-barricade furniture, non-breakable mirrors, artwork and anti-ligature window treatments met stringent safety standards.

However, there were still adjustments to be made as census ramped up. "We had to experiment to find the proper type of glue to affix the toilet lids to the tank so patients couldn't break them and harm themselves," Crum remembered.

The new facility's technological challenges were met with cutting edge solutions. The electronic medical records (EMR) system was incorporated from the beginning as were advance security features and communication systems. EastPointe's award-winning e-signage, a large monitor at the nurses' station, provides voluminous patient information at a glance and alerts staff to "what's new and what's due."



*Patricia Reed, RN-ICF Charge Nurse, left, and Lacy Etheridge, RN, right, work at EastPointe's voluntary unit nurses' station. In the background is the e-signage used to monitor patient care.*



Census meetings are frequent at EastPointe. Attending a June 13 meeting are, clockwise from bottom left, Erin DiFate, Susan Deas, Renee Presley, Kim Whitley, Christina Russo, Jarrett Crum, Cindy Martin, Amanda Cox, Richard Monroe, Patricia Reed and Amy Conway.

Finally, just developing the processes, policies and procedures to manage the new hospital was a colossal task. “The key has been the flexibility of our leadership team,” explained Crum. “They recognized that we needed to continually adjust the processes to meet actual needs.”

### The key to success

“As Probate Judge of Baldwin County, with over 200 mental commitments per year, I was very concerned when we were informed of the closing of Searcy Hospital,” recalls Judge Tim Russell. “I am pleased to report the new EastPointe facility has been wonderful. All of the employees at EastPointe have been very kind and helpful. They have performed beyond the call of duty. When we send one of our consumers to EastPointe, we know they will receive excellent care.”



EastPointe staff members Susan Deas, RN-nurse coordinator, left; Renee Presley, RN-director of nursing, center, and Jarrett Crum, hospital administrator, take a few moments to catch up on the day's activities on the hospital's voluntary hall.

Chief Medical Officer, **Dr. Sandra Parker**, echoed that sentiment. “We have an incredible team of knowledgeable behavioral, therapy, activities and nursing staff who are devoted to the care and recovery of patients affected by mental illness. Our company is extremely fortunate to have a physician team dedicated and passionate about taking care of some of the most difficult and seriously mentally ill patients in our region. I have worked with many physicians but I have never worked with a group as devoted and hard working as the physicians of AltaPointe.”

Plans for the facility include operating a newly renovated wing, which adds 16 intermediate care facility beds and opens up capacity in the existing acute care units.

### EastPointe Hospital Patients Served

10/1/12 to 5/31/13

Hospital Admissions.....	921
Hospital Discharges .....	888
ICF Admissions .....	67
ICF* Discharges .....	53

\* Intermediate Care Facility (residential)

“It’s been a great experience starting a hospital from the ground up,” Crum summarized. “There was really no model, so we relied on our internal leadership team. I’ve got a great staff here and a great support from the AltaPointe management, all committed to meeting these challenges. And, although we’re still refining as we go, I think we’ve done a good job.”

### EastPointe helps patient find way back to recovery

Ring in a new year as a patient in a psychiatric hospital is something Robert Smith\* never dreamed he would do. Yet, when he realized he needed serious help, he voluntarily admitted himself into EastPointe Hospital in Daphne on Dec. 31, 2012.

Smith, 46, was diagnosed with bipolar disease and said he has been known to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol. His mental illness coupled with addiction sent him to EastPointe.

“I had a setback with the death of my wife; I started drinking again,” Smith said. “So, I went over to EastPointe to get back on track.”

Smith says from the moment he was admitted he began working on his recovery and going home well.

“One of the staff members gave me some information about substance abuse, [saying] that there is a solution with AA and NA,” Smith said. “I read those items every day and every night.”

Since his discharge on Jan. 8, 2013, he says he has jumped back into sober living and taking care of his mental health. Smith credits his support system for his recovery which includes his mother, with whom he lives, and AltaPointe, where he continues to receive outpatient services.

“It’s not hard, you just have to have the proper people in your life and in your corner,” Smith said. “When you are going through difficult times, your family can be so wrapped up in their own lives; AltaPointe filled that gap for me. I thought I was fine and comfortable, but really [I was] just harming myself.”

**Kara Biggs**, AltaPointe’s adult outpatient services coordinator, says Smith is compliant with his follow-up treatment. “Though he has a lot of medical issues, he is well educated regarding his diagnosis and has good insight into his needs for treatment,” Biggs said. “He responds well to recovery, utilizes community resources and seeks them out on his own.”

Smith has been sober for four months and doesn’t like to think about what would have happened if he could not have afforded the mental health care he needed. He says he is thankful for programs such as the Medicaid Emergency Psychiatric Demonstration, which gave him access to AltaPointe’s behavioral healthcare system.

\* Name has been changed to protect the patient's identity

# Program Progress

## Adult Outpatient Services

### Student nurses leave ZOP with changed perspectives on mental illness

When 36 University of South Alabama College of Nursing students began their psychiatric rotation with AltaPointe, their main goal was to finish the course and earn the credit. After all, it wasn't something they were particularly looking forward to doing.

Rachel Chiartano admits she was anxious about what she would see or who she would meet coming to AltaPointe's Zeigler outpatient program. She says she had a preconceived notion about people living with mental illness, what they would look and sound like.



*During her psychiatric rotation, USA nursing student Rachel Chiartano helps Denisha Broadnax with her reading and writing.*

Chiartano underestimated, though, how she would feel meeting someone with a mental illness once she got to know them.

"People with a mental illness are kind of shunned, but when you sit down and work with them they are just like everyone else," Chiartano said. "They have a sickness, just like if you had diabetes. They need people to talk to and people to work with them, just like everyone else."

Chiartano was especially moved by a man who asked her to teach him to write his name and then her name as well. With tears in her eyes, Chiartano described the exchange once he learned to write the two.

"And then he wrote 'Rachel likes helping Johnny' on a piece of paper and put it in his pocket," Chiartano said. "It was really sweet because before he would just sit and not talk."

Thinking about the immediate impact she was able to make in one person's life by a simple gesture, Chiartano says the rotation changed the course of her nursing career. The thought of becoming a psychiatric nurse wasn't on her radar, but now it is.

"It was seeing the difference I made, especially with different consumers," Chiartano added. "Spend quality time with them and eventually they open up and talk about their problems."

Elizabeth Fuller, PhD, an instructor for the USA College of Nursing-Community Mental Health Department says the psychiatric rotation is a vital part of the curriculum.

For several years, students have been coming to AltaPointe's various locations for their psych rotation, a teaching strategy used nationally to introduce nursing students to mental healthcare.

The nursing students spent four weeks working with AltaPointe consumers on their social skills. The group split its time between Zeigler and AltaPointe's West Mobile location. The student nurses learned how to identify a wide range of mental illnesses, something Fuller says is invaluable and can't be taught in a classroom.

"Without this experience many of the nurses would enter the field without ever knowing the challenges with mental illness or the challenges of being a psychiatric nurse," Fuller said.

**Carl McNatt**, Zeigler Outpatient Coordinator, says it's a win-win situation for everyone involved. "Patients get the one-on-one care they thrive on while the nursing students build therapeutic relationships and can see immediate changes in patients," he said.

Perhaps, even bigger changes are seen in the nursing students who walk away with more than school credit; they leave with a changed perspective of what it means to live with mental illness.

### ACT team helps family living the 'roller coaster ride' of schizophrenia

When Jessica Johnson\* answered the phone, her teenaged son, Phillip\*, was at school and sounded agitated. He told her he felt like everybody had turned against him and that everybody was talking behind his back. That conversation marked the first signs of Phillip's schizophrenia and a life Johnson describes as being like a roller-coaster ride full of hospitalizations and stabilizations. That was 11 years ago.

Johnson said her son was a standout student and athlete in high school, until that day when "something just snapped" and everything changed. She said her son had never shown signs of the disease before that day and that his actions came "out of the blue." At first Johnson did not know what to think about her son's unusual behavior, but her feelings soon changed and her suspicions grew. You see, mental illness runs in their family.

*See **Diagnosis** page 9*

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### The diagnosis and involuntary commitment

Knowing his family history, their doctor diagnosed Phillip with schizophrenia within six months of that frantic phone call.

Living with the disease hasn't been easy. "He had a breakdown, and the doctor thought he should be committed," Johnson said. "So, I had him involuntarily committed. He's been to BayPointe, Searcy and has lived in a group home."

When Phillip was discharged from the group home in 2009, Johnson began taking care of him. He is unable to hold a job.

"When he is off his medicine, he hears voices and walks around carrying on conversations, alone," Johnson says.

### How the ACT team helps

She understands his behaviors are part of the disease, but Johnson also said she knows help is available. She found that help in the AltaPointe Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team.

"Once he was released from the group home, he was hooked up with the ACT Team," Johnson said. "They have been wonderful."

**Cindy Gipson**, who oversees the ACT team, says the team takes intensive outpatient services to consumers in their homes, on the street, or wherever they may be, as frequently as needed to reduce the number of hospitalizations.

"Because we know our consumers so well, we can quickly assess their decompensation," Gipson explained. "We increase services to try to stabilize them without hospitalization. Because of the bonds between consumers and staff members, we are able to persuade

them to go voluntarily most of the time."

**Alisha Pruett** was assigned as Phillip's ACT team nurse. Gipson says when Pruett saw Phillip's hygiene deteriorating, she knew he was getting ill and had him come in for a visit with **Dr. Marianne Saitz**.

"We increased his case management services and therapy," Gipson said. "When I asked Alisha if she would be willing to go straight from home each morning and watch Phillip take his medication; she did not hesitate."

This individual care is very important to Johnson, who works full time and relies on the ACT team to make sure Phillip is well and taking his medication when she's away.

### ACT team offers hope, no matter what

Unfortunately, Phillip stopped answering the door for the ACT team, but Pruett kept in touch with his mother and got him back in to see Saitz. The entire treatment team pulled together to prevent hospitalization; but this particular time their efforts did not work.

"Phillip decided he did not want to take the medicine and would not take it," Johnson said. "However, I don't think he would have gone as long without another hospitalization had it not been for the ACT team's involvement."

Johnson credits the ACT team with making life easier for someone living with a mental illness, especially when the roller coaster tracks toward turbulent.

*\*Name has been changed to protect the patient's identity*

## Adult Residential Services

### ARS focuses on safety

The closure of Searcy Hospital has changed the community group home landscape in many ways. As the AltaPointe Adult Residential Services (ARS) staff members have been transitioning former Searcy patients into the community, ARS leaders have been evaluating needs and implementing necessary changes to its levels of residential care.

In December 2012, ARS developed a work group to focus on consumer and staff safety within the group homes. Chaired by **David Beech**, ARS director, the group includes ARS managers **Patricia Sullivan**, **Bill Hamilton**, **Kara Whitney** and **Gwen Mose**, the group evaluated program rule changes, implemented a level system, and revised search and contraband procedures.

### Group home staff see improvements

"I believe the changes to the program rules and the level system are helping some consumers to be compliant with their treatment," **Tracy Gradford**, Rosewood behavioral aide, said. "They now understand they will not be allowed to go on community outings if they are not at a certain level."

The level system monitors consumer behaviors and ensures that they are stable before they go independently into the community. The changes to the program rules included the revision of consumer search procedures and signing in/out requirements, which were adjusted to coincide with the level system.

ARS leadership has focused on safety for all of these changes. "We continue to look at the individual safety needs of our



*Tracy Gradford, behavioral aide, talks over the new level system with consumer Jeffrey Johnson at Rosewood.*

consumers," Beech said. "We are dedicated to creating a safe and therapeutic environment for our consumers and staff."

See **Specialized Services** page 12

# People & Positions at the Pointe

## Welcome new staff members

**Angela Byrd** has been hired as the new nurse coordinator for BayPointe Children's Hospital. Byrd earned her associates nursing degree from the Bishop State Community College. Byrd most recently worked at USA Medical Center.

**Mary Caron Downing** joined the human resources team as the new contact for employee injuries and leave of absence requests. Downing came to AltaPointe via the local banking industry. She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Auburn University and a master's in business administration from the University of South Alabama.

**Jason Holston** has joined AltaPointe as the assistant director of human resources. Holston comes to AltaPointe by way of Atlanta and brings with him 12 years of human resources experience. He is the point of contact for benefit and compensation questions, and will assist with employee relations issues. Holston earned a bachelor's degree in human resources management from Auburn University.



Jason Holston

**Jamie Matthews** was hired as an AltaPointe Adult Residential Services coordinator. She formerly worked at The Bridge as its lead therapist, program manager and clinical coordinator. Matthews is originally from Ohio where she worked in community mental health for eight years and as a social worker for three years. Matthews earned a master's in community counseling and a bachelor's in psychology from Heidelberg University in Ohio.

**Renee Presley, RD, LPN**, has joined EastPointe Hospital as its new director of nursing. She has 29 years of experience in specialties including critical care, home health, long-term care, legal consulting, and mental health. Most recently she served as nurse manager of the psychiatric inpatient unit at the Biloxi VA Hospital and was the director of nursing and director of planning and quality improvement at Searcy Hospital. She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and a double master's degree in adult health and administration from the University of Mobile.



Renee Presley

**Melanie Williamson** has joined AltaPointe as health information coordinator, a recently created performance improvement position. Williamson previously worked in health information management at Infirmiry Health Systems and at a Birmingham hospital. She earned her bachelor's in medical record administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.



Melanie Williamson

## Promotions

**Susie Boucher** is now the CarePointe hospital admission and referral specialist. She earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from St. Joseph's University, a master's degree in special education from Catholic University of America and a master's in community counseling from the University of South Alabama.

**LaTonya Garlington** is now the CarePointe hospital coordinator specialist. She earned bachelor's degree in psychology from Jacksonville State University and a master's degree in counseling psychology from the University of West Alabama.

**Amanda Hartgrove** is now the clinical coordinator of the EastPointe Hospital Involuntary Unit. She earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of South Alabama and a master's degree in social work from the University of Alabama.

**Lisa Nelson** is now the recruitment manager in the Human Resources Department. Nelson earned her bachelor of business administration from the University of South Alabama. Nelson is also a certified professional in human resources (PHR).

**John Hayes, CRNP**, is the new director of nursing for BayPointe Children's Hospital. He earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree in family mental health from the University of South Alabama.



John Hayes

**Mike Jackson** is now the assistant director of financial operations. In his new role he will oversee AltaPointe's revenue cycle management and the finance and accounting staff members responsible for billing and receivable management.



Mike Jackson

**Cindy Martin, MBA**, is now the EastPointe Assistant Hospital Administrator. She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in human resources and a master's degree in business administration from the University of South Alabama. Martin also is a certified professional in human resources (PHR).

**Katie Miller** has joined the HR team as a human resources specialist recruiter. She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of South Alabama.

For a complete listing of all new employees and employee moves, please go to the announcements on AltaLink, AltaPointe's intranet.



## AltaPointe celebrates Children's Mental Health Awareness Week



University of South Alabama mascot, SouthPaw, greets one of the kids attending the Mental Health Matters Festival May 10.



WKSJ deejay Dan Brennan, far right, poses May 7 with BayPointe Children's Hospital staff, from left, Donald McGraw, team specialist; Kristie Ryan, LPN acute; Greg Broadnax, LPN acute; and Juanita Johnson, therapist. Brennan spoke to the children about "keeping your head up."



Zina May, NAMI Mobile president, right, dishes out ice cream treats as part of the CMHAW celebration at BayPointe May 13. Casey Johnson, BayPointe behavioral aide, left, joins in the fun.



Olivia Nettles, children's outpatient director, works the NAMI-Mobile booth during the Mental Health Matters Festival May 10.

## Rosewood hosts Adult Residential Spring Fling



Laurie Bell, peer specialist, was a big hit at the ARS Spring Fling with her face painting skills May 24 at Rosewood.



Kara Whitney, ARS coordinator, hands a snow cone to Traci Holmes, residential manager, during the ARS Spring Fling May 24.

## Specialized Services

### BayView responds to BAE tragedy

When hurricane force winds ripped through downtown Mobile toppling a guard shack at BAE Systems Southeast Shipyards April 4, John “Buster” Johnson was thrown into the cold waters of Mobile Bay. It would be days before the body of 64-year-old Johnson would be recovered.

Meanwhile, BAE officials called AltaPointe’s BayView Professional Associates to help its employees cope with the traumatic event. John Conrad, BayView coordinator, and Kim Dyson, therapist, were on the scene at BAE within 24 hours of the accident to provide Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD) to Johnson’s coworkers.

“We saw more than 700 [BAE] employees in a large lecture setting and then 15 to 20 employees for individual sessions,” Conrad said. “Kim spoke to the group about what to expect following a traumatic event.”

Dyson says she was not expecting such a large group and, initially, greeted them with condolences and addressed their state of probable shock and disbelief.

“It is really common that we see people in the field and in our office who don’t understand the grief stages,” Dyson said. “We try to put them at ease and normalize the situation. We couple this with giving suggestions as to what to do and what not to do to manage their emotions during a very stressful time.”

BayView therapists are called to the front lines of workplace shootings, robberies, suicides and deaths of coworkers at least six times each year where they provide CISD to people touched by tragedy, according to Conrad.

### EOC adopts ‘See Something, Say Something’ campaign



The AltaPointe Environment of Care Department and the EOC Committee have adopted the “See Something, Say Something” campaign as a way to improve security at all program levels and company in all locations.

“As an organization, we need to be more diligent about security,” Robert Carlock, EOC Director, said.

“The notion that security is ‘somebody else’s’ responsibility can no longer be our school of thought.”

Numerous efforts already have been made to improve security at the program level. They include the hiring of a new security company specializing in healthcare, developing policies and procedures for vendor management, and designing improved identification and security features at AltaPointe’s secured facilities. These new safety initiatives will supplement existing and improve security measures.

“No longer can we accept that because someone made it past the front desk that they are alright to be in a facility,” Carlock said. “Challenging and questioning unidentified people in our programs needs to become second nature.”

The “See Something, Say Something” campaign will help all staff members focus on monitoring security as the campaign teaches them new safety and security strategies. The campaign was originally used by New York’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which has licensed the use of the slogan to the Department of Homeland Security for anti-terrorism and anti-terrorism crime related efforts.

“AltaPointe will adapt some of the campaign’s features while tailoring certain objectives and tactics for use in a behavioral healthcare setting,” Carlock said. “The EOC department and committee are concentrating on making AltaPointe as safe as possible for its consumers, patients, staff and visitors.”



CarePointe, AltaPointe’s call center, annually receives more than 30,000 phone calls, most of which involve mental health, substance abuse, or social services resource questions from the community. CarePointe’s 20 regular and after-hours staff members conduct assessments, schedule first-time patient appointments and make referrals for callers with serious needs.

There are times, however, when the nature of the calls received are unexpected. CarePointe’s staff members wanted to share with AltaNews readers the following unusual requests they have received recently: “Can I have an XRAY and EKG at my intake to rule out heart problems?” “Do you know Alabama Power’s number?” Can you call my mother and tell her I made an appointment?” “Can you pick me up for my intake?” and, two of the staff members’ favorites, “My wife left me for a therapist, so I think you should waive the intake fee,” and “The jail told me to get my Xanax from you all or they’d put me back in jail.” CarePointe staff members respond calmly, politely and professionally no matter how unique the request.

CarePointe serves AltaPointe’s two hospitals, nine outpatient clinics and 76 programs. It also supports psychiatric services for six acute care hospitals in Mobile and Baldwin counties and four state psychiatric hospitals. You may reach CarePointe at 450-2211.

### Think about this...

“The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don’t do anything about it.”

Albert Einstein,  
Nobel Prize-winning physicist · 1879-1955

