

In This Issue



Introducing MHFA to business leaders, law enforcement
Page 5



Media consult AltaPointe experts
Page 12

At the Pointe

May 1-7 Children's Mental Health Awareness Week



May 14 AltaPointe sponsors NAMIWalks Mobile
Medal of Honor Park
9:30 a.m.
Call 237-1091 to register.

Ingoglia says AltaPointe is well-positioned to meet challenges

National Council leader gives update on national trends in behavioral health

Daunting challenges are on the horizon for healthcare providers in Alabama as well as across the country, but an expert in national healthcare policy says AltaPointe is well-positioned to meet them.

Chuck Ingoglia, senior vice president of public policy and practice improvement for The National Council for Behavioral Health, was guest speaker at AltaPointe's annual meeting Feb. 24. He urged board members and AltaPointe's leadership team to embrace those challenges and seize the opportunities that will accompany them.

"Five years ago, we were solely focused on mental health," Ingoglia said. "We in behavioral health are being challenged now to also screen for primary care issues, and primary care providers are recognizing the need to screen for mental health issues. The federal government's model is now collaborative care."



Chuck Ingoglia of The National Council for Behavioral Health presents an "Update on National Trends in Behavioral Healthcare" during the 2015 AltaPointe Annual Meeting at The Admiral in downtown Mobile Feb. 24.

Tuerk Schlesinger, CEO of AltaPointe, said the challenges AltaPointe encountered in 2015 included a \$450,000 reduction in funding by the city of Mobile, the unexpected loss of \$2.5 million from Medicaid's Emergency Demonstration Project, and the state Legislature's decision to "level-fund" the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

Those were "huge hits," which Schlesinger said AltaPointe met in fiscal year 2015 (and is continuing to meet) by lowering administrative costs through "economies of scale" and employee attrition, closing BayPointe Hospital's adult unit, continuing to focus on patient-centered treatment and better outcomes, and incorporating new payment methodologies.

Providers need 'smart, fearless leaders'

Ingoglia said mental health care providers will need "smart, fearless, team-based leadership" to cope with funding cuts, changes in federal policies and the ongoing need to offer high quality care.

"I think AltaPointe has that," he said. "Some mental health providers excel at providing care. Others excel at operating a business. My sense is that AltaPointe has paid attention to both. And it takes both. If you're only able to provide one, you'll be out of business. AltaPointe is well-positioned for the future."

Ingoglia, whose National Council for Behavioral Health represents 2,511 community behavioral health and addiction treatment organizations in all 50 states, reminded guests at the annual meeting that AltaPointe is highly respected by its peers in the National Council.

"When people talk about what's going on in Alabama, it's always about AltaPointe," Ingoglia said. "And if you think about the way that AltaPointe looks comprehensively at access to care, how it has invested in



Tuerk Schlesinger, AltaPointe CEO, gives the 2015 corporate annual report Feb. 24 at The Admiral.

Dramatic changes will improve patient experience, patient health and reduce healthcare costs



Tuerk Schlesinger, CEO

Dramatic changes will improve patient experience, patient health and reduce healthcare costs

Alabama is preparing for the most dramatic change to its healthcare system that it has ever experienced. The change is actually more of a transformation to the Alabama Medicaid Agency's delivery system that will initially serve more than 650,000

Medicaid-qualified residents across the state.

The goal of this new plan mirrors the "triple aim" of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) to improve patient experience, improve overall patient health and reduce costs.

You may have heard this new model referred to as Medicaid managed care and the Regional Care Organization (RCO) plan. I introduced this concept in my spring AltaNews 2014 column and explained that the state's plan for a "Section 1115 Waiver Demonstration Project" had been filed with CMS requesting funds to help start up the RCOs.

Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley announced Feb. 9 that CMS had approved the state's 1115 Waiver. In addition to the approval of the RCO management plan, CMS agreed to provide up to \$328 million in federal money over three years to help RCOs start up. The anticipated RCO start-up date originally was October 2016, but that date may change because the state must meet certain CMS waiver requirements before the funds are available.

Managed care and mental health

Now that we know the waiver has been approved, it is a good time to fill you in on the discussions that have been taking place between the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) and Medicaid concerning how the funding methodology will change. For years, funding of treatment for indigent and Medicaid-qualified patients has been interdependent. If all goes as expected, the new funding strategy will be independent with the RCOs managing Medicaid funding and the ADMH managing indigent care funding.

The state has never undergone such an extreme paradigm shift in the way healthcare funding for these two groups is managed. When these changes occur, it will be seen as the most progressive shift in the country. Healthcare experts across the country are watching Alabama to see if we can succeed. They have pointed to two obstacles our state must overcome to attain the goals of the managed care plan.

The first possible obstacle is that Alabama already has the most underfunded Medicaid system in the country. The second, is that we will be moving from an out-of-date volume-based, fee-for-service reimbursement method to a progressive, capitated¹ payment system. This move also opens the door for integration of behavioral healthcare with primary care, making the largest changes with the least amount of funding of any state in the country.

All these factors combined do not create the ideal recipe for Alabama's Medicaid managed care and the RCO's provision of

care systems to succeed. However, we believe the in-depth research, planning and analysis carried out by many well-informed healthcare experts give Alabama the edge it will need to accomplish the goals.

AltaPointe's role in managed care

Despite a few uncertainties, we know these changes are on the horizon. Our job is to make the best of these circumstances for both our patients and you, our employees. Since nearly 32 percent of AltaPointe's revenue comes through existing Medicaid service contracts, we are well aware that making the change to managed care requires tremendous focus from our administrative and clinical teams.

If we are to succeed, we must be flexible as we adjust to the new and different delivery and reimbursement models. We have already begun and will continue to conduct extensive research to learn what will work best. We also will consult with the most knowledgeable experts who already have succeeded in helping other organizations implement a strategy for managed care.

For our patients, the changes mean a new progressive way to receive care. It will be our job as a medical home² to help make sure our patients are getting adequate preventive behavioral and primary care so that they will be healthier and live longer. We already have put in place a new care management team that has received special training at Stanford University in California to prepare for the role it will play when managed care begins.

What is next?

We will continue to explore how AltaPointe's delivery system should change to make sure we adhere to the new rules and patient-centered care. We will communicate with you regularly so that unexpected changes are kept to a minimum.

AltaPointe is in good company with this transition. Every medical and behavioral healthcare organization that provides care to Medicaid-qualified Alabama residents is facing the same major challenges. We must be successful because the health and well-being of our patients depend on our doing this right.

My best advice to you as we continue charting the Medicaid managed care and RCO course is to pay close attention to information you receive, ask questions when you don't understand, be patient, and, above all, hold on tight until we get through these transitions.

¹ Capitated payment is a fixed, pre-arranged monthly payment received by a provider per patient enrolled in a health plan.

² Medical home providers integrate and coordinate all primary, acute, behavioral health, and long-term services and supports to treat the whole person.

For more information, go to Medicaid.gov.

Onsite nursing education beneficial to students and patients

AltaPointe's continuum of care offers a wide range of opportunities for those pursuing a psychiatric nursing education and career. AltaPointe provides mentors and programs that enhance the learning experience for students whether they are working toward a bachelor's or advanced practice degree (ADN) in psychiatry.

AltaPointe partners with area universities to provide mental health education for nursing students. Some students train here for a few weeks, others up to a year or more. Students work directly with other medical staff and have access to patients.

Diverse training gives advantages

Students are able to work across the continuum from adults to children, at inpatient and outpatient facilities, as well as in the day treatment environment. They have the opportunity to work with patients with severe mental illness, substance abuse issues and ADHD as well as those "worried well" patients with issues such as situational anxiety.

"Having nursing students here is mutually beneficial: the students are learning to care for the mentally ill, and our patients typically enjoy sharing their stories with them,"

Renee Presley, RN, EastPointe Hospital director of nursing, said. "On days the students are here, it gives the patients more one-on-one interaction."

AltaPointe's **John Hayes, CRNP**, volunteers as preceptor, or teacher, for the nursing program. Hayes says he has seen an increase in the numbers of students seeking advanced practice degrees in psychiatry in recent years.

"With the size and scope of our system, it is hard for other companies to give as great an exposure to a variety of psychiatric settings," Hayes said. "The program is also a great recruiting tool. I was a student that came through our program, and there are now six of my former students working or who have just accepted positions within the organization."

While pursuing her ADN from Virginia College, **Catherine Roberts, RN**, trained at EastPointe for six-weeks of psychiatric clinical training. She said she was apprehensive at first and had reservations about working with mentally ill patients.

Roberts told of an incident during the initial tour of the hospital, when a male patient shouted obscenities at her group. Roberts said she responded with a cheerful, "Good morning," and quickly realized interacting with the patients was something she could do.



Three of the most recent University of South Alabama graduate nursing students who have trained at AltaPointe join their preceptor, at far left, John Hayes, CRNP (Bay Minette Outpatient, BayView and Fairhope Outpatient) at EastPointe. Beginning second from left, they are Wendy Robertson, CRNP; Eddie Thompson, CRNP; and J.D. Sheffield, CRNP.

"You can put a Band-Aid™ on most anything and make it better, but you can't put a Band-Aid™ on mental illness," Roberts said. "You have to really listen to the patient to figure out how you can help them. I like that part; I like getting to really know my patients." Roberts is now employed in EastPointe's involuntary unit.

Why students choose psych nursing

The reasons behind choosing the field of psychiatric nursing are varied. With more than 35 years of experience as a psych nurse and preceptor, **Mary Pharez, CRNP**, has found that students either love

or hate psychiatry. She said she believes the decision to pursue a career in psychiatry usually comes down to one of four reasons: a close connection to someone who has dealt with mental illness either personally or professionally; a fascination on how the brain works; the right personality trait, such as, being a good communicator or teacher; or, simply not wanting to work with the "blood and guts" part of medicine.

Eddie Thompson, CRNP, and **J.D. Sheffield, CRNP**, just graduated from the University of South Alabama (USA) and have joined AltaPointe's staff. Both practitioners said family members that had worked at Searcy State Psychiatric Hospital influenced their decision to pursue a career in psychiatric nursing. "Several of my relatives, including my mother, worked at Searcy," Thompson said. "It was a natural choice for me. I was never scared to work with people with mental illness like so many others."

AltaPointe's emphasis on receiving the appropriate education and training was something Roberts really appreciated. While briefly training in another hospital, she said the nurses had not been trained in Mindset crisis prevention and physical restraint training, and didn't really understand how to deescalate a situation, Roberts said.

Both students and university professors were complimentary of the training available through AltaPointe. **Wendy Robertson, CRNP**, a recent USA graduate praised AltaPointe and her preceptor. "Training at AltaPointe exposes you to all sectors of the population and ultimately makes you better prepared," she said. "Working with John Hayes was great; he is a natural-born teacher."

Yolanda Turner, PhD, RN, professor at Virginia College sees working with the AltaPointe team as an opportunity for faculty practice to enhance the learning experience. "The students find the experience at AltaPointe to be one of a kind," Turner said.

AltaPointe demonstrates readiness with February severe weather threat

When severe weather threatened the central Gulf Coast in late February, the emergency preparedness staff at AltaPointe did what they do best, preparing facilities in Mobile, Baldwin and Washington counties for the possibility of damage.

“It was a pretty severe threat,” said **Robert Carlock**, AltaPointe’s Environment of Care director. “On the day before it arrived, it appeared to be headed for us, so we initiated our emergency plan.”

Carlock said he was pleased with the staff’s quick and thorough response, and even more pleased that although tornadoes danced around the Mobile area – striking in Mississippi and northwest Florida – none struck southwest Alabama.

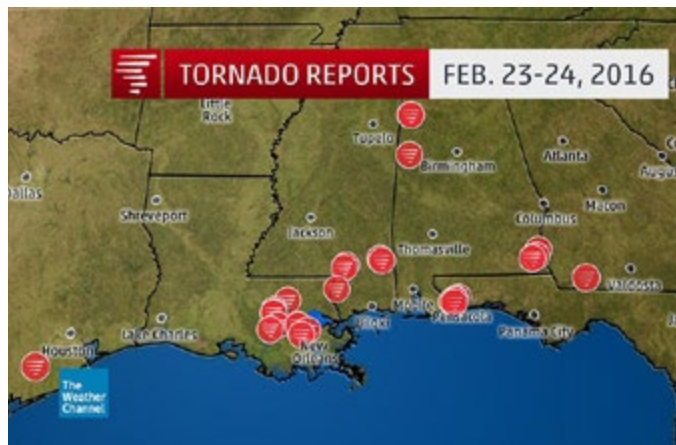
“The great thing is, in this case our preparations were all for nothing,” he said. “And I’ll take that any day. I never complain when bad weather misses us. But we’ve got to be ready.”

Weather forecasters on Monday, Feb. 22, began warning schools, hospitals, the news media and emergency operations offices that a line of severe thunderstorms was expected to move along the coast the next day, with high potential for damaging winds and tornadoes. After consulting with AltaPointe’s CEO, **Tuerk Schlesinger**, and chief of staff, **Julie Bellcase**, Carlock activated AltaPointe’s emergency plan.

Under the plan, maintenance staffers make sure all generators are fueled and that portable generators are “where they need to be,” he said. “All employees with AltaPointe vehicles make sure they are gassed up.”

Communication is also critical during prolonged emergencies, he said, so AltaPointe’s team leaders have SouthernLINC satellite radios.

In addition, under the emergency plan, Carlock touches base with local hospitals and other healthcare facilities in the region in



AltaPointe activated its emergency operations plan in response to severe weather alerts. This Weather Channel map illustrates the numerous tornadoes that were reported in our region of the Gulf Coast Feb. 23-24.

case of widespread disaster. He said AltaPointe’s 24/7 operations, including its hospitals, are required to be prepared to be self-sufficient for a minimum of 96 hours.

AltaPointe wasn’t alone during February’s weather threat. Alabama emergency response officials have divided the state into “Healthcare Emergency Response Coalitions” whose members meet monthly to discuss emergency plans at healthcare facilities in their areas. Erin Coker, a registered nurse at the Mobile County Health Department, oversees the coalition in Mobile.

Coker said coalition members exchange ideas and plans and were ready in February – as they always are – to assist one another.

How bad could the weather have been in southwest Alabama? Consider what happened in Pensacola, Fla., where a tornado ripped a two-mile path through the city, destroying apartments, town homes, vehicles and trees.

That’s what AltaPointe must be prepared for. And, indeed, it and hospitals across the nation are required by The Joint Commission to conduct a Hazard Vulnerability Assessment every year in which they review vulnerabilities, plan responses to and recovery from events and create individualized plans to address potential hazards, including naturally occurring, technological and human-induced disasters.

“In Alabama, of course, the threat isn’t volcanoes or earthquakes,” Carlock said. “It’s severe weather and hurricanes. At AltaPointe, we are very well prepared for both. We have practiced this and drilled for this over and over.

“There are people in our organization who’ve done this so many times that they know exactly what to do,” he said. “It’s second nature to them.”

National Behavioral Healthcare continued from page 1

technology and how it is preparing for the changes on the horizon; I’m optimistic about its future.”

Schlesinger noted during his presentation at the annual meeting that 2015 also contained good news for the organization; for example, it was able to step in to help the community when Alabama Psychiatric Services (APS) unexpectedly closed its doors, absorbing about 7,000 people who had previously received psychiatric services through APS. AltaPointe also developed a strategic plan to meet new requirements by Medicaid managed care and the Regional Care Organization system, which will take effect in October 2016.

In 2015, AltaPointe served nearly 27,000 people in Mobile, Baldwin and Washington counties. With operating revenues of \$79,425,041 and operating expenses of \$77,595,282, it oversees two hospitals, nine outpatient clinics and 76 programs. AltaPointe also supports psychiatric services for six acute-care hospitals in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

Schlesinger saluted outgoing board president Larry Jackson for his two terms at the board’s helm and welcomed incoming president George Noonan. He also cited members of AltaPointe’s leadership team for their ongoing commitment to providing mental health services and care in southwest Alabama.

AltaPointe teaches law enforcement, community how to respond to signs of mental illness

Mental illness is popping up in conversations around the country. One subject on the minds of many is the way law enforcement is trained to handle people experiencing a mental health crisis.

AltaPointe Health Systems was contacted by the Mobile County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) to teach its deputies how to better respond to mental-health related calls. **Cindy Gipson**, intensive services assistant director, says it is important that law enforcement officials have the skills to handle these calls and know what resources are available to provide the best possible care.

"First responders have an opportunity to provide intervention and divert individuals with mental illness who may have committed petty crimes from the legal system into proper treatment," Gipson said. "It is important to know when to take someone to jail and when to get them help."

Gipson, along with **Eddie Pratt**, children's outpatient services assistant coordinator, spent more than a week conducting two-hour training sessions daily recently. The sessions' message was crafted pulling together information from Gipson's experience working with law enforcement in Texas and Pratt's background as a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) certified trainer.

MHFA is a public education program that helps people identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance-use conditions. Since 2010, AltaPointe's MHFA certified trainers have taught hundreds of people how to spot the signs of a mental health crisis and how to respond.

For this particular training, Gipson says the feedback has been positive. "Our goal was to enhance the law enforcement training already offered by the MCSO and provide them with new tools to carry in their tool box," Gipson said. "I think they felt like we accomplished that and gave them a new understanding of working with individuals with mental illness."

AHS introduces MHFA to community leaders

Law enforcement isn't the only group that can benefit from some type of MHFA training. AltaPointe invited area business leaders to attend a MHFA introductory course at the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce in the



Tamieka Martin leads a four-hour Mental Health First Aid introductory course for leaders in business and education at the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce.

fall. Participants included leaders from Mobile County Public School System, University of South Alabama, Franklin Primary Health Center and the Alabama Department of Human Resources.

Over the course of four hours, **Tamieka Martin**, adult community services coordinator and Mental Health First Aid trainer, outlined the importance of recognizing the signs of common mental illnesses, de-escalating crisis situations safely and initiating timely referral to mental health

and substance use treatment resources available in the community.

"This program is designed to teach anyone how to not be alarmed during a mental health crisis so they can better respond," Martin said. "People have pre-conceived notions that all people with mental illness are dangerous, and that is false."

MHFA teaches the appropriate things to say to individuals experiencing a problem and provides general information about disorders such as depression, anxiety and schizophrenia."

Connie Ewing, an advocate for mental health awareness and president of the Survivors of Mental Illness (SOMI) club, has taken the MHFA course and encourages others to do the same.

"I think everyone should take this course," Ewing said. "Understanding and being able to recognize the symptoms and warning signs that someone may be in distress and how to help them is very important."

US Congress lends its support to MHFA

The U.S. Congress recognizes the benefits of MHFA. It included a \$15-million appropriation for Mental Health First Aid in the omnibus spending agreement released in December 2015. This marks the third consecutive year Congress has supported the public education and awareness program with funding.

Whether it is law enforcement, or the average Joe, everyone should sign up and join the 500,000 people across the U.S. already trained in Mental Health First Aid. AltaPointe can help. Two courses are available: one designed for adults and the other designed to spot the signs of a mental health crisis in youth. For more information on upcoming training, please visit AltaPointe.org or call (251) 450-4340.



**MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID**

Cheryl McCalmon

NAMED 2015 SHINING STAR OF THE YEAR



Cheryl McCalmon is AltaPointe's 2015 Shining Star of the Year. McCalmon was selected for her exceptional work ethic and her quiet and consistent dedication to the people assigned to her care.

Tucked away on more than two acres in rural Baldwin County sits one of AltaPointe's residential facilities. Inside you will find **Cheryl McCalmon**, a behavioral aide, humbly attending to the needs of the adults living there. Her supervisors and coworkers describe her as more than humble – they say she is unassuming, unselfish and shy. More than that, she is compassionate, accountable, respectful and encouraging when it comes to delivering Five-Star Customer Care.

“Having a job like this is rewarding,” McCalmon said. “The consumers look forward to your coming every day; and treating them with dignity and respect is all they want.”

From an early age McCalmon says she liked taking care of people. One of eight children growing up in Guyana in South America, she would happily take on her sisters' chores.

“I would do them so they could go out,” McCalmon said. “I enjoy doing for other people.” So, it comes as no surprise that she spends her days tending to others.

Helping others while she heals

After six years at AltaPointe, McCalmon sees being a behavioral aide as a job of great importance. She believes it's her purpose in life. Each day she dispenses medication, cooks dinner, and offers a warm smile and encouraging word to AltaPointe residents. McCalmon says the job is challenging but very worthwhile. She says helping others recover from mental illness has had a healing effect on her, as well.

You see, McCalmon's husband of 14 years passed away from a heart attack in October 2015. Tears filled McCalmon's eyes as she talked about her loss, and how just coming to work helped her deal with his death.

“I loved taking care of my husband,” McCalmon shared. “My work here is healing for me, and it has allowed me to care for someone again. Just being here helps.”

Residents ask for her

McCalmon's genuine care and concern for AltaPointe's residents does not go unnoticed. Supervisors say the way she makes the house a home for its residents is extraordinary. On the days McCalmon is not scheduled to work, residents ask for her and want to know when she is due back.

“She is always signing up for extra shifts, **Courtney Wikle**, adult residential assistant coordinator, said. “If she is needed to stay over or come in early, Cheryl always agrees. She works well with our residents and treats them with respect and dignity. She is always willing to help them achieve any tasks or goals they are working toward.”

McCalmon's positive attitude and her kind treatment of residents exemplifies the AltaPointe Five-Star Customer Service program's standards of behavior, which were designed to help staff members continuously improve the quality of service they provide. The program was recently renamed Five-Star Customer **CARE** and new standards written to better reflect *how* all staff members should interact with patients, their families and co-workers. The new standards serve as a guide to staff members to remind them to always **CARE** and be *compassionate, accountable, respectful* and *encouraging* to everyone.

AltaPointe is her pride and joy

“Cheryl embodies all of those qualities, and is a true testimony to our commitment to care,” **Tuerk Schlesinger**, AltaPointe CEO, said as he named McCalmon the 2015 Shining Star of the Year Feb. 24. However, the thought of being recognized publicly was overwhelming, according to McCalmon.

Asked her response to winning this award, McCalmon said, “It's an honor to be a part of the AltaPointe team, and I appreciate the confidence placed in me each day.

“AltaPointe is my pride and joy,” McCalmon added. “I do not do my job for the recognition. It does not matter to me. My happiness comes from seeing the residents getting better. I feel fulfilled in that.”



Cheryl McCalmon, left, and Courtney Wikle, review medications for adult residents at a Baldwin County group home.

AltaPointe recognizes Stars of the Year

The AltaPraise Review Team selected five 2015 AltaPointe Stars of the Year from among 302 staff members who received more than 600 AltaPraises last year. Cheryl McCalmon is the 2015 AltaPointe Shining Star of the Year. Four other staff members also received high honors and were named AltaPointe Stars of the Year this February at the AltaPointe Annual Meeting.

Sabrina Glover-Davis, Transitional Age Behavioral Aide



Sabrina Glover-Davis works tirelessly to make the transitional age residence a home for the young men living there. She's known for cooking special meals on birthdays and treating all of the residents with compassion, respect and an encouraging word. Glover-Davis says she believes this work is her life's calling.

"She is one of those people that you cannot sum up in a few sentences," **Kathy Rouse**, transitional age coordinator, said. "She has that 'special something' that brings peace to those around her, just through her very presence. She adds so much to our program."

Nina Schenone, Certified Nursing Assistant, EastPointe



Nina Schenone's co-workers praise her for developing an innovative intake process for court-ordered patients that is now standard protocol. Nina delivers five-star customer care to her patients, and her contributions have streamlined the intake process.

"Nina is a model employee," **Amanda Carnley**, EastPointe nursing coordinator, said. "She is prompt, on-time, accountable and always willing to go the extra mile. She is what every employee should strive to be."

Courtney Washington, Human Resources Specialist



Courtney Washington says when she joined AltaPointe two years ago it was her goal to be named a Star of the Year. Washington's co-workers say she consistently displays all the AltaPointe Five-Star Standards of Care.

"Courtney has helped many employees through a lot of personal issues... navigating medical leave and injury," **Alicia Donoghue**, human resources director, said. "While they always appreciate the assistance she gave, they most appreciate her compassion. It is not uncommon for Courtney to receive a card, thank you notes, or flowers for her hard work, dedication and compassion."

Ryan White, Adult Outpatient Therapist, Fairhope



Ryan White is praised by his peers and patients for his humor and thoughtfulness. His personal motto, "Life is tough, wear a helmet," is well known among his co-workers. White says he treats everyone like he wants to be treated. "Working with patients is my life's purpose. I can't see my doing anything else."

"Ryan deserves being named an AltaPraise Star of the Year," **Melissa Smilie**, adult outpatient coordinator, said. "He is such an inspiration and a great addition to our team."



AltaPointe Stars of the Year gathered for a photo after the annual meeting with their directors and top administrators. Celebrating together are, first row from left, Courtney Washington, Nina Schenone, Sabrina-Glover Davis and Ryan White. Standing, from left, are Larry Jackson, AltaPointe Board of Directors President; Alicia Donoghue, director of human resources; Phil Cusa, EastPointe Hospital Administrator; Tuerk Schlesinger, AltaPointe, CEO; Olivia Nettles, director of children's outpatient; Megan Griggs, director of adult outpatient; and Julie Bellcase, chief of staff. Shining Star of the Year, Cheryl McCalmon, was not available for this photo.

People & Positions at the Pointe

Promotions



Nick MacDonald

Nick MacDonald, CPA, has been named director of practice management. In his new role he will oversee the day-to-day management of administrative functions in outpatient operations, participate in long-range strategic planning development, and manage provider contracts with local hospitals. Since October 2013, Nick has served as AltaPointe Business Manager

overseeing medical billing. His previous experiences as the controller and finance manager of a regional division of a global manufacturer, as well as an auditor and business consultant, prepared Nick for this new position. MacDonald earned his bachelor's degree from Auburn University.



Jessica Williams

Jessica Williams has been named director of patient accounting. She earned a bachelor's degree in health service administration from Auburn University and is currently enrolled in Auburn's MBA program with an expected completion date of fall 2017. Williams has been with AltaPointe for the past year and a half working as a financial analyst, a position that allowed her to gain an in-depth understanding into AltaPointe's billing and reimbursement practices.

Christina Sciulli, MS, has been promoted to the position of CarePointe Hospital Admissions and Referral Coordinator. Prior to this promotion, she was crisis and hospital coordination specialist. She has been with AltaPointe and CarePointe for three years.

Caroline Hale is now the AltaPointe Utilization Management Specialist. Hale was the care coordinator for AltaPointe Centralized Services Center before the change. She earned her master's degree in community counseling from the University of South Alabama. In preparation for this position, Hale received special training in Care Web QI and the MCG guidelines. She also attended Chronic Disease Self-Management training in Stanford, Calif., where she met requirements to become a master trainer.



Susie Boucher

The role of the AltaPointe Centralized Services Center has been expanded to include the provision of utilization review/management and care management services. **Susie Boucher, MA, MS**, has been promoted to assistant director of centralized and managed care services. In this new role, she will assist in directing AltaPointe's efforts related to managed care implementation.

Boucher has a bachelor's degree in sociology from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, a master's degree in special education from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and a master's degree in community counseling from the University of South Alabama. She is currently pursuing an MBA at Spring Hill College.

Jeff Barker, RN, has been named nurse coordinator at BayPointe Hospital. Prior to this promotion, he was the EastPointe weekend coordinator/acute RN for the past two years. He earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of South Alabama and a bachelor's degree in communication from Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas. Barker is currently working on a doctor of nursing practice (DNP) degree at USA in the family psychiatric nurse practitioner program.

Eddie Thompson, CRNP; J.D. Sheffield, CRNP and **Wendy Robertson, CRNP**, recent University of South Alabama graduates, have joined AltaPointe. Learn more about them on page 3, "Onsite nursing education beneficial to students and patients."

'Welcome to AltaPointe'



Amber Krempa

Amber Krempa, PhD, a licensed psychologist, has joined the medical staff at BayView Professional Associates. She earned a bachelor's degree from Birmingham-Southern and a master's degree in counseling psychology from the University of West Alabama in Livingston. She completed her doctorate in clinical psychology from Georgia School of Professional Psychology. Krempa has extensive training in working with children and families. She has a special interest in working with developing children, as well as children and families with a wide range of presenting concerns, including developmental delays, autism spectrum disorders, developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, ADHD, and behavior disorders.



Kaivonna Towner

Kaivonna Towner, PHR, has joined AltaPointe as a human resources specialist—recruiting and employment. Towner earned a bachelor's degree in management from Alabama A&M University in Huntsville. Prior to coming to AHS, Towner worked in human resources for Future Research Corporation.

Send AltaNews your story!

Have you recently earned a promotion, received a special honor, given a lecture, accepted an appointment, graduated from college or had something notable happen in your career? If the answer is "yes," we want to know. Please send your submissions for AltaNews to the Office of Public Relations at info@altapointe.org.

Bravo! Bravo!



Katie Miller

to ensure their ability to demonstrate what they know and how they can utilize this knowledge in various situations.

Congratulations to two of AltaPointe's HR Specialists, **Katie Miller** and **Hannah Noonan**, for passing the SHRM-CP exam. Both are now SHRM Certified Professionals, a valued distinction in the HR profession. The exam tests HR competencies and knowledge



Hannah Noonan

James "Ryan" White, therapist at Fairhope adult outpatient clinic, has recently met all the qualifications to become a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in Alabama. Congrats to Ryan!

Elizabeth Ann Wood, M.D., psychotherapist at BayView, graduated from Capella University with a doctorate degree in advanced studies in human behavior. Wood also is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a National Certified Counselor. Good Job.



Halie Jones

The Alliance to the Medical Society of Mobile County invited **Halie Jones**, assistant director of substance abuse services, to serve on a panel of experts for a program called "House Calls." The topic was "Spice and Its Impact on Our Society." It was held at St. Luke's High School on Nov. 18 and at St. Mary's School on March 2.

W. Bogan Brooks, M.D., presented a workshop titled "Attitudes and Aging: Creating Enduring Change Among Medical Students" at the Association of American Medical Colleges Medical Education Meeting, Nov. 10-12, in Baltimore. The workshop was designed to challenge ageism by improving the attitudes of medical students toward treating older patients.



W. Bogan Brooks

Congratulations to **Courtney Washington**, human resources specialist-benefits, on earning her master of science degree in human resources management from Troy University. Courtney holds a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in human resources from the University of South Alabama.

Congrats to **Vivian Gooding**, **Emma Hayles** and **Greg Broadnax**, who retired recently. Gooding retired from AltaPointe after ten years working as a therapist in our children's outpatient services program. Hayles retired after 16 years with AltaPointe most recently working as a behavioral specialist acute for BayPointe. Broadnax worked at BayPointe Residential Services as an LPN beginning in 2004.

Sandra Parker, M.D., AltaPointe Chief Medical Officer, was featured as one of 2015's Inspirational Physicians by the American Medical Association – Women Physicians Section (AMA-WPS). Parker was nominated by **Christina Talerico, M.D.**, University of South Alabama third-year psychiatric resident. "Dr. Parker recruited me to a field of medicine that I initially didn't set out to practice. Under her tutelage, I was able to establish a new career while still maintaining the family-oriented lifestyle I wanted. She has been a wonderful role model in both my professional and personal life. She is always willing to listen and give inspirational advice to be the best woman physician I can be," Talerico wrote in her nomination of Parker.

Sherill Alexander, director of performance improvement, has been appointed to the 2015-2017 Health Information Management (HIM) Advisory Committee in the College of Health Sciences at Alabama State University.

COP staffers make Christmas brighter for others

Praise goes to Children's Outpatient Services staff members led by **Jonna Sanders**, **Jameron "Deon" Gatson** and **Dante Crenshaw**, who collected hundreds of new toys and other items as Christmas gifts for needy Mobile families, AltaPointe TransAge Adolescent program residents and Baldwin County day treatment patients. Sanders organized the initiative for the fifth consecutive year. Sanders' daughter, Robyn, also assisted. The group worked in partnership with Toys for Tots and the Salvation Army.



Jonna Sanders, COP in-home therapist, right, alongside her daughter, Robyn, check out the toys intended for families of AltaPointe patients.

Program Progress

BayPointe Hospital

BayPointe sees success with The Grafton Model after one year

In January 2015, BayPointe Hospital introduced to its staff members The Grafton Model – a trauma-informed approach to care for children coping with mental illness.

The model focuses on caring compassionately for people in the throes of their disease and understanding that many behaviors may result from trauma they have experienced. One year later, BayPointe has seen many positive outcomes resulting from using this model.

BayPointe records show a 50 percent reduction in the use of seclusion and restraint compared to previous years. In addition, a survey conducted this winter showed, 59 percent of staff members report being comfortable using the model. These numbers indicate that a majority of staff members are taking into account the trauma BayPointe children may have experienced and how that affects their behaviors.

Staff members at every level are included in The Grafton Model education and training, which explains the biology of trauma and how experiencing trauma changes the brain. BayPointe leaders say it helps all staff members see that some patients behave the way they do because of physiological reasons, not controllable reasons.

Staff members learn about each consumer's history through case conceptualization cards. A card includes background information that provides guidance on how to work with the child, ideas for coping skills, explanations about what might trigger the child's behaviors, as well as suggestions for communication techniques that may work best with the child.



The Grafton Model includes the use of Ukeru, a safe, comforting and restraint-free crisis management technique developed by and for behavioral health caregivers and educators. These Ukeru pads that line the halls of BayPointe are easily accessible to staff members.

Comfort vs control

“Staff members are learning the importance of comfort versus control and what it takes to calm down and soothe the patient without using force,” **Jack Lungu**, BayPointe Hospital Administrator, said. “Our staff members reported in the survey fewer power struggles with patients and that they believe The Grafton Model gives the patient options.”

One survey question asked of BayPointe staff members, “What does comfort vs control mean to you?” generated several responses, including: “It means helping the consumer calm down by letting them tell me what they need instead of my telling them

what to do,” and “It is better to comfort a consumer than to use control over them. Comfort requires compassion; control leads to a power struggle.”

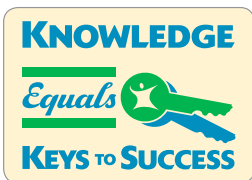
Employee dedication achieves success

AltaPointe administrators say the staff members' positive adoption of The Grafton Model has been a success at BayPointe and at the AltaPointe Adolescent TransAge residential program, both of which have served as a pilot program for Grafton.

Grafton recommended visiting BayPointe to a clinical team from the Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Wisconsin interested in initiating the program at its hospital. The group visited BayPointe in mid-January to learn more about our first year's successes.

Developmental Disability Department

2nd Annual Community Awareness Day exceeds expectations



The AltaPointe Developmental Disability (DD) Department held its 2nd Annual Community Awareness Day in October 2015 and exceeded the organizing committee's expectations, according to **Teresa Brazile**, developmental disability case management assistant coordinator.

More than 50 providers and vendors filled the gymnasium of the Goodwill Easter Seals building on Gordon Smith Drive. The day gave people living with developmental disabilities, as well as their

families, a chance to learn under one roof about all of the services available to them in our community and state.

“Our theme was ‘Knowledge Equals Keys to Success,’ which is what really guides us,” Brazile said. “Members of the population we care for have special needs. We wanted to educate and inform them about the services that can meet those needs and make their lives successful.”

Brazile said more than 200 people attended the event and gained valuable information on housing, medical equipment, acute

Developmental Disability continued on page 11

healthcare, and much more. Vendors included Drug Education Council, Volunteers of America of Southeast Alabama, and Franklin Primary Health Center.

Individuals living with mental illness and developmental disabilities face unique challenges in their efforts to lead stable, productive lives. AltaPointe's DD case managers assess individual need, develop an integrated care plan, advocate and link individuals to needed services, and regularly monitor each individual's progress.

The goal is to improve the individual's quality of life in the least restrictive environment. To receive these services, individuals must meet the criteria as defined by the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH).

"A decade-old waiting list for people wanting developmental disability services in Alabama includes more than 3,000 names," Brazile added. "This event is meant to help connect individuals to other services in the interim."

Performance Improvement

Relias Learning online system fills tremendous education and training need

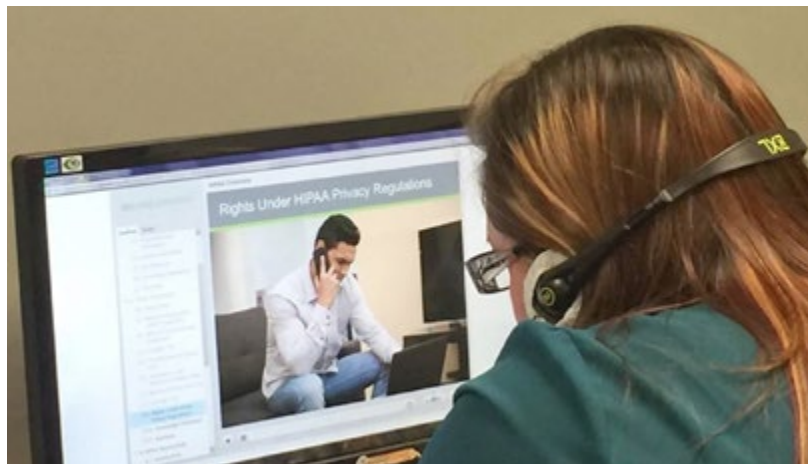
As AltaPointe has grown in both number of employees and locations across three counties, administering certification and training courses has faced logistical challenges. The performance improvement (PI) and information technology (IT) departments looked to other expanding healthcare companies across the country and identified a trend: online education and training. After much research AltaPointe chose the Relias Learning Management System as the solution.

Responsible for training, education and certification of all AltaPointe employees, the PI team recognized several issues created by AltaPointe's expansion. Staying in compliance and maintaining accurate training records was a top priority. Because the training and education team members were not willing to sacrifice quality, they had to find an acceptable training method that would be more flexible and accessible to all employees.

"We were determined to meet the organization's needs by increasing our new employee orientation to weekly training rather than every other week," **Cella Walker**, assistant director of consumer needs, training and education noted. "To do this, we needed to revise training and knew we wanted to use best practices and sound material in behavioral healthcare. We discovered we could accomplish this with Relias Learning. The immediate result was new employee orientation being completed in five days versus seven."

Relias offers extensive curricula, ease of use

From the PI perspective, the team was thrilled with the Relias expansive library with more than 450 already developed training courses geared to the mental health and behavioral health industry. Relias also allows customized programs to be added. To date,



An AltaPointe staff member takes a HIPAA-related training course through the Relias Learning Management System.

AltaPointe has developed 80 new courses through Relias to meet specific needs in our industry.

From the IT point of view, Relias was more user friendly than other programs researched. "Relias was much more accessible," **Suren Naiker**, business analyst, explained. "It allows AltaPointe to place a direct link to learning on our AltaLink intranet site, allowing easy access for all employees by signing in with their AltaPointe user names

and passwords; a feature not offered by similar programs."

Both PI and IT teams were eager to utilize the comprehensive reporting and record-keeping features Relias offers as well as to give employees greater convenience and flexibility employees when they need to take required courses. Employees can get recertified or take a course for CEUs on their own schedule, all provided by AltaPointe.

Some of the PI courses delivered to employees through Relias include Cultural Diversity, Population Served, Therapeutic Boundaries, and HIPAA Overview. Human Resources (HR) utilizes Relias for a number of courses. A few of them include training about AltaPointe benefits, policies, and the ID badge and a course on non-harassment.

The real test for Relias was how well it could reach a large segment of AltaPointe employees who were not on computers and electronic devices regularly. Within the first month, employees began receiving notices of required testing and certifications. Thanks to the Relias system's design, every time employees receive email notifications of training or recertification their supervisors are copied. Reminders are sent until the training courses have been taken and passed. Thanks to the email notifications and the supervisors' encouragement, 100 percent of AltaPointe employees have now taken and passed the annual flyer training course.

AltaPointe takes national spotlight in fight against Spice; CEO calls for mental health reform

A national television production company reached out to AltaPointe after extensive research showed Mobile County as a community that has been facing the Spice epidemic head-on.

A three-man crew from New York, NY, followed **Sandra Parker, M.D.**, AltaPointe Chief Medical Officer, for two days filming her with patients and colleagues. Parker responded to questions about AltaPointe's efforts to treat patients affected by Spice as well our collaboration with law enforcement and other agencies in the fight against the drug.

Regionally, AltaPointe continues to hold the headlines as an expert when it comes to the wellness and recovery of people living with mental illness and developmental disability. An editorial written by **Tuerk Schlesinger**, AltaPointe CEO, was published in more than 12 newspapers, including "Lagniappe," the "Montgomery Advertiser," and "Al.com."

"The depressing reality is that action often is not taken at any level of government until after a mass murder, the flurry of media coverage, and the unbearable 'moments of silence' observed on the floors of Congress," Schlesinger wrote. "The difference now is that there seems to be urgency in those hallowed halls to find solutions."

His opinion piece, "Underfunded mental health system requires urgent action," called for national mental health system reform citing three bills before Congress that, if approved, would increase funding, improve access to care and help fight the stigma associated with mental illness.



A national network's TV production crew sets up an interview with Sandra Parker, MD, about the use of "spice" in Mobile County.

Local media, community engagement

Mobile area television stations sought out the expertise of AltaPointe clinicians for two separate upcoming specials. **Eddie Pratt, MS**, assistant coordinator of children's day treatment services, was interviewed for a piece on suicide prevention on WKRG-TV5 while **Edgar Finn, M.D.**, a board certified child and adolescent psychiatrist, spoke to Local 15 News about the lasting impacts of cyber bullying and how parents can help their children overcome them.



A Local 15 reporter interviews Edgar Finn, M.D., about cyber bullying of children.

Meanwhile, developmental disability case managers took to the airways on FOX10 to spread the word about the AltaPointe Developmental Disability Community Awareness Day. The total local television audience reached was an estimated 16,000 viewers.

Community education and engagement is part of AltaPointe's mission. Between the months of August and December 2015, staff members across our continuum of care participated in more than 30 community outreach projects along the Gulf Coast and beyond.

Staff members were featured speakers at events to raise awareness about the risk of suicide, conducted Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training to help law enforcement officers react appropriately to situations involving mental illness or developmental disability, and spoke to high school students about the dangers of substance abuse following the death of a student who mixed methadone and alcohol.

AltaPointe's social media presence continues to capture audiences with nearly 800 Facebook fans and more than 350 followers on Twitter. One Facebook post featuring AltaPointe's annual ham toss day reached more than 1,450 people and was viewed nearly 530 times. Schlesinger's column on the need for mental health reform garnered the most attention with a reach of 1,852 people.

CarePointe CORNER

After-hours calls increase dramatically

During December 2015, CarePointe's after-hours staff members answered more than 758 phone calls, more than twice the number received in November. Of those calls, crisis counselors responded to 223.

Results from recent AltaPointe Performance Improvement (PI) surveys show the after-hours crisis line is helping people with mental illness live better lives.

Every month PI surveys people who called the after-hours crisis line. Following are a few of their responses:

"By the time I hung up the phone, I received several follow-up calls to make sure my family was ok. They did an excellent job for me and my family."

– CarePointe caller

"I give them an 'A'. They called back to follow up and see if everything was alright the very next morning."

– CarePointe caller

"She was able to direct me to what I needed to do and where I needed to go because I was clueless at the time. They were a great help."

– CarePointe caller

During regular business hours in December, CarePointe answered 5,163 calls.

AltaPointe outpatient offices relocate

The Community Counseling Center of South Mobile County is now housed at 13825 Tapia Avenue, Bayou La Batre. Seven staff members work from this office. **Martha Pharr**, South Mobile Coordinator, reports the building is larger and also has helped them create a warm atmosphere for patients.

In Foley, the AltaPointe Children's Outpatient and Adult Outpatient offices are now occupying the same building at 201 E. Camphor Ave. It was recently remodeled to accommodate an increased number of patients. **Melissa Smilie**, outpatient coordinator, said the lobby is more open and looks great.