



An e-newsletter of the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities

*A passion for their profession*

## McCarty Center employees say working with patients is fun, fulfilling

The backgrounds are diverse, the job titles are different and the years of experience range from four to 25.

But a common interest unites these employees. They love working with children with developmental disabilities and watching them play, progress and prosper.

Phyllis Brawner, Doneisha Sterling, Maria Greenfield and Dean Bischoff are employees at the J. D. McCarty Center. They are among the approximately 235 staff members who work at the hospital, which celebrated its 65th anniversary in 2011.

Brawner and Sterling work as direct care specialists. Greenfield is the director of occupational therapy, and Bischoff serves as a rehab technician.

Each say their job is gratifying and enriching. They talk about the excitement of watching patients improve their abilities and learn new skills and the fun they've had just hanging out with

the kids on field trips.

"It's more than a job. It's more than a paycheck," Brawner said. "You have to have a heart for these kids."

Here's a little about how these employees developed that "heart."



*Phyllis Brawner, left, and her daughter Doneisha Sterling are direct care specialist at the McCarty Center. The two say they love working with each other and working with children with special needs.*

### **A family affair**

Brawner and Sterling love hanging out together. The mom and daughter take the same Zumba class, watch movies together and attend the same church.

The Norman residents also love working together at the McCarty Center and having the opportunity to make a positive impact in a patient's life.

"The best part, to me, is making a difference," Brawner said about the job.

Both are direct care specialists who assist inpatients; implement patient care plans that outline a child's medical and behavioral needs; and take children to their scheduled therapy sessions and supervise them on field trips.

Both women say that working with the kids is what makes the job so satisfying, such as getting to know their personalities and seeing them accomplish goals. Sterling said she is constantly learning from the kids in her care. When she sees them improve their skills and overcome obstacles, it motivates her to do the same.

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## A family affair

Brawner said she feels proud and protective of the patients she assists.

"You've got to build that trust," she said. "It lets them know it's OK to bond."

They also love going on field trips with the kids, such as the museums, the Oklahoma City Zoo, a water park and arcades.

"They can go out and have fun just like everybody else," Sterling said.

Sterling and Brawner work in different hospital units that house inpatients and see one another as they take patients to therapy sessions and during daytime events for the kids. They miss one another on days when they work different schedules.

"When she's off, it's like a part of me is missing. When she's here, man, I need to see her," Brawner said. "I'm proud to work with my daughter and I'm very thankful she is my daughter."

Sterling said it's wonderful to work with her mother, who is also her best friend.

The two also share similar stories about how they became interested in the McCarty Center.

Brawner said she was always amazed by the work done at the hospital and used to visit her husband, Don, when he was an employee here. She also accompanied him on a field trip with patients and decided that the McCarty Center was where she wanted to work.

"I have so much more to offer, as well as to learn," said Brawner, who has worked at the hospital for eight years. "I wanted to be a positive influence in the lives of the children at the McCarty Center."

As a teen, Sterling used to visit her mom at the center and loved to play with the patients. Soon she started working in the hospital's conference center and later became a direct care specialist. She has worked for the hospital for four years.

"It's not just another job. It's part of my life," Sterling said.

It's also an experience she gets to share with someone she loves.



Maria Greenfield, left, director of occupational therapy at the hospital, watches while outpatient Genesis Kiel plays with shaving cream. The exercise is about sensory processing, which is determining what it's like to touch, feel and smell the shaving cream. The activity also helps Genesis use her eyes and hands together in pre-writing skills.

## Driven to persevere

Greenfield describes herself as a "motorhead" and for good reason. She knows how to change oil, swap engines and handle a hot rod.

She also knows a lot about another type of drive, the kind that is powered by passion and perseverance. That inner drive helped her through a life-altering event and into a profession that she loves.

Greenfield is the McCarty Center's occupational therapy director. Occupational therapists work with people who, because of a disability, an illness, injury or psychological condition, need assistance in learning skills to help them lead independent lives.

Greenfield said the job gives her the chance to connect with children and their families and to encourage kids with disabilities to build on their potential. "Every child on Earth has the right to become as independent as possible."

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## The Building Block

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## **Driven to persevere**

Her work also allows her to be creative and to play games with patients as a part of their therapy.

For example, during one session, Greenfield and outpatient Genesis Kiel played with shaving cream. They squished it into their hands, and Greenfield watched as Genesis smeared the cream on a table and drew in it with her fingers.

The exercise is about sensory processing, which is determining what it's like to touch, feel and smell the shaving cream. The activity also helps Genesis use her eyes and hands together in pre-writing skills.

Greenfield knows first-hand the benefits of occupational therapy not only as a therapist but also as a patient. The therapy was part of her recovery after a car wreck changed her life.

When she was 19, Greenfield was driving on the Broken Arrow Expressway during a rainstorm when her car spun out and hit a guardrail. Part of the car was on the road the rest was on the shoulder. Greenfield got out to check the engine when another car hit her and pinned her between the two vehicles. Her pelvic bone was broken and both of her legs were nearly severed and could not be saved.

The injuries resulted in an above-the-knee amputation on one leg and a below-the-knee amputation on the other. Greenfield was fitted with prosthetic legs shortly after being

discharged from a three-month stay in the hospital.

While recuperating, she thought about what to do next in her life. She had been attending Oklahoma State University at the time of her accident and was interested in health care as a profession. Greenfield made up her mind to go back to school, and she was willing to work hard to make it happen.

"I was no couch potato. I think that helped. I had the drive. I wanted to be going places."

One day, while in occupational therapy, she noticed a guy who had injured his arm and was working a car engine for his therapy. She was intrigued, especially since she is crazy about cars.

In high school, Greenfield and her friends owned hot rods, like Camaros, GTOs and her own 1971 Mustang Fastback. She also took a class on basic car maintenance and got to do hands-on tasks.

"I loved every second of it," she said. "I was a grease monkey to the core."

As she watched the guy work on the engine in therapy, it sparked an idea. "If I can incorporate health care and my love of working on cars, I'm there."

So, she set her sights on a career in occupational therapy and earned her bachelor's degree in 1991 from the University of Oklahoma.

Greenfield interned at the McCarty Center and later worked as a full-time therapist. She left briefly for a few years for other jobs before coming back to become the director

of occupational therapy in 1998.

Greenfield said one of the perks of her work is interacting with patients and their families and watching the kids grow up. The hospital serves children from birth to 21. "Families get bonded to us. It's like a magnetic connection," she said. "That's what it's about -- all the different people I get to connect with."

She also said the hospital offers families some incredible services at a single location. The hospital provides medical care and physical, occupational, speech and language therapy to children on an inpatient and outpatient basis.

This place is the most unique place in the United States," Greenfield said. "We've got it all in a one-stop shop."

The job also gives her the chance to share her personal experiences as a way to encourage patients to accomplish a task or achieve a dream.

"If I can do it, they can do it."

## **A man of many talents**

Bischoff has taken on a variety of tasks at the McCarty Center.

He's washed dishes, worked as a nurse's aide, served as a bus driver on field trips and has supervised recreational activities for the patients.

## A man of many talents

There's also his current roles as a rehab technician, the lifeguard at the hospital's pool and the supervisor of the shop area where he makes modifications and repairs to equipment.

Bischoff said the assortment of job assignments "has kept things fresh" during his 25 years of working at the hospital. It's also remains a gratifying experience for him.

"I think that most every day I gain from the small experiences and the people that I am privileged to work with. I gain from the kids, therapists, DCSs and from equipment and materials themselves," he said. "This is a wonderful place to work and it offers so much in personal growth."

Bischoff said he's also been able to combine his personal interests into his professional life. For example, he loves spending time outdoors, such as camping and fishing. He was able to share those hobbies with children at the hospital during his time as a recreational activities specialist.

Also, as a teen, Bischoff took shop and woodworking classes, worked on cars and built go-carts. That skill set has come in handy at the hospital when he's worked on equipment to aid patients, such as constructing a back to a tricycle seat or building pedals that have footplates.

Bischoff's first job at the McCarty Center also required handiwork -- he started out as a

part-time dishwasher in the kitchen. He later became a nurse's aide and then began working as a recreational activities specialist. It was a job that gave him the chance to hang out and have fun with the patients, such as during trips to baseball games and visits to the Oklahoma City Zoo.



*Dean Bischoff has worked at the McCarty Center for 25 years and his current jobs include serving as the rehab technician, the lifeguard of the hospital's pool and the supervisor of the shop area where he makes modifications and repairs to equipment.*

"I think I've always been kind of a kid at heart."

Bischoff still interacts with kids in his current job, such as by assisting with patient therapy. He also has a variety of other tasks. Among them, he designs equipment devices or additions to existing pieces so that the equipment will aid the patient more effectively, makes wheelchair repairs, keeps supplies stocked, delivers items and even serves as the go-to guy to rid the office of the occasional insect.

In addition, "I help therapists with brainstorming ideas or assist with pieces of equipment that they may not be familiar with," he said.

Bischoff's co-workers say his

aptitude and attitude are greatly appreciated. Recently, he was presented with the hospital's "Keys to Excellence" award after being nominated by his colleagues. The "Keys to Excellence" employee recognition program honors people who show a positive attitude and outstanding commitment and leadership skills.

In his nomination for the award, co-workers described him as a necessity to the rehab team and an excellent team member.

"Being nominated by the people you work with is the best honor," he said. "I love the staff I work with."

He also credits Sue O'Hare, director of physical therapy, for her support, leadership and for helping him to build on his job skills.

Bischoff said he's proud to work at the McCarty Center and believes the hospital will continue to make advancements in its services to children with special needs.

"Ever since I've been here, the hospital's always been truly focused on the kids," he said. "They'll continue to be client focused and strive to offer these kids the best care."

### 2011 Keys to Excellence Employee of the Year

In a ceremony held on Thursday, February 23, Dean Bischoff was named the Keys to Excellence Employee of the Year recipient. A plaque commemorating the honor was presented to Bischoff by Vicki Kuesterstephen, director and CEO of the McCarty Center.



Speech-language pathologists Maria Bratton, left, and Angela Moorad, third from left, perform a yoga pose with patients Elaina Fredrickson, second from left, and Layne Yandell during a therapeutic yoga group session at the J.D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities. The group meets weekly, and Moorad and Bratton work together to help patients with poses.

## Moorad selected as guest instructor in recent yoga workshop

Angela Moorad's passion for children's yoga led to her involvement in a recent workshop on teaching yoga to kids with special needs.

Moorad, a speech-language pathologist at the McCarty Center, was invited to serve as a guest instructor for the March workshop in Edmond. Yoga teacher Ann Robideaux led the workshop, which included strategies for working with children with special needs, adapting yoga poses to accommodate a child's ability level and using safe techniques during sessions.

Moorad leads a weekly therapeutic yoga group for inpatients at the McCarty Center. She is also a member of the International Association Yoga of

Therapists; is certified in the Radiant Child Yoga Program, Levels 1 and 2; and founded OMazing Kids Yoga LLC to promote inclusive yoga for kids and teens of all abilities in Oklahoma.

Robideaux is the director and founder of Asana Alphabet, which provides yoga teachings for youth and teacher training for qualified instructors. Asana Alphabet is based in New York City.

Robideaux connected with Moorad through Facebook after reading about Moorad's involvement in yoga for kids with disabilities. Moorad also shares resources about kids yoga on her blog at [www.omazingkidsyoga.com](http://www.omazingkidsyoga.com) and through a YouTube channel. She also volunteers once a month to teach yoga to kids at Educare in Oklahoma City.

Robideaux asked Moorad to be a guest teacher for the workshop given her training and full-time work with kids with special needs.

"I just thought Angela would be a good fit," she said.

Moorad and Robideaux believe that yoga offers a variety of benefits for children.

Moorad started the therapeutic yoga group at the hospital in 2010 and has seen positive results. She said some of the kids who have participated have become more confident and willing to try new things. Others have improved their social skills and their ability to stay calm and focused.

Robideaux, an Oklahoma City native, has practiced yoga for almost 20 years and considers it "a safe, full-body exercise regime" for kids that increases their strength and flexibility.

"It's about improving oneself, rather than competing with others, which makes it a fabulous type of class about developing self-esteem," she said. "It can also deepen the breath which, in turn, creates calmer thought patterns and, ideally, a stress-free mind."

Moorad said she was thrilled about the opportunity to receive additional training at the workshop and to meet other people who share her interest in yoga for children and youth.



# Gutter Dance 9

Gutter Dance 9, a charity bowling event benefiting the Camp ClapHans scholarship endowment fund, is scheduled for Thursday, May 10, at the Sooner Bowling Center in Norman.

Dinner and sign-in are from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. with bowling beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Dinner will be provided by corporate sponsor Johnny Carino's Italian. Dinner is free for members of the bowling teams and meal tickets are available for \$10 per person for anyone else who wants to partake of a great Italian meal.

The cost to bowl in the Gutter Dance is \$200 for a team of four. Each team gets two lines of bowling. Bowling shoes are included.

Trophies will be awarded to the first, second, third and last place teams.

A prize will be given to the team with the most creative bowling shirts. And prizes will be given to bowlers who make a strike when a color pin appears in their rack-of-pins.

## The 7-10 Split Roll Off

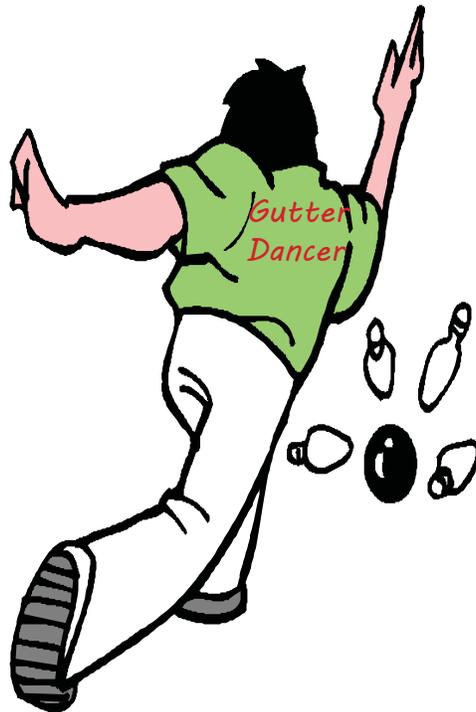
The top 10 individual high score bowlers will get a chance to win a 2012 Chevrolet Cruze from corporate sponsor Marc Heitz Chevrolet.

The names of these ten bowlers will be put in a hat and randomly drawn for bowling order. Each bowler gets one attempt at the notoriously difficult 7-10 pin split. The first bowler to make the split wins the car.

"This has gotten to be one of our most popular events," said Greg Gaston, director of marketing. "This is one of those events that skill and experience don't matter. It's all about the fun. And we have bowlers of every level participate."

Anyone interested in participating, either as a bowler or a lane sponsor, may contact Gaston at 405.307.2807 or ggaston@jdmc.org.

Deadline for entries is the close of business Tuesday, May 8.



# Gutter Dance 9

Team Entry Fee.....	\$200
Team Entry Fee & Lane Sponsorship.....	\$250
Lane Sponsorship.....	\$100



John "Super Chicken" Johnson studies his next delivery. Johnson, a member of the McCarty Center IT department, was a part of the Super Heroes in Training bowling team for Gutter Dance V.