

Highlights & Headlines

JANUARY 2024

from
HILLTOPPERS, Inc.

NEWS ♦ NARRATIVES ♦ NOTES ♦ NOTIONS ♦ NECESSITIES ♦ AND NONSENSE

**Ronnie "Brent" Johnson
accepts the Individual
Achievement award
accompanied by Hilltoppers
Agency Support Coordinator
Paula Brinkley.**



Honoring Dedication

Hilltoppers, Inc. takes honors in two categories at the annual TNCO conference.

Congratulations to Hilltoppers, Inc. for taking honors in two categories at the Tennessee Community Organizations (TNCO) 2023 conference in Murfreesboro, the Individual Achievement Award, and the John Henry Family Award.

TNCO is a statewide association for service provider organizations that support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Tennessee. Member organizations, including Hilltoppers, Inc., provide services—both residential and day services—to more than 12,000 Tennesseans with disabilities. The main purpose of the organization is to collaborate the efforts of member agencies to ensure disabled Tennesseans receive quality services. In other words, work together to improve the lives of the people we serve.

Ronnie Brent Johnson earned TNCO's Individual Achievement Award for his courageous and continued success at choosing to maintain a healthy lifestyle and weight. Brent made the commitment a few years ago to get healthy and lose weight. Slowly but surely, at about one pound per week, he lost over 200 pounds and has kept it off for almost two years. Brent acknowledges that he has more energy now and enjoys life to the fullest. TNCO recognized Brent's hard work and achievement and awarded him their prestigious Individual Achievement Award. Congratulations Brent!

Another Hilltoppers, Inc. supported family, brother and sister Jim Dwyer and Mary Lampugnano, received the John Henry Family award for their commitment to take care of each other and their support for the Hilltoppers' mission.

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Jim at the football toss.



With a little help from a hugger, Donovan makes the shot!



Knights of Columbus and Young Marines present the flags at Special Olympics.

HILLTOPPERS, Inc.

Hilltoppers, Inc. is governed by a nine member, volunteer Board of Directors who meet the 3rd Tuesday of each month. We are grateful to have these nine directors to review and guide us, and we thank them for their time, talents and governance.

Doug Fields
Chairman

Randy Bond

Mark Witt
Vice-Chair

Lori Boyd

Michael Dalton

Melinda Swafford
Secretary & Treasurer

Gina Leary

Perk Thornton

Special Olympics 2023

A Hootin' Hee-Haw, Lots of Fun!

Cumberland County Special Olympics sure was special this year, for many reasons, especially because the weather was great and COVID didn't restrict us!

This year's theme Country "Hee-Haw" was embraced by all and the games were a great success. Open to all disabled in Cumberland County, our Hilltoppers' gang seized the opportunity to participate. The western themed motorcade began on Cook Road and traveled to Stone Memorial High School, which housed the games.

Highlights & Headlines

Jeanene Houston, Executive Director

Mary Lampugnano, Editor

Kimberly Bristow Kemmer, Designer

CAM-Graphics,

Our benevolent printer

www.hilltoppersinc.com

OUR VALUES

RIGHTS, RESPECT & DIGNITY

A priority at Hilltoppers, Inc. is to teach and practice that all people have **Value**; that all people have **Rights**; and that all people will be treated with **Respect** and **Dignity**. Everyone should practice and facilitate **value, worth** and **respect** in their daily supports and communications to others.

CHOICE & DECISION MAKING

It is also a priority for the staff at Hilltoppers, Inc. to support all people, their family members, friends, natural supports, and others to share, educate, and encourage the use of supported decision-making strategies. We encourage people to seek and research information that will assist them in learning to make good choices and informed decisions, and how to communicate their choices freely, including complaints.

A host of volunteers (Stone Memorial High School Pep Club, the Marine Corps League, Knights of Columbus, Cumberland Fellowship Special Needs Ministry, just to name a few) made the games a complete success. Grand Marshall Tabitha Corson bellowed out “Let the games begin!” and a sea of blue t-shirts entered the field, some donned in cowboy hats and bandanas, and all accompanied by their very own “hugger,” a young volunteer assigned to each athlete to encourage and assist them.

One such first-time hugger remarked that seeing the special athletes in action was such a moving experience that he can't wait to volunteer next year. Basketball, golf, relay races, and bean bag toss comprised the games. Athletes performed their best to the cheers of family and friends and earned ribbons for each event.



T-shirt on, Eddie is ready for the games.



Diana on the go!



Susan greets the young Marines.



Thank you to the many volunteers who made our Special Olympics so special!



Pam gets a golf lesson before the game.



Doug and his personal hugger head to the field to compete.

BOO BASH BRINGS SPOOK-TACULAR HALLOWEEN FUN

MOST ORIGINAL:
1st Place
Linda Hassler



SCARIEST
1st Place
Susie Kersey



BEST IN SHOW
Ruth Selby



BEST IN SHOW - STAFF
Delores Ketchum

Trunk-n-Treat, dancing, games, and costume contest—you can't get more Boo-Bash than that! The day center was transformed into party central for our Halloween bash. There were countless costumes that scared us and delighted us, and so many originals! Oh, we had our fair share of pumpkins and vampires and skeletons, but a second-to-none grim reaper brought home 1st place for Susie Kersey, and Benny Gibbons was hilarious as he took 1st place as a bottle of salad dressing! Country-western glamour queen Ruth (Dolly) Selby took Best in Show. Several staff got into the act as well, dressing as the Spice Girls (and Guys!). After lunch and a rousing sock-hop game, revelers were treated to trunk-n-treat in the parking lot provided by our staff, the Marine Corps League and Lantana Baptist Church. Thank you to those volunteer groups who added to our fun!

OUR EVERYDAY HEROES



We recognize the value that our employees bring to Hilltoppers, Inc. and we are grateful for their commitment to excellence and care. Caring is the most important part of our jobs! So many stand out as examples of excellence in carrying out the mission of Hilltoppers, Inc. Heartfelt congratulations for you, and Hilltoppers', continued success. Thank you!

CONGRATULATIONS TO EACH OF OUR EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH!



AUGUST 2023
ANGIE DAVIS
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



AUGUST 2023
JACOB SISCO
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



AUGUST 2023
TAMMY HARRIS
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



AUGUST 2023
DOUG WHARTON
ECF/CHOICES SPECIALIST



SEPTEMBER 2023
SARA SCHWARTZ
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



SEPTEMBER 2023
TOMICA STEPP
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



OCTOBER 2023
AMIE UNDERWOOD
HOUSE MANAGER/SCHEDULER



OCTOBER 2023
NANCY HALL
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



OCTOBER 2023
KAYLIE SLAVEN
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



OCTOBER 2023
CASSANDRA STEERMAN
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



OCTOBER 2023
CHARLOTTE NUNLEY
HOUSE MANAGER



OCTOBER 2023
THERESA BERENT
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



DECEMBER 2023
CATHY BARNWELL
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



DECEMBER 2023
SONYA CANNON
HOUSE MANAGER



NOVEMBER 2023
JULIE KOUBA
TRAINING COORDINATOR ASSISTANT



NOVEMBER 2023
CAROLINE PIECURA & PAULA BRINKLEY
AGENCY SUPPORT COORDINATORS



NOVEMBER 2023
CRYSTAL JOHNSON
HOUSE MANAGER



DECEMBER 2023
WHITNEY ENGLAND
HOUSE MANAGER



DECEMBER 2023
TAWNJA DAVIS
HOUSE MANAGER



DECEMBER 2023
DEBORAH HERRON
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



DECEMBER 2023
APRIL LOPEZ
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL

Congratulations to Mary Burton

In December, we wished well to our Transportation Coordinator, **Mary Burton**, on the occasion of her retirement, over 46 years in the making! Mary is one of the few employees who has been with Hilltoppers, Inc. since early in its inception, and one of the many employees that regard all Hilltoppers, Inc. employees—regardless of their job title—to be DSPs! Friends and family gathered in the day center to say goodbye and wish her well on her next journey in life. We'll miss you, Mary!



NO PHOTO AVAILABLE:

OCTOBER 2023
MICHELLE GRIFFITH
HR & TRAINING COORDINATOR

OCTOBER 2023
KIM LEDBETTER
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL

Sharing the Joy

Hilltoppers, Inc. celebrated Christmas 2023 by spreading joy throughout the Crossville community



Colton paints tree ornaments for the Hilltoppers Christmas tree on display at the 1st National Bank in Crossville.

Christmas has always been a time of joy for Hilltoppers, Inc. and we couldn't contain that joy just at the day center. Our celebrations this year included spreading joy throughout the Crossville community! We decorated a Christmas tree for display at the 1st National Bank of Crossville. We held a winter coat drive for the needy and supported Toys for Tots. We participated in the Crossville city Christmas parade, had a gift exchange at the day center, and thoroughly enjoyed our annual Knights of Columbus Christmas pizza party. Santa even made an appearance!

Hilltoppers folks wanted to spread joy everywhere! For one particular project, Operation Santa Bag, sponsored by The Arc of Cumberland County, filled gift bags were given to members of the special needs community who don't have family at Christmas. The donations included new sheets, toiletries, socks and shoes, and personal gifts to individuals in our community who need it most. Sometimes it does mean more to give than to receive.



Hilltoppers Christmas tree on display at the 1st National Bank of Crossville.



Decisions, decisions! Megan can't decide which ornament to paint first—the star, the gingerbread man, or the tree!



Jonathan and Michael decorate ornaments.



Josh and his BFF Jessica at our Christmas party.



Keri in the best Christmas sweater EVER!



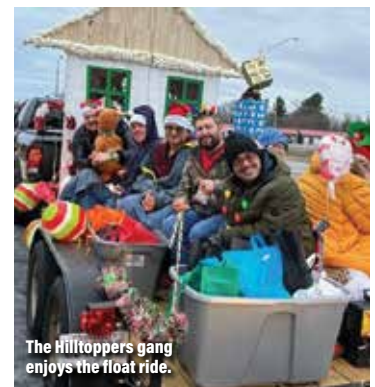
Grayson poses with Operation Santa Bags, filled with goodies and mostly, love.



Jessica and Austin head the Hilltoppers float in the Crossville Christmas parade.



Mastermind behind the Hilltoppers float, Paula the Elf!



The Hilltoppers gang enjoys the float ride.



Special thanks to Charlee Blu and his mama, Kim, who pulled the trailer for the parade!



Santa and pal, Earl



The Cluckers entertain the gang at our Christmas party.

Thank You

As we say farewell to 2023, Hilltoppers, Inc. would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the following organizations and individuals for your substantial donations. Our programs and services depend on the generosity of those who care. Thank you!

- Cumberland County
 - United Fund of Cumberland County
 - The Corvette Club
- KIND Charities of Tennessee
- St. Frances of Assisi Council of Catholic Women
- Fairfield Glade Ladies Club
 - The many, many private individual donors

HILLTOPPERS, Inc.
Community
Thrift Store

...our Community's Clothing, Furniture and Treasure Emporium

Your donations = Opportunities

Remember to shop and donate at the **Thrift Store** located at **154 East First Street!**

"Your Community Emporium" for Bargains!

It hurts our hearts to say goodbye to friends...



In October, we said goodbye to **Johnnie Kay Stokes**, resident at Gossage House and friend to all. Johnnie passed on October 26. She was 70 years old. She is survived by loving brothers and sisters, and many friends at Hilltoppers. Johnnie had an infectious smile, loved Mickey Mouse, and loved to celebrate birthdays! We will miss her dearly.

In November, we lost two residents of Harrison House.



Mary Jane Price, our oldest resident, passed away on November 2, 2023, at the age of 87. She was dearly loved by her family, her staff, and her friends at Hilltoppers. Originally from Mississippi, Mary Jane lived with her parents till their death and then at Hilltoppers, where she has spent the last 31 years. Ever the lady, Mary Jane was always fashionably dressed and never left the house without her lipstick. She had many friends, enjoyed many years at the day center, and especially enjoyed participating in our Christmas programs. She was loved and will be greatly missed.

On November 8, we lost our little brave soldier and friend **Michael Bond**, also of Harrison House. He was four days shy of his 50th birthday. Michael was big brother to Scott, who predeceased him, and they were true brothers—at each other's throats sometimes, but always had each other's backs. Michael loved rocking in his rocking chair or swinging in the outdoor air; he loved his rattle and he loved to eat. Michael's parents, as well as his many caregivers and teachers, say that he was an inspiration to them. Michael taught them to be more loving and more tolerant. He inspired many to pursue special education as a career path and vocation. Michael was dearly loved--by family, by friends, by staff, by all who knew him.





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Visit us at <http://www.hilltoppersinc.com>
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**WE'RE
HIRING!**

We need **Direct Support Staff** and **LPNs** to work with adults who have intellectual and development disabilities. Download an application from our website (www.hilltoppersinc.com) or stop by our office at **86 Duer Court** and fill out an application. We offer a new starting rate of **\$15.50 an hour for DSPs, \$19 an hour for LPNs**, plus paid training and opportunities for advancement.

Hilltoppers, Inc. Annual Giving Appeal

Hilltoppers, Inc. depends on the generosity of others to accomplish our mission. In fact, a sizeable amount of our operating budget comes from individual and small business donations. Will you consider a contribution to our organization? Your generosity can help enrich the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Enclosed is a donor envelope for your convenience. Remember that every donation makes a difference, regardless of size. Thank you for your support!

Another way you can support our mission while shopping at Kroger, you can register Hilltoppers, Inc. as your charity of choice when you use your Kroger grocery store card to donate. Register at www.krogercommunityrewards.com.

