

Noah's Ark Day Center

By Catherine Dean

Noah's Ark (NA)-a new community access group and adult day program-is holding its grand opening event Wednesday, October 31, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at 3019 Heritage Road, Suite A, in Milledgeville.

Activities at the celebration will include free food, games, door prizes, and a bug and animal themed costume contest-the public is welcomed to stop by and take part in the festivities.

The program is managed by Gateway Healthcare Agency (GHA) and provides adults with challenging needs a place to learn how to manage their behaviors, develop daily living skills, and connect to the community in which they call home.

GHA is a full-service healthcare agency locally owned and operated by husband and wife team Rance (CEO) and Angela Williams, RN, who have over 20 years of experience in nursing, group-home management, and in-home assisted living care.

"We are passionate about providing our special needs and elderly community members with the best possible care," said Angela. "My husband and I named the new day program after our son Noah."

The Noah's Ark staff refer to their clientele as "members"-they are adults with developmental and behavioral disorders including but not limited autism and down syndrome.

"On paper, our members are extremely challenging adults that most other facilities will not take because of their behavioral issues," said NA's Coordinator for the Community Access Group (GAG) Georgia Freeman. "We accept them into our program to give them a more full-filled life and we're succeeding in doing just that."

Although the staff stresses that all are welcomed in the program-referring to all manners of developmental and behavioral challenges-the group is kept small for better management and interaction with everyone.

The program is housed in a newly built building behind the Gateway Healthcare Agency's Heritage Road location. It contains a classroom, a meditation room, staff offices, a sensory room, and space for additional activities and services.

"We are preparing our members for life in the outside world-we want to teach them manners, life skills, and educate them to the best of their abilities," said Freeman. "Many have never been given opportunities to develop new skills-that is exactly what want to provide."

The member's monthly calendar is jam-packed with learning activities, field trips, work-out days, and entertainment. Members visit Body Plex Gym once a month, volunteer at Freedom Church, have weekly in-services from the Baldwin County Fire Department (MFD), and visit the local public library.

“We have partnered with the BCFD to teach our members about fire safety including what is good and bad fire and having a fire escape plan, how to decide what is an emergency and how to dial 911,” said Freeman.

For the BCFD, the opportunity to forge a partnership with Noah’s Ark meant accessing a section of the population not normally reached.

“We are excited to be working with an area of the population we have not worked with before-special needs adults,” said BCFD Captain Sheri Kneip. “We hope to teach them not to be afraid of first responders and how to handle an everyday emergency that could arise.”

For member parent Becky Bryant of Savannah, Noah’s Ark has brought great piece of mind knowing that her adult son is being well cared for and is enjoying his more active life.

“For me and him, it has meant the world,” said Bryant. “I had a very difficult time getting him into a program. I searched the entire state and was so grateful to find Gateway Healthcare and Noah’s Ark Day Program. He is very, very happy there and when he’s happy, I’m happy.”

For more information on Noah’s Ark or Gateway Healthcare Agency, visit their offices at 3019 Heritage Road, or call 478-454-5408 or visit their website at www.gatewayhca.com.