

The top portion of the cover features a photograph of green ferns. Overlaid on the left side of this image is the acronym "NCCA" in a large, light green, serif font.

NCCA

# Carolina Counselor

Fall 2023

Official Newsletter of the North Carolina  
Counseling Association

# Carolina Counselor



Official Newsletter of the NCCA

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

We Welcome our 2023-2024 Leadership!

Amendments to the NCBLCMHC Administrative Rules going into effect 2025

NCCA Annual Conference  
February 15-17, 2024

### Have a Contribution for the Newsletter?

Email your submission to:  
nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com

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#### Instagram & Twitter

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n2ca.org

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## 2023-2024 Executive Officers

President: Andrea Barbian

President-Elect: Kerri Legette-McCullough

President-Elect-Elect: Shanita Brown

Past President: Sharon Webb

Secretary: Jason Perry

Treasurer: Rebecca Blanchard

Member-at-Large Government Relations: Bill Stewart

Member-at-Large: Keisha Rogers

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**Thanks for Reading!**

Please submit to the *Carolina Counselor* when you have something to share with professional counselors in North Carolina.



# Carolina Counselor Sections

## **Branch News:**

News about the North Carolina branch of the American Counseling Association

## **Campus Happenings:**

News concerning student projects and student work in the department, university, community, and/or professional organizations such as local chapters of CSI and/or state, regional, and national counseling organizations

## **Diversity and Advocacy:**

Discussion of issues related to diversity, multicultural competency, and advocacy; may address the helping professions directly or indirectly

## **Division News:**

Any news related to NCCA division projects

## **Higher Education in NC:**

Comments on the state of higher education in North Carolina and tips for effective teaching/counseling

## **Legislative News:**

State and national news concerning enacted and proposed policy changes related to professional counselors in any setting

## **Member Spotlight:**

NCCA members who deserve the spotlight! Please provide a photo of the nominee, a short summary of the member's accomplishments, and contact information/photo of your nominee

## **Perspectives From the Field:**

Professional and ethical issues in counseling, counseling theory/practice, and/or reflections on work as a student, professional counselor, counselor supervisor, and/or counselor educator

*NCCA membership is required to submit articles.*

# Branch News

## *President's Message*



Greetings NCCA Members! I don't know about you all, but I am ready for fall. The changing of the leaves, cooler air, and football excite me. As an organization we are off to a great start to the 2023-2024 year. Our Executive Committee met at the end of July for our Leadership Summit. We will be working hard this year to streamline tasks, work efficiently with our management company, serve our membership in a meaningful way by supporting healthy divisions, and revitalize our inactive divisions. If you have the desire to get plugged in and don't know where to start, please reach out to [info@n2ca.org](mailto:info@n2ca.org). Additionally, our conference planning team has been working hard to prepare for our annual conference in February. I hope you all are settling into a routine. Please reach out if there is any way that we can support you.

With gratitude,

Andrea

Dr. Andrea Barbian, LCMHCS, NCC  
NCCA President

# Branch News

## *NCCA Annual Conference*



We are excited to connect with our members and industry partners on February 15-17 in Greensboro, NC, for our [2024 Annual Conference!](#)

Learn the latest about the counseling profession, engage in thought-provoking conversations, and network with industry peers on February 15-17 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Greensboro in Greensboro, NC during the 2024 NCCA Annual Conference.

The 2024 conference theme is Change, Adapt, or Lose: The Imperative for Advocacy in Counseling.

**Click Here to Register**  
<https://www.n2ca.org/registration>

<https://n2ca.memberclicks.net/annual-conference>



# Division News

## *MGCA-NC: Helping the Military Community* by Bill Stewart

A few years ago, I remember checking Facebook and seeing a mass of activity from one of my old units. A member of our unit had taken his own life and the grief across the unit was profound. This particular member had served slightly before I joined the unit, so I did not know him well. I went to his Facebook page to learn more about his life. Although things can be easier to see after the fact, I felt profound sadness looking at his page as the soldier appeared to have been broadcasting his despair and need. Moments like that inspire me to work to help this community that has given so much on our behalf.

As the president of the Military and Government Counseling Association of North Carolina (MGCA-NC), I wanted to introduce you to what we do and invite more members to join. MGCA-NC is designed to help educate counselors on issues related to the military community – active duty, veterans, and their families – so that our counseling community can better support their needs. Additionally, we advocate for the mental health needs of the military community to ensure that their mental health is prioritized and resourced.

To give you an idea of the work we do, our goal has been to provide NCCA

Bill Stewart is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor – Associate who works in private practice where he spends part of his time working with the military community. Bill is the current president of the Military and Government Counseling Association of North Carolina and is the Member-at-Large for Government Affairs for NCCA. Prior to becoming a counselor, Bill served as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne followed by a career at Johnson & Johnson. Bill also holds an MBA from Duke University.



# Division News

## *MGCA-NC: Helping the Military Community*

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members with a minimum of two educational programs per year and to have military issues represented at the NCCA annual meeting. Last year, we hosted two events with a focus on the unique needs of military kids and resources for community counselors to become more informed on working with the military community.

We have also been working with our state and national representatives on issues that impact the mental health of the military community. In past years, we focused on license portability, the incorporation of counselors at the Veterans Affairs facilities in NC, and issues related to how TriCare complicates mental health care. I am proud to say that progress has been made on each of these issues. This year, we will define new legislative goals to address with state and federal legislatures.

Why does this matter to a counselor practicing in North Carolina? North Carolina has one of the largest active duty and veteran populations across the US. We support huge installations such as Fort Liberty, Pope Air Force Base, and Camp LeJeune. Many of these members opt to stay in North Carolina when leaving the military. As has been well publicized, the mental health needs among our military members are immense after over 20 years of sustained combat. The need for mental health counselors who can connect with the military community across North Carolina is in high demand. For those with no exposure to the military, who have concerns about working with this population, MGCA-NC can help you become more familiar with the military community. Our goal is to help prepare NCCA members to better address the vast mental health needs of this community. We hope to see you at MGCA-NC meetings or events throughout the year!



# Higher Education in NC

## *Advocacy at Work: Adjusting To a New Learning Experience*

by Oluyemi Stephens

Adjusting to an unfamiliar learning environment can be daunting as students pursue higher education; especially for international students. It often involves overcoming cultural shock, homesickness, uncertainties, and fear of the unknown. As an international student from Nigeria, I moved to Pretoria, South Africa in February 2014 to begin my higher education. I later began graduate studies in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke in August 2022. Although I was initially apprehensive and uncertain about my experience at UNCP, I have since experienced advocacy benefits.

Advocacy, according to the ACA 2014 Code of Ethics, involves promoting the well-being of individuals, groups, and the counseling profession by removing barriers and obstacles that inhibit access, growth, and development. I have experienced advocacy firsthand through my course advisor, who consistently looks after my well-being and encourages me to express my concerns. The active listening, empathy, and genuineness displayed by faculty and staff at meetings promote counseling and advance the profession.

Oluyemi Stephens is a graduate student in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. He is dedicated to offender rehabilitation, research, trauma, and advocacy for marginalized and underrepresented populations



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# Higher Education in NC

## *Advocacy at Work: Adjusting To a New Learning Experience*

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I lived through culture shock that involved adapting to different communication styles and emotional expressions. I had to learn a new set of social norms and develop fresh coping mechanisms for dealing with stress and loneliness. During this phase of my adjustment, my course advisor was incredibly supportive and listened attentively to my concerns. She offered helpful suggestions for adapting. Culture shock and other barriers could have hindered my adjustment to my current academic environment and negatively impacted my academic performance. Furthermore, whenever I have concerns, I am provided with resources that address them. For instance, I have received text donations and connected with staff and faculty for support and assistance. Thanks to advocacy efforts, I maintained a 4.0 GPA. I have held leadership positions in various organizations, presented posters at major research conferences, won scholarships, and secured graduate employment opportunities. All these accomplishments would not have been possible without my course advisor and faculty.

My experience has taught me that advocacy is not just about words, but also about actions. Through my individual and professional advocacy efforts, I have learned that access, growth, and development are facilitated by advocacy. With the advocacy efforts I benefitted from, I can offer valuable guidance to African international students. I can show them how to successfully adjust and excel in the U.S. educational environment.

# Perspectives From the Field

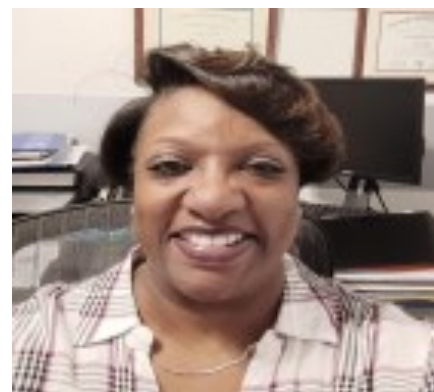
## *A School Counselor Helping to Improve School Climate, Renew Engagement, and Reintroduce Empathy*

by Demetrise Cobb

Thankful for the summer! As a School Counselor, each year that we wave our goodbyes to students and embrace the summer heat, it feels like a new season in our lives. So often we embrace our feelings and allow the climate to direct our next moves but before you know it, the leaves are changing and one season fades into the next. This anticipation can be a springboard for new behavior, new habits, resets, and renewed strengths.

Right before the season changed, I was able to teach 8th graders lessons on empathy, we're always in the business of improving school climate. What struck me as daunting was their reception to the lesson. Reader's please understand everyone's response to COVID is not the same nor are the current 8th graders in comparison to any other 8th graders. The current 8th graders may have spent an elementary grade or two in their homes. What this means to educators is, there may have been some social norms not yet solidified with peers on the other side of a screen. Even though they appear older, often teens want to move around but at their own drum, not because you told them to. In the lesson, students were asked to stand in a circle with me. They had to take

Demetrise Cobb is a National Board licensed school counselor, licensed mental health counselor, and supervisor. She owns a small private practice and will begin the doctoral program at East Carolina University in the fall in Counselor Preparation and Research.



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# Perspectives From the Field

## *A School Counselor Helping to Improve School Climate, Renew Engagement, and Reintroduce Empathy*

Page 2 of 3

off one shoe and feel the coolness and awkwardness of 1 foot on the floor. They moaned about having to take off 1 shoe as the smells of corn chips and burnt grass mixed with the inadvertent heat when the air conditioner set by the county on auto would cut off and on depending on the number of bodies it believed to be in the room.

For a moment, we discussed ways that when you are an empathizer it may be uncomfortable, not normal, and in some ways a different height than you are used to as you stand lopsided. Next, while in the circle, we turned to the right, taking 10 steps away from their 1 shoe. Then I really heard the moans, as they were leaving what was comfortable for that second. While they stood in front of someone else's shoe, anticipating what to do next, I was barely able to calm them down. The drudgery was comical but yes, I asked them to take 1 foot and place it in the other person's shoe. Ironically, this was a metaphor I had learned differently, and teaching it to them for the first time brought a different element of joy for me. I was able to bring home the symbolism of sharing 5 minutes in another person's shoes for the first time and listen. Responses included, "this is weird", "it won't fit", "this is hard" and "why do I have to do this?". With all that was said, when the expressions were done, students smiled and grinned while making "it" work out.

We stood in the circle talking with each other about how empathy has its place, how relating to others can be all of the physical things described; but how relating to someone experiencing a challenge is doable, even with the feelings. I was reminded of how resilient the human spirit can be. No, there wasn't a current crisis in play but needless to say these students bring many challenges

# Perspectives From the Field

## *A School Counselor Helping to Improve School Climate, Renew Engagement, and Reintroduce Empathy*

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to the equation. The students returned the shoe to their owners and there were fist bumps and shoulder bumps, with ‘excuse me’ and ‘my bad’s’ with eye contact and a better level of human connection. Right before my eyes, I observed teens being genuinely kind to people who didn’t look like them but shared in their experience of being commonly alright. I didn’t preface this by stating that feedback from teachers was over the top positive and how this lesson should have been taught earlier in the school year.

One of the objectives in the lesson was not only to emphasize ways to reduce conflict by improving social climate but also to remind students how relatable we all can be. A later lesson allowed students to reflect on where they believe they first learned of empathy. Some stated their school, parents, church, social media and the like. When asked how this could be duplicated or even improved in their daily lives, they responded with “look deeper”, “not judge others by what’s on the outside”, “you never know what someone is going through” and “we’re a lot alike”. With those words, like the change of a season, I just enjoyed the student feedback because when speaking from a certain place, teens in all of their complexities have a commonality of learning when given the right space, social improvement takes place. For all of you returning to your schools this fall or regular routines post vacations, I wish you blessings in your season and anticipate great human connections as you produce your part in the environment.

# Thanks for Reading!

Do you have a contribution for the  
*Carolina Counselor*?

Would you like to discuss a potential idea for this  
newsletter?

email Nicole Stargell at [nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com](mailto:nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com)

NCCA membership is required to submit articles to the *Carolina Counselor*.

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## Carolina Counselor Editor



**Nicole Stargell**, PhD, LCMHC, LSC, NCC, BC-TMH is the Director of Information and Technology for the North Carolina Counseling Association. Nicole is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling at the University of North Carolina Pembroke. She serves as the Department Chair and Testing Coordinator, and Chapter Faculty Advisor for the Phi Sigma Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota. She is a member of the UNCP Institutional Review Board and the editorial boards for *Counseling Outcome Research & Evaluation* and *Teaching & Supervision in Counseling*.

## Carolina Counselor Assistant Editor



**Vanessa Doran**, MAEd, LCMHC, NCC currently works at Jodi Province Counseling Services, PLLC in Jefferson, NC serving a rural community with an array of mental health needs. As a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor and National Certified Counselor, she works with children as young as 2 years old to adults ages 40+, and everyone in between. Vanessa thoroughly enjoys working with middle and high school age kids and utilizing CBT, Person Centered, and Existential Theory in her counseling office. She graduated with an MAEd in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from the University of North Carolina Pembroke in 2016, and her BA in Psychology with a minor in Sociology from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Vanessa enjoys learning about Expressive Arts therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy, and Play Therapy.

# Back to School

“Dedicated to the growth and development of the counseling profession and those who are served.”

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- The fundamental purposes of the North Carolina Counseling Association shall be:
- To provide a united organization through which all persons engaged or interested in any phase of the counseling profession can exchange ideas, seek solutions to common problems, and stimulate their professional growth.
  - To promote professional standards and advocacy for the counseling profession.
  - To promote high standards of professional conduct among counselors.
  - To promote the acceptance and value of individual differences and the well-being of all individuals.
  - To conduct professional, educational, and scientific meetings and conferences for counselors.
  - To encourage scientific research and creative activity in the field of counseling.
  - To become an effective voice for professional counseling by disseminating information on, and promoting, legislation affecting counseling.
  - To encourage and support the divisions and chapters.

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Join NCCA: <https://www.n2ca.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3272>

The NC Counseling Association, a state branch of the American Counseling Association, represents professional counselors in various work settings.

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*The North Carolina Counseling Association represents diverse interests of its membership through an Executive Council, geographically located members, specialty organizations, and committees.*  
<https://www.n2ca.org>