

# HELP FOR THE JOURNEY

Fall/Winter 2023

The Newsletter for North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry

## U.S. Surgeon General Releases Advisory on the Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: One Hope Outreach Ready with Response

By Melanie Beeson



In May, 2023 the U.S. Surgeon General released an advisory on the epidemic of loneliness and isolation in the United States. This advisory highlights not only the mental and emotional effects of loneliness and isolation, but also brings awareness to the detrimental physical health outcomes of loneliness and isolation. Just a few of these alarming physical outcomes include: a 29% increased risk for heart disease, a 32% increased risk for stroke, a 50% increased risk for older adults developing dementia, and a 60% increase in risk for premature death. The Surgeon General urges the nation to improve social connections and lays out six pillars to address the issue.

In addition to the epidemic of loneliness and isolation, NCBAM is aware of the growth in the aging adult population in our state. NC's Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) recently reported that NC ranks 8th in population of ages 65 and older with 1.8 million aging adults residing in NC. This report also shares that 27% of those age 65 and older live alone.

NCBAM developed the One Hope outreach in 2018 with the mission: "To offer the One Hope of the Father, who is above all, and through all, and in all to those experiencing social isolation and loneliness. To connect the lonely with community, and ultimately with Christ."

NCBAM continues to expand the One Hope Outreach to address the growing needs for social connections among aging adults. NCBAM builds relationships with key partners to enhance and grow the One Hope Outreach. Among these partners are North Carolina Baptist Churches, Area Agencies on Aging, NCDHHS, Meals on Wheels, first responders, and most recently, USAging.

NCBAM partnered with USAging at the regional Southeastern



Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A) conference in August. As One Hope Director, I was thrilled to present NCBAM's One Hope outreach to more than 100 professionals in the field of aging—representing nine states.

One Hope is making a positive impact on aging adults in NC by offering increased awareness of the epidemic of loneliness and isolation, opportunities for social connections, and resources for those wanting to help us connect with older adults who are suffering. The Hope Line continues to be a valuable resource for aging adults to call, toll free, and share a friendly conversation with a trained, mission-minded volunteer.

Please look for One Hope on Facebook and Instagram. You can help us spread awareness about social isolation and loneliness by following us on social media and sharing our content.

Melanie Beeson serves as One Hope Director & Southeast Coastal Regional Director for NCBAM. Contact Melanie at [mbeeson@bchfamily.org](mailto:mbeeson@bchfamily.org).



Scan to dig deeper into the Surgeon General's Advisory.



Scan to view demographic statistics for North Carolina's growing aging population.



Scan to learn more at [onehopeNCBAM.org](http://onehopeNCBAM.org).

# NCBAM Advises National “Steps to Safety” Initiative

By Angie Gregg



NCBAM was honored when the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) asked us to represent the **faith-based community on its Advisory Committee for Older Adult Fire & Fall Prevention**. With a passion for Fire

and Life Safety Education and an extensive background in the fire service, **I was thrilled to accept the invitation!** We were tasked with updating the popular, evidence-based Remembering When program.

Like Remembering When, **Steps to Safety remains rooted in fire and fall key messages**, still pairs fire service with community partners, and **continues to use group presentations and home visits** for sharing information. Our committee identified gaps and opportunities for older adult education, added medication messaging, created online training, and updated the website and printed materials.

It was a great experience to **represent faith-based organizations, to serve with multidisciplinary professionals**, and to **share my passion** for safety and prevention! I’m eager for people to know that **falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults**—and to be aware that falls don’t have to be an inevitable part of aging. When senior adults take a proactive approach to fall and fire prevention, **it can be a life-changing investment** that helps them age gracefully and confidently.

**Steps to Safety emphasizes** that it takes a village of stakeholders working together to prevent falls and reduce fall risk. **NCBAM regional directors are trained in Steps to Safety** and can provide Fire and Fall Safety group presentations. **Call 877.506.2226** to be connected with your area’s director and **learn how to share Steps to Safety** in your church or community.



**STEPS TO SAFETY™**  
PREVENT FIRE & FALLS AT HOME

Scan to learn  
more about  
Steps to Safety!



Angie Gregg serves as central west regional director.  
Contact Angie at [agregg@bchfamily.org](mailto:agregg@bchfamily.org)

## SAVE THE DATES!

### Aging Well Conferences

March 14, Kinston  
April 11, Mocksville  
April 18, Vale

### Rampin’ Up!

April 27 & May 4

### AAIM

(Aging Adults Innovating Ministry)

### State Leadership Conference

May 7, Thomasville

### Camp BAM

June 19-23, Thomasville

### SummerFest

Fort Caswell  
May 13-17 & August 19-23

### Fall Festival of Fellowship

Camp Caraway  
October 7-10



Learn more and register!  
[ncbam.org/events](https://ncbam.org/events)  
**877.506.2226**

# Help for the Journey – Around the State!

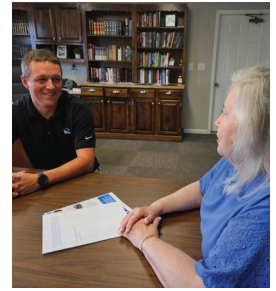
## Southeast Sandhills

Charity Johnson, southeast sandhills regional director, coordinated ramp builds and other projects at the Kennedy Home and surrounding counties. Dr. Mel Winstead, pastor of Mt. Moriah BC, gathered 51 intergenerational volunteers to bless aging adults in need.



## Far West

Anita Davie, far west regional director, meets with Pastor Brent Snyder of Locust Grove Baptist Church to explore how churches can help protect vulnerable adults from elder abuse. Snyder believes the church has a moral duty to help victims and abusers.



## Charlotte

The North Carolina Association on Aging (NCAOA) held its annual meeting at Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church. The church partnered with NCBAM to help the NCAOA rebound from the Covid years and save money by hosting the conference at Pritchard. NCBAM's Angie Gregg and Amy Burns welcomed attendees to the venue.

## Central West

Angie Gregg (left), central west regional director, role-played during a Steps to Safety training in Nashville for 40 community members who attended this evidence-based training for fire and fall prevention.



## North Central

Austin Decker, north central regional director, gets his face painted during an afternoon break at Camp BAM. Forty-one campers served 18 aging adults and three BCH ministries; constructed six wheelchair ramps; and mowed, trimmed, and cleaned three yards.

## South Central

Folks at Mt. Gilead's Highland Community Center had fun learning about fall prevention from South Central Regional Director Philip Brown.



## Southeast Coastal

NCBAM shared valuable information with more than 200 aging adults at Fort Caswell's popular senior adult retreat—Summerfest. Here, Regional Directors Charity Johnson and Melanie Beeson smile for the camera in a photo booth they set up for attendees.

## “IN THEIR OWN WORDS”

*I feel 100% safer in leaving my home with the aid of the ramp. I didn't want to go out. Now, I am confident! Your service has changed my life for the better. You have my prayers and appreciation!*

– Anthony, Kinston



## Excited to Join BAM and Ramp It Up!

By Brian Roberts



**Greetings friends!** I am Brian Roberts, the new **Call Center director for NCBAM**. I feel privileged to **provide support to aging adults** and I am beginning to understand the unique challenges they face.

After a decade in full-time vocational ministry, I will use what I have **learned to lead our team of Call Center specialists**, to enhance our operations, and to ensure we continue to **deliver outstanding service while proclaiming Jesus as Lord!** I am confident the Call Center will become an even more valuable resource to seniors and their families.

Speaking of families: **my family is one of the joys of my life!** My wife Jaclyn has been by my side for 22 years, and I could not do half the things I do without her encouragement and care. **Our biggest blessing in marriage has been our two children:** Brilyn, our 16-year-old daughter, and Brison, our 14-year-old son. They keep us busy, **but also remind us of the beauty of God's grace in creation.**

Now that I feel settled in the Call Center, I look forward to NCBAM's biennial outreach, **"Rampin' Up! 2024."** Held in conjunction with Operation Inasmuch, **Rampin' Up!** will attempt

to construct 100 ramps between April 27 and May 4. NCBAM believes **every aging adult deserves a safe and accessible home.**

You can help by donating resources, spreading the word, or building a ramp!

If you don't know how to build a ramp, we've got you covered! **A free**

**ramp construction training will be held in Cary on February 10.** A Baptists on Mission trainer will share everything you need to know to construct a ramp!

Through volunteers, NCBAM will continue to make significant differences in the lives of aging adults. **Together, let's continue to provide Help for the Journey!**

*Brian Roberts serves as Call Center director for NCBAM. Contact Brian at [broberts@bchfamily.org](mailto:broberts@bchfamily.org).*



Brian on a family hike with Jaclyn, Brilyn, and Brison.

**Scan to register** for the Ramp Construction Training in Cary.



## A Memorable Monday

By Connie Russell



**What began as a typical Monday** became a day not soon to be forgotten. I had just taken a request for a ramp when my fellow Call Center specialist, Sharon Chastain, told me **something had happened at a ramp site in**

**Alamance County.**

When I called David Faircloth, ramp crew coordinator for First Baptist Church Mebane, **he told me that as they were setting up to build, a crew member collapsed.** John Fladeland was taken to the hospital and put on life support. Sadly, John passed away that night. John's obituary noted his heart for the Lord and serving others, **"If you see a wheelchair ramp in Mebane, chances are good John Fladeland had a hand in it."**

Needless to say, the ramp crew was devastated—as was our client. **I listened and helped the crew chief and the client**



**begin to work through their grief.**

The crew, in spite of their grief, **continued to work on the ramp. They felt John would want them to.** They befriended the client (and her daughter) and **planted seeds of the Gospel** in the daughter's heart. FBC Mebane still keeps in touch with this client and helps with ongoing needs. Most of all, **they are showing her an example of Christian love and service.**

*Connie Russell serves as a Call Center specialist for NCBAM. Contact Connie at [clussell@bchfamily.org](mailto:clussell@bchfamily.org).*

## Field of MAKERS Raises Funds for Rampin' Up! 2024

The second annual **Field of MAKERS**, a juried artisan show, was held September 9 on the Mills Home campus of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina in Thomasville. In addition to our state's finest crafters, **the event included popular food vendors, live Gospel music, and a roving magician** who entertained the crowds.

Field of MAKERS is a fundraiser where all proceeds benefit aging adults served by the ministry. **The event makes it possible to purchase lumber for wheelchair ramps, and for safety needs** such as minor home repair, grab bars, or smoke alarms for aging adults in need.

Many thanks to our generous **Field of MAKERS 2023 sponsors!**



Tristan & Mia Roberts



*Bud and Buddies Old Time Gospel Band blessed shoppers with their music.*



*Comedic Magician, David Lucas, entertained shoppers.*



*Fifteen vendors showcased unique handcrafted items.*

## Sixty-Five-Foot Ramp Provides Access at Fort Caswell

Eight churches sent dedicated building teams and attendees of the **August session of Summerfest** also lent a hand in the construction of a massive 65-foot accessibility ramp at Fort Caswell.

Over two days and 105-degree temperatures, **volunteers built the ramp to provide equal access** to the corn hole, the fire pits, and the new seating that showcases **the glorious sights and sounds of the area overlooking the Cape Fear**. Everyone, regardless of age or mobility, **will now be able to enjoy this beautiful area**.

**Dr. Sandy C. Gregory, director of NCBAM**, said, "NCBAM is honored to help provide this ramp for the many senior events held at Fort Caswell, and for anyone who needs to have equal access."



*NCBAM's Robert Leonard (far left), assembled volunteers who constructed this ramp at Fort Caswell.*

The following groups participated in the ramp build:

- Cool Springs Baptist Church, Elkin**
- Fort Caswell Maintenance Staff**
- Friendship Baptist Church, Elkin**
- Grey Stone Baptist Church, Durham**
- Jonesboro Heights Baptist Church, Sanford**
- Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church, Charlotte**
- River of Life Baptist Church, Sunset Beach**
- Starnes Cove Baptist Church, Asheville**



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 The mission of North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry is to help aging adults maintain their independence. Dr. Sandy Gregory, director; Carol Layton, editor; Amy Burns, proofreader; Brian Roberts, circulation manager; Betsy Huffine, art director. **Free subscriptions** are available by calling **877.506.2226**. NCBAM is a ministry of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina.



## Letter from the DIRECTOR

*"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength . . . they will run and not grow weary." – Isaiah 40:31*

As NCBAM approaches its 15th anniversary in 2024, I'm reminded of the early days traveling across the state visiting churches, Baptist Associations, and state agencies **to learn about the needs of aging adults in North Carolina** and how we could best frame this new ministry.

Government agencies were happy to share information with me, but I could tell they weren't very hopeful about us making a long-term difference. More than one person told me, **"Faith-based groups don't stick around."** Another said, "They come on full force, but then fade away."

But thanks to Baptist churches, Baptists on Mission volunteers, and the strong presence of God's people living out the Gospel, **NCBAM has stood the test of time.** We're proud of our state partnerships and the awards we have received from **agencies who are grateful that we have not faded away**, but rather continued to grow "from strength to strength."

NCBAM began with a statewide Call Center which is now just one of 14 ministry outreaches. **One of our most impactful outreaches is Rampin' Up!** Held biennially in conjunction with Operation Inasmuch, this event brings attention to **the vital need for wheelchair ramps** among so many older adults in North Carolina.

Rampin' Up! will be held April 27 and May 4, 2024. Please call us at **877.506.2226** and make plans **to bring safety and independence to a senior** in your community



in need of a wheelchair ramp. We have many clients who have been trapped in their homes for months or years because of just a few steps. I guarantee you the **sight of an older adult beaming while walking down their ramp** for the first time is a sight you'll never forget!

Rampin' Up and our other outreaches demonstrate that **NCBAM remains on "full force"**— and will continue to impact lives for years to come.

Dr. Sandy C. Gregory has served as director of NCBAM since its inception in 2009.

Contact Sandy at [scgregory@bchfamily.org](mailto:scgregory@bchfamily.org).



**Scan to learn** about each of NCBAM's 14 outreaches!