

WATAUGA COMPASSIONATE  
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE



# May 2021 Newsletter

PREVENTING TRAUMA.  
BUILDING RESILIENCY.

*What's strong in you?*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT  
**[WWW.WATAUGACCI.ORG](http://WWW.WATAUGACCI.ORG)**



# WCCI 2021-2022

## Upcoming Meetings

### Meeting Dates for 2021-2022 year:

Until further notice, WCCI meetings are by Zoom beginning at 8:30 am on the second Thursday of each month. Meeting dates are below. The Zoom link and password are as follows:

<https://zoom.us/j/92959886225?pwd=TKJaUGFMTUY2aG13K2ZOMmdmNjIFUT09>

Meeting ID: 929 5988 6225

Passcode: 262131

WCCI meeting will be held from 8:30-10:30 am.

May 13, 2021	Jan. 13, 2022
June 10, 2021	Feb. 10, 2022
July 8, 2021	March 10, 2022
August 12, 2021	April 14, 2022
Sept. 9, 2021	May 12, 2022
Oct. 14, 2021	
Nov. 11, 2021	
Dec. 9, 2021	



*Our community is always in dire need of foster care parents and mentors. To be a foster parent or to learn more, contact Jessica Winebarger at the Department of Social Services (265-8100). To be a mentor or to learn more, contact Angela McMann or Charlene Grasinger at Western Youth Network (264-5174)*

## Social Media! FOLLOW US!

WCCI - Watauga  
Compassionate  
Community  
Initiative

Watauga County  
North Carolina  
Aces Connection

@wcci\_2020



# WCCI WEDNESDAYS

## Upcoming Schedule

WCCI will be hosting monthly conversations by Zoom about trauma and resiliency. These conversations will be with people impacted by ACEs, as well as agency staff and providers. They will be held every Wednesday on Zoom until further notice. They will begin at 12:00 noon.

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/93894662207?pwd=Wjc3eU9SL3JMOXJpQSs5UkxYqUd3UT09>

Meeting ID: 938 9466 2207

Passcode: 440689

Date	Who is Joining	Topic
May 5	Mollie Furman	Faces of ACES, Thriving Lives series:
May 12		
May 19	Christina Dave	Faces of ACES, Thriving Lives series: My Path to Being Heart-Centered+
May 26		
June 2	Jennifer Smith	Faces of ACES, Thriving Lives series: Walking the Wire: Deconstructing Safety

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Stephanie Thomas

Steph is a native of Kill Devil Hills, NC, Steph began her adventure in the High Country when she enrolled at Appalachian State University in 2001. She graduated cum laude with her bachelor's degree in Social Work from ASU in 2005. In addition to her passion for working with children and families, Steph found that she also has a fervent interest in foreign languages and cultures. This interest inspired her to pursue a Fulbright grant, which allowed her to live and work in



Bulgaria teaching English to Bulgarian students for the 2009-2010 academic year. Upon her return to the United States in 2010, Steph once again engaged with children and families in the High Country. For the next 7 years, she worked as a part of team providing Intensive In-Home therapy services with the goal of improving family situations and avoiding out-of-home placement for children. Steph began her role as Family Advocate at the Blue Ridge Children's Advocacy Center of Southmountain Children and Family Services in October 2017. She continues to be passionate about advocating for and walking alongside children and families in their journeys to overcome adversity and reach their highest potential to lead happy, healthy and fulfilled lives.

For approximately the past 3 years, Steph has co-led the WCCI Prevention Committee, which she says has been a really amazing experience. She says: "We have an amazing, dedicated group who care deeply about Prevention of trauma and adverse experiences in the High Country. I am honored to be a part of WCCI and the Prevention Subcommittee and excited about the opportunity to continue this important work!"

# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## Western Youth Network

Western Youth Network (WYN) is working to eliminate Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their consequences by intervening in the root causes of trauma and advocating for trauma-informed policies and practices in North Carolina's Appalachia region. WYN currently manages five initiatives to realize its vision of a trauma-free community: mentoring, after school, summer camp, high school success, and substance abuse prevention.



## Mediation & Restorative Justice Center

MRJC aims to reduce the physical, emotional, and financial harm caused by unresolved conflict, litigation, and incarceration by providing mediation, alternative sentencing, and other restorative processes that increase the respect, peace, productivity and safety in the communities served. Their programs include Community Mediation, Juvenile Mediation, District Criminal Court Mediation, Drug Treatment Court Program and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD).



### What is Mediation?

Mediation is a process in which conflicting parties voluntarily agree to work towards settlement of issues with the help of a neutral third party, known as a mediator.

### What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice is a different way of responding to crime and/or harm in families, communities and especially in the criminal justice system. Restorative justice emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by unjust behavior through inclusive and cooperative practices that involve the victim, offender, and community members. Several models of restorative justice are practiced in MRJC programs including victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, circles, restorative dialogue and classroom conferencing.

# RESILIENCY SKILL

## Yoga: The Half Moon Pose

This challenging pose is meant to position the spine in lateral flexion—meaning it causes it to side bend. The goal is to stretch the entire body from the heels of your feet to the tips of your hands. It is known to work wonders for the circulatory and skeletal systems.

What's not to love? If you struggle with this pose in the beginning, don't worry! It takes time and practice. Don't give up. We believe in you and you can do it!

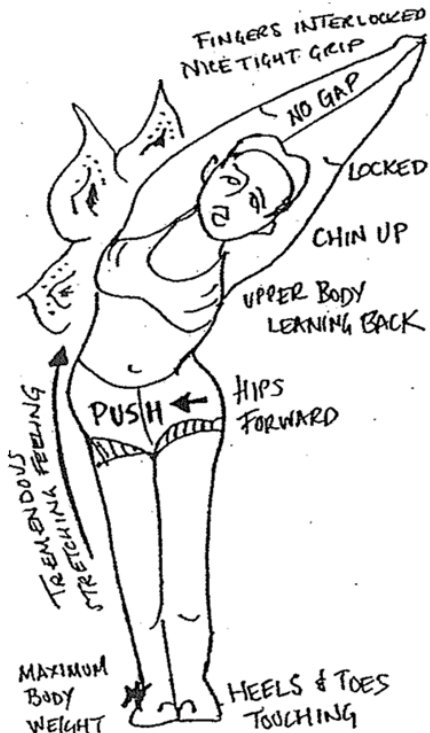
How to

Make sure you do this pose to the right and left, to create balance  
Take a deep breath and begin and follow the infographic below:  
Hold the pose for 60 seconds and then switch sides

Youtube Link: [Half Moon Pose \(1st Part\) - Bikram Hot Yoga Tutorial](#)

### Why we love it: The Benefits

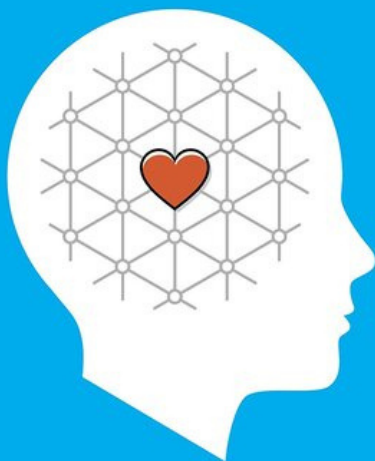
- Strengthens the core muscles in the central part of the body
- Creates deep stretching for the muscles
- Improves flexibility of the spine
- Corrects back pain and bad posture issues
- Strengthens the back and abs
- Trims fat and helps to tone: abdomen, buttocks, thighs, arms, hips
- Gives you a quick burst of energy and vitality
- Creates heat in the body
- Is known to promote proper kidney function and cure enlargement of the liver and spleen



# BOOK OF THE MONTH

Hardwiring Happiness

## *Hardwiring Happiness*



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THE  
NEW BRAIN  
SCIENCE OF  
CONTENTMENT,  
CALM, AND  
CONFIDENCE

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**RICK HANSON, Ph.D.**

International Bestselling Author of *Buddha's Brain*

# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**In February, an intern working in collaboration with WCCI, Brittney Craven, sat down (virtually) with Yolanda Adams, Family Resource Coordinator for Watauga County Schools.**

**Yolanda:** My name is Yolanda Adams and I am the family resource coordinator for Watauga County Schools. I have been employed by Watauga Schools for seven years now and this position for about three years. I also have freelance contracts with different organizations here in town to interpret and also bring resources to the Latino community. I have different contracts with DSS, Child Protection Services, the Children's Advocacy Center, and Daymark. I also assist sometimes with law enforcement and police to help them with anything they need regarding bringing resources to our Latino community.

**Brittney:** Wonderful. Would you mind sharing with us a little about your role in the upcoming 2021 WCCI conference?

**Yolanda:** Sure. So my role, of course, because we are in the COVID era, is going to be a little bit different. I usually am in charge of the hospitality of the conference and this time it's going to look a little bit different but I am actually playing two roles this time around. I am helping with the resilience kits. We are very excited about this opportunity that every single person that registers will be able to receive this little box with some goodies and I don't want to give too much away so it will be a surprise for everybody who is going to be attending this wonderful conference. I'm also going to be able to present and I will be one of the Faces of Aces so I'll be sharing my story with the audience that would like to join me

**Brittney:** Would you share your background in trauma work?

**Yolanda:** Sure. So because I work for the school systems, I work very closely with Denise Presnell, the social worker from Hardin Park and the one who actually started this amazing momentum about resilience and trauma awareness. That's when I was actually exposed for the first time and I heard about trauma and resilience and ACEs.



# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Yolanda:** I always said that it was mind-blowing for me because I thought that I had a very normal childhood experience. I thought everything was pretty normal but I had some things going on in my life that I couldn't quite pinpoint exactly where they were coming from and then I heard the presentation about ACEs and took the test. The scoring basis and the results of ACEs were very intricate. We all took the tests together and it made me realize "wow. Now I can completely understand a lot of memories that I have and reactions that I have and it has to do with a lot of traumatic events that I actually endured during my childhood years". When I learned about that I wanted to share that information with all, especially the Latino community because in our culture, we tend to be very closed about sharing our feelings and experiences or events that have happened in our lives. It's almost like a taboo to talk about mental health. With trauma, we tend to keep it to ourselves so that was my main goal. Now that I had this amazing knowledge come to me I wanted to share it with the community

**Brittney:** You mentioned your various roles in the community and that you're doing the advocacy around ACEs but what is the work you do? What does your day-to-day look like with trauma work?

**Yolanda:** My new role that I started about three years ago is as a Family Resource Coordinator. Before this, I was the Spanish interpreter and translator, and during all this time I was building to the new position by bringing a lot of resources and any additional help that they needed that were not just school-related but life-related. I started to work very closely with the families and realized there's a lot of needs other than just what is in the school system and behavior issues inside the school system. As I was more in my new role as the Family Resource Coordinator, I realized there's a lot that I can go ahead and share with these families so they can learn how to understand those emotions that they have, to understand where they're coming from and how they can heal from it. Little by little because it can be overwhelming for some people just to suddenly start to hear about all this because to tell you the truth, some of the trauma events can be so high that they don't even want to acknowledge them. They don't want to even rethink about that even though it's still affecting them on a daily basis.

# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Yolanda:** We started the Latino track in the WCCI conferences. That was a huge success when we opened to our Latino community to be involved and learn about this. That has been my main role. The priority for me has been the education portion of it and that if we start talking about it, sharing our own traumatic events and our experiences, people will be more open to learn and be proactive about it and be able not only to take care of that for themselves but also to help their own family members as well.

**Brittney:** You touched on what you enjoy doing a little already but what's your favorite aspect of trauma work or resiliency work?

**Yolanda:** I think for me, my favorite thing is to be able to see the relief of those that I share this information with because it's like this huge heaviness they've had upon their shoulders is taken away. It's like "oh my goodness, now I completely understand this is not my fault. This is because of something that happened and now by learning resources of resilience and learning exercises then I am able to heal". That for me is the most satisfying thing there is. Also to take the stigma away from that just because we seek help from a specialist like a therapist or a psychiatrist or psychologist that doesn't mean that we're crazy. That means that we are actually taking care of our own health. If we feel sick, mental health is very important. That is my favorite part when they actually understand they have to take care of this like they would a broken arm. If we continue sharing this with everybody that have had traumatic events or anything like that, I think we can totally see a shift in our society that we are more understanding of each other.

**Brittney:** Thank you for sharing that with us. What does resilience mean to you?

**Yolanda:** Resilience means so much. Resilience for me, I learned that it is genetic. The genetics from my mom, I always think about how her life was very hard when she was a child and growing up. Every time I saw her she was happy and thriving and showed all this resilience and I know a lot of that is within me. I totally believe from science that traumatic events and resilience actually can pass through your DNA.

# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Yolanda:** Resilience for me is to have the strength to fight through those feelings, to have the strength to acknowledge those traumas that we have gone through, and to actually be proactive to heal. So we cannot just do this by ourselves. We can seek help and that is part of the resilience to be very aware of it and when we don't feel okay it is okay for us to take a five-minute break or a few seconds break to breathe and many other things that I have learned about resilience. I hope that I can also pass this to my own family and to the families that I work with.

**Brittney:** You touched on a few but how do you feel people can build resiliency skills?

**Yolanda:** First to learn and be educated about mental health and trauma. Without that component of the ACE score, I don't think we can have knowledge of the resilience we might have within us already but we probably are not very aware that we can use that in our favor. I would definitely say to be open to talking to others when we need to. Even though some of the exercises might be like, "oh my gosh, I would never be standing and holding and pushing the wall". You're gonna hear a lot of exercises that you can do to calm yourself and that doesn't mean that you have to practice every single one of them but maybe you can obtain two or three that are just exactly what you need. One of the ones that I practice the most when I'm very tense or going through very stressful situations is breathing because sometimes I think "oh my gosh, I'm not even breathing" because that's how stressed I am. I love to draw as well. My faith is number one so if I'm feeling extremely stressed about something I always go to prayer first so there are others that they go out and exercise and walk and do all that so it's just about learning all the techniques that are out there and choose the one that fits you. Don't choose one that is going to make you uncomfortable because instead of helping it's actually going to throw you off a little bit. Many of them are out there so just choose the one that fits in for you and do it.

**Brittney:** How can we learn more about the work that you do or the resources that you're connected with?

# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Yolanda:** So, of course, you can contact me at the school system. You can email me ([adamsy@wataugaschools.org](mailto:adamsy@wataugaschools.org)) or call me (828.264.7190). I think my number is one that a lot of people have but you can share it with them so they can contact me. My office is at the board location for the school system. I actually started a new page called Q'Pasa Appalachia on Facebook that is more than just about resilience and trauma awareness but it's actually a page that we created in order to strengthen our relationships between the Latino community and the Watauga community. We interview Latino businesses and organizations and we try to build that bridge of trust so we know more about each other and one of the things that I started to talk about is trauma, mental health, resilience. I want to start to educate in a very passive way so people will start to get educated and grab things here and there that will start to open their minds and their hearts to it so Q'Pasa Appalachia, Watauga County Schools, email or call me.

**Brittney:** Wonderful. Thank you. Is there anything else you wanted to share?

**Yolanda:** Yes, I want to share that I think the topic of diversity and inclusion is out there. We all want to be proactive and make sure that we build that trust with different races. I will say just don't be afraid of different colors, different accents, different upbringings. Be open-minded. Beautiful minds come from different shapes of bodies, colors, accents, and countries. My favorite thing that I want to do through Q'Pasa Appalachia is for our audiences to have that different view and learn that if we get to know somebody that, to begin with, we might not feel like we have a connection with we might be very surprised about how beautiful that culture or that race might be so just a little nugget of let's have open hearts and kindness to each other regardless where we came from.

**Brittney:** Great. Thank you so much for meeting with me and for sharing your story and what you will do for our community.

**Yolanda:** Absolutely, yeah thank you for doing this.