



# THRIVING

hope



An **Uplift Encouragement Group** Publication

Fall 2023

## SOUTH CAROLINA GROUPS

### **UPLIFT Charleston Mt. Pleasant**

Meets the **THIRD** Saturday of each month from 9:30-11:00 at:  
Seacoast Church  
750 Longpoint Road  
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

### **UPLIFT Charleston West Ashley**

Meets the **FIRST** Saturday of each month from 9:30-11:00 at:  
Northbridge Baptist Church Fellowship Hall  
1160 Sam Rittenberg Blvd  
Charleston, SC 29407

### **UPLIFT Greenville**

Meets every other month at:  
Overture Greenville  
52 Market Point Drive  
Greenville, SC 29607

### **UPLIFT Lexington**

Meets the **FOURTH** Thursday of every month at:  
First Baptist Church of Lexington Fellowship Hall  
415 Barr Road  
Lexington, SC 29072

### **UPLIFT Myrtle Beach** coming soon...

## WELCOME

Welcome to our first Uplift Encouragement Group newsletter. The UPLIFT Encouragement Group offers people who face a chronic illness or disability the opportunity to meet with others. As well as to share their experiences, knowledge, strengths and hopes.

These groups are run by and for their members. The leaders are just ordinary people who with a little bit of courage, a sense of commitment and a good amount of caring. Therefore, it's a great way to share hope with others who are taking the same journey as you. "Hope is Real."

## SCHERI FORCE

### **Founder and Executive Director**



The founder of The UPLIFT Encouragement Group, Scheri Force was diagnosed with MS in the late 1990's and has refused to succumb to a life of limitations. She knew she could still have an abundant and full life of happiness and joy and YOU can too!

## WAYS YOU CAN PARTICIPATE:

- Interacting with a group of people who understand what you are going through.
- Enjoy the family-like environment and have a shoulder to laugh, cry and share on.
- Hear from speakers who are educating us on issues that are relevant to us.
- Participate in fun social events, gatherings and community projects.
- Become a resource to help ENCOURAGE others along their path.

# LEADER HIGHLIGHTS



## Meet Jamie Kohler

**Founder, Blissful Dreams**  
**UPLIFT Charleston – Mt. Pleasant**

She is a God fearing animal lover that grew up with a passion and gift with animals and, in particular, working with challenging horses. After growing up showing horses and riding professionally, I started to feel like there was still something missing, an emptiness. Following a series of life changes and events, I soon realized that God could use me and my passion of animals to help love others and show love through sharing the unconditional love that animals give to all of us despite our looks, abilities, or pasts. I realized that animals display the true unconditional love of Christ to everyone. We began adopting rescued horses, dogs, (and cats) and began providing animal-related activities and horseback riding to individuals of all shapes, sizes, colors, ages, and abilities. The mission of Blissful Dreams Rescue Ranch is to share the love and gospel of Jesus Christ through therapeutic horseback riding and animal related activities for children and adults struggling with psychological, emotional, physical, and relational challenges while using formerly abused, neglected, and abandoned horses and dogs. Animal behavior can be so misunderstood, just like people that are “different” can be misunderstood. It is difficult to explain without witnessing it in person, but there is something amazing that happens when you connect misunderstood animals that have been given a second chance with individuals that are misunderstood and/or hurting.



She realized that something was missing and felt that she was not using the gifts GOD had given her for His Purpose. In 1998, Jamie started working with children with autism, teaching them to ride and sharing her love of horses. Ten years later, she established Blissful Dreams, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing compassion, love and acceptance to anyone in need. Jamie states, “I began to realize that I could still make horses my career, but I could do it to help others. GOD gets all the credit for Blissful Dreams. Jamie has been riding horses since the age of 6 and is a licensed veterinary technician. She lives in Huger, SC with her husband, Tom and their daughter, Sam. Tom retired from Mt. Pleasant Waterworks in February 2022 after over 24 years of service to assist Jamie with the daily full time responsibilities of Blissful Dreams. Samantha is a Senior at Wofford College (Class '23), where she is captain of the Equestrian Team.



# LEADER HIGHLIGHTS

## Meet Kristen McCall UPLIFT Greenville



An Upstate transplant recipient competed in the World Transplant Games in Perth, Australia, in April, and brought home three medals.

Kristen McCall's journey started when she was 14 and she needed a new kidney. Her Dad stepped up to donate. Twenty years later, McCall was back on dialysis and in need of another kidney replacement; someone in the community stepped in to help. In Australia, McCall competed in track and 5k events with the goal of checking off something on her bucket list. "Every day is...I'm just glad I was able to get it off of my list of things that I can accomplish. I mean, I just got out of the hospital last week from having sepsis. So I mean, I'm just constantly going through these hurdles and so when my health is good, I try to, you know, set goals for myself and accomplish them," McCall said.

McCall picked up two silver medals, and one bronze medal.

# MEMBER HIGHLIGHT BRUCE WEST

**BRUCE AND MARGO WEST** have been supporters of Uplift Encouragement Group from the beginning where Bruce serves on the nonprofit's board as VP. Bruce and Margo just celebrated their 40th anniversary and have been dealing with Bruce's disability for 33 years. He uses a wheelchair resulting from a nontraumatic cord injury and suffers with Myasthenia Gravis. Bruce medically retired from his position as an education administrator. Akiva, the Service Dog assists with many daily tasks, and is also a certified Therapy Dog. Bruce and Margo hold patient advocacy and service to community central in their lives through engaging in Uplift Encouragement activities, therapy dog visits to clinics and Alzheimer units, and consulting regarding disability issues. They reside in Gilbert, SC and enjoy cruising to tropical ports.





# Resource Education Day

This was an opportunity to showcase local services geared towards those living with chronic illnesses/disabilities and their caregivers to share what resources are available to them, talk with the vendors and gather information. We had 30 vendors turn out for the first annual Resource Education Day!





# 5th Anniversary BBQ

The UPLIFT Encouragement Group Annual BBQ and 5-year anniversary. This is a night where we take time to celebrate all of our accomplishments, no matter how big or small, with our friends and family.

YOU are why we are celebrating tonight. Without you we could not do what we are doing. YOU are some of the most selfless and caring individuals I have ever met. I am in constant awe of this group of men and women for all that they do despite their chronic illnesses/disability. Even though the journey can be difficult at times, YOU manage to get things done. I want to celebrate YOU for all YOU have done, are doing and continue to do. YOU have become my extended family and I love each and every one of YOU!





# Greenville May Meeting



Faye Harrison

Ms. Faye Harrison drove all the way from Columbia to speak to the group about her journey with Crohn's disease.

Everyone is welcome to join these group meetings and we are all here to talk about chronic illness and how we as a GROUP can overcome dealing with any aspect of living with a chronic illness.



Greenville Group Leaders with Chrissie Jenkins with Palmetto Infusion



Faye sharing her story



Faye with her caregiver dad



## DONATIONS:

This nonprofit (501c3) has been created to help others living with chronic illnesses/disabilities. Ways we assist are: home additives, medicine, groceries, assistive equipment. Also, monies raised for group gatherings and the expansion of groups into other communities, Go to our website at [www.upliftencouragement.com](http://www.upliftencouragement.com) and look for the donate button.

Please contact Scheri Force at (803) 318-4108 or [scheri@upliftencouragement.com](mailto:scheri@upliftencouragement.com) with any questions or more information.

Check out our website at: [www.upliftencouragement.com](http://www.upliftencouragement.com) or [Facebook page!](#)