

feature story

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BERT VANDERVEEN
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From Classroom TO COMMUNITY IMPACT

ALICE JONES '24 AND GREENSBORO CEREBRAL PALSY ASSOCIATION'S TRANSFORMATION

Alice Jones '24 arrived at the small nonprofit agency just in time. Growing Connections for Pediatric Achievements, formerly known as the Greensboro Cerebral Palsy Association (GCPA), was in the midst of a name change, website overhaul, and full rebranding. At the same time, the organization was preparing to celebrate its 75th anniversary and hold its first fundraising gala.

As the only administrative employee, the busy executive director was already stretched thin, so the organization needed a strong marketer to bring the plans to life.

Jones, who earned her undergraduate degree from the Bryan School of Business and Economics in May 2024, took that role as the organization's paid intern.

"Alice was tremendous in helping us navigate all this," says Ma'Kayla Jefcoat, executive director of GCPA, who is also a UNCG alumna. "From day one, she was very professional and wanted to go the extra mile to partner with us. She has been instrumental in helping us tell our story."

Jones was introduced to the organization through her professor, Dr. Sara MacSween, a senior lecturer in Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism at the Bryan School. MacSween, who serves on the GCPA Board, knew the agency could benefit from a branding refresh and assigned a group of students to develop a marketing plan as a senior capstone project.

In partnership with GCPA's executive director and board, the student group surveyed stakeholders, conducted research, and identified what differentiated the agency. Ultimately, they recommended a name change to more accurately reflect the wide range of clients served.

While the former name highlighted cerebral palsy, the organization provides therapeutic early intervention for children with all types of special needs and developmental delays, from birth to age 3. It's critical that parents quickly understand the wide range of services offered, so they can enroll children who may benefit early, Jefcoat says.

"We wanted to honor our 75-year history," Jefcoat adds. "So remaining GCPA helps to represent that history, but now it has a new meaning. The students really got the ball rolling for us. None of us had experience with rebranding and what that meant. But working with the Bryan School and all those lovely students was amazing."

After the plan was developed, it became clear the agency needed on-the-ground support to implement all the changes. "As a nonprofit, you don't have all the resources in the world, and all our funds are devoted to what we do in programming," Jefcoat says.

Jones stepped up, learning quickly and working 10-15 hours a week to make it all happen. Her work included helping to develop a visual representation of the brand, redesign the website, plan events, and assist with social media, email marketing, and even a billboard.

Now pursuing an MBA at the Bryan School, Jones says the internship also showed her the importance of having a consistent brand voice in an organization. As a result, she helped develop a list of marketing dos and don'ts, which the GCPA team can rely on after she leaves.

"It's one thing to study marketing in the classroom, but it's another to apply the skills I have learned to support an organization that serves children and families in such an important way," Jones says. "Seeing my work make a real difference at GCPA has been incredibly meaningful."

Her career goal is to lead a marketing team at a company or organization, and she believes this internship has prepared her well for this possibility while also helping her make an impact.

"Gaining experience while contributing to a mission I deeply believe in has been so rewarding," she adds. "I'm proud to have played a role in helping GCPA share its story." ■

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ABOUT GCPA: WHY EARLY INTERVENTION MATTERS

- Eighty percent of a child's brain develops by age 3.
- GCPA targets that timeframe, providing therapeutic childcare for infants and toddlers with developmental differences and special needs.
- Trained staff and therapists work six hours a day with children in four classrooms at Gateway Education Center. A summer program is also offered.
- Annually, the program serves about 50 children with autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and other special needs.

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ALICE JONES '24
MBA Candidate