

Our Story

After 26 years in the field of education field, I made one of the toughest decisions I have ever had to make. Having held various positions from teacher to administrator in the public school system, I decided leave my public school career to embark on this amazing new journey.

When I moved to Virginia from Delaware, I began a teaching children with **autism and other special needs**. It proved to be the most frustrating and eventually, the most rewarding assignment. Through training and the help of many kind people, I found that my frustration was replaced by fascination for the amazing kids that I was teaching. Kids that I once thought were oblivious to my presence were engaging with me and developing not only academic skills, but social skills. I found myself laughing with them instead of crying because of them. I actually started to like these kids, a lot!



Over the next several years, I realized that these wonderful kids needed more than what they were able to get from the public system alone. They needed skills to engage in the outside world without melting down or tantruming. Not everyone gets to see them the way God has allowed me to. Many people see them in sensory overloaded environments and task them with things that seem intrinsic and natural to everyone else. So these great kids get labeled as bad or not able to learn. I have taught some of the most intelligent, creative and loving kids around; kids who have talents and abilities that could possibly go unseen and under-utilized if our businesses and communities are not educated and equipped to successfully engage with them let alone, employ them.

One day at church, in the middle of yet another sermon encouraging us to walk in faith, I saw the building in my mind—a comprehensive center that provides **advocacy, tutoring, social skills training, pre-employment skills and job coaching**. It's a place for the whole family to receive education and training in a supportive community.

The Vision in Action:

The Hitching Post Educational Center, a non-profit organization, shares a building with Hickory Trading Company, a rustic little coffee shop and artisan gift shop that features the best coffee in town and some of the area's most talented artists and small business entrepreneurs who have come together to support the Education Center. **Students from elementary level to post graduation will receive tutoring, social skills training, life skills training and pre-employment training/ Job Coaching all in one integrated location. Older students can receive on-the-job support and job coaching through the retail side of the business with specially trained staff to support and equip them with the skills they need to succeed in the workplace.** Having honed their social skills and job skills, they will be equipped for successful employment. Additionally, we offer Special Education Advocacy, Arts and Crafts sessions and Parent Training Workshops.

The charming Tree House, once our primary location, is now home to many events for both The Hitching Post Educational Center and Hickory Trading



Company. Our Tree House is equipped with Anderson windows, heat and air-conditioning and a suspension bridge...thanks to my amazing husband who is supportive in not only words but actions.