

Safety and Heroism



CASWELL DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER GROUP AWARD Department of Health and Human Services

(From left) *Contrina Smith, Autumn Burton, Tabitha Chapman, Matthew Roberts, Sabrina Edwards, Labrenda Edmonson, Rasheeda Whitehurst and John Streeter; (not pictured) Tisha Sherrod.*

On February 28, 2023, the kitchen at the Caswell Developmental Center's Kendall 103 facility caught fire. As the fire alarms blared, the facility's eight residential staff – Autumn Burton, Tabitha Chapman, Labrenda Edmonson, Sabrina Edwards, Matthew Roberts, Tisha Sherrod, Contrina Smith and Rasheeda Whitehurst – sprang into action. The staff acted with urgency and dedication as they evaluated at-risk residents in multiple facilities. The staff's efforts were valiant; they compassionately and carefully evacuated non-ambulatory residents, many of whom did not understand the severity of the situation. The staff members remained patient and thoughtful, prioritizing the care of residents even when their safety was at risk.

As the Kendall 103 staff worked to move residents to safety, John Streeter, an HVAC technician at the Caswell Developmental Center, sought out the source of the fire. Streeter made his way through the smoke-filled building, entered the kitchen and found a burning control box on top of the refrigerator. Streeter located a fire extinguisher and attempted to control the blaze as flames crept toward the ceiling. He returned to disperse a second fire extinguisher, managing to slow the fire's progress enough to buy the rest of the staff time as they evacuated the residents. Streeter's fast-acting, selfless response was enough to limit the fire's impact until the Kinston Department of Fire and Rescue arrived.



Autumn Burton, Tabitha Chapman, Labrenda Edmonson, Sabrina Edwards, Matthew Roberts, Tisha Sherrod, Contrina Smith, John Streeter and Rasheeda Whitehurst saved the lives of the nine residents in Kendall 103. Each honoree risked their own safety to prioritize the well-being of residents who were unable to care for or defend themselves. The State of North Carolina is honored to be represented by such exceptional employees.