



**GULF COAST TEACHING
FAMILY SERVICES, INC.**

www.GCTFS.org

Touching Lives

Issue 3 - Fall 2010

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Robert Goes to Congress

Last April, something very significant happened once again on Capital Hill, as it does every year, when self-advocates converged on Washington DC. They came from all parts of America, to once again plead their cause, and fight for their rights and the rights of all individuals that have intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Among those very “special” constituents, was Robert Berggreen, a self-advocate from our Adult Day Habilitation Center, a program for adults with disabilities that

assists them in cultivating their creative and social talents through daily activities. This program encourages participants to make important contributions to their community and improve their quality of life.

Going to DC

Each year, when Robert makes this most memorable journey, along with his parents, Leo and Madeline Berggreen, it is as if he were experiencing it all over again for the very first time.

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Christmas Art Contest

Although the weather has been balmy, GCTFS recently asked our clients to think “Winter Wonderland” and enter our 2nd annual Christmas Art Contest.



“Twas the Night” by Spencer,
Therapeutic Foster Care Program

During the month of September, our clients let their creative juices flow. Many clients worked on their art at the office and at home, while some of our Day Habilitation clients worked on their art as a project.

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Ritz Cracker Pie

(Courtesy of Gloria Ethridge, GCTFS Baton Rouge Regional Director)

Ingredients

- 3 egg whites
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- ½ pint whipped cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 small Hershey’s bar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 21 crumbled Ritz crackers

Directions

- Beat the egg whites until stiff.
- Add 1 cup sugar, vanilla, baking powder. Keep beating the mixture.
- Fold in the Ritz crackers and chopped nuts.
- Grease a pie dish with butter and pour the batter.
- Bake for 25 minutes in a 350°F oven.
- Let the pie cool for 30 minutes before covering with the whipped cream and 1 tablespoon sugar. Sprinkle grated Hershey’s chocolate on top.

Enjoy!



Q&A with Misty



Misty has been a client of our NOW program for the past two years. She was found at 4 months old, abandoned and with several physical problems, including hydrocephalus and spina bifida. Misty was taken in by a family who later adopted her. She faced multiple challenges growing up; doctors were very pessimistic

about her condition, but her mother's faith carried her through all those obstacles. Misty has grown up to be an admirable person who enjoys studying the Bible and singing gospel.

What do you do for fun?

I like to play "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" on the computer.

What is your favorite book?

"Order in the Courts" by Paul Wilbur.

What is your favorite movie?

"The Ten Commandments" with Charlton Heston.

What is your favorite TV show?

"The Love Boat" and "Magnum PI." I like to watch the DVDs.

What is your favorite song?

"Show Me Your Face" interpreted by Paul Wilbur.

What is your favorite dish?

The meat pies from City Cafe

What is your favorite holiday?

I like Christmas because of Jesus and I get to open gifts.

What is your favorite place in Baton Rouge?

The USS KIDD because soldiers served on it.

Which person (dead, alive or fictional) would you like to meet?

Gavin McLeod (who plays the ship's Captain on "The Love Boat")

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you like to go?

I would like to go back to Israel (Misty had the chance to visit that country when she was a teenager).

What are you thankful for this coming Thanksgiving?

I am thankful to be alive and that both my parents have good health.

What did you ask Santa for this Christmas?

A navy blue ORU (Oral Roberts University) sweatshirt.

Contributors

Madeline Berggreen Pat Landry
Gloria Ethridge Kristi Martin
Natacha Krzesaj April Schaff

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Gulf Coast In Home Care can provide you or your loved one with:

- Companionship
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A Wish Come True

Lee Andre is like most eight year old boys. He likes skating, spending time with his brothers, and hanging out at the mall. He has dreams of going to college and becoming an engineer. On July 28, 2010, one of Lee Andre's other dreams came true. Up until that day, Lee Andre was a foster child. On July 28, he was legally adopted by his new mom, Ms. Shirley H.

Shirley describes Lee Andre as a very affectionate and kind hearted child, and she says she cannot imagine her life without him. Lee Andre literally jumps for joy when he talks about his adoption and when you ask him what makes Shirley such a great mom, he is quick to say "she loves me and she takes care of me". Shirley started fostering children in her home seven years ago, and today, she has one adopted son and one foster boy in addition to Lee Andre. Shirley says she hopes to see Lee Andre get a good education, go to college, and follow his dream of becoming an engineer.



Lee Andre and Shirley

It is clear to see that Lee Andre has been a gift in Shirley's life, and she is proud to have an impact on his future. And there is no question as to the gift Shirley has given Lee Andre. When asked how he felt when finding out Shirley wanted to adopt him, Lee Andre's smile lights up the room as he replies, "I felt loved and very happy".

There are always special kids in need of good homes in foster care programs throughout the country. At Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services, we operate a Therapeutic Foster Care Program that provides homes in the community with specially trained foster parents for abused, neglected, or troubled children and adolescents, as well as for children with physical and/or mental disabilities. If you have any interest in becoming a foster parent, please call our office at (225) 201-0696.



The #1 Overlooked Tax Deduction

The 2010 tax season is almost here. While you are crunching numbers and flipping through receipts, let's have a look at the most overlooked tax deduction that can be used by anyone.

We all have unused clothes or furniture in and around our home that can be donated to community charities, but did you know that vehicle donations can also get you a considerable deduction while helping local non-profit organizations like GCTFS?

"Gifts To Charity" has been a part of the IRS form Schedule A for a while, but many people just skip this section. Do you know that you can claim fair market value for non-cash charitable donations? Vehicles donated to GCTFS have the potential for a substantial fair market value and that could mean significant savings on your bill from Uncle Sam.

The process is easy. We make all the arrangements for the free pick-up of your vehicle by a local towing company. We also provide all of the documentation so you will have everything you need to file your taxes next year.

Call our Donations Department at (225) 201-AUTO for more information.

Your Holiday Shopping is more meaningful with Albertson's Community Partners

There is no cost to get involved and Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services will benefit greatly with your help.

Just cut out the card below and scan it at check out each time you shop at Albertson's. Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services will earn 1% of your shopping each time you scan this card.

Free key fobs are also available at www.gctfs.org/albertsons.php



Christmas Art Contest *(continued)*

By the end of September, almost thirty entries had poured into the office.

Awarding the prizes

On October 5th, three independent judges, Julie Barfield, Debbie Kuehne, and Susan DeMers, selected winners in ten artistic categories and three entries were selected



Julie Barfield, Debbie Kuehne, and Susan DeMers

for the top honors. Some of the categories included Artistic Merit, Best Sports Themed

Entry, Best Traditional Christmas Scene, and Best Spiritual Representation of the Season. "There were so many great entries to choose from," said Ms. Barfield. "It was wonderful to see the clients' creativity on display."

Celebrating the artists

A special "Christmas party" was held Friday, October 8th, at the BREC facility on Jefferson Highway, where the winners were announced. Clients, employees, and guests were served Christmas cake and lemonade, while Christmas music played. There was dancing, fun, and fellowship. The announcement of the contest participants, category winners, and top entries was met with thunderous applause and warm smiles. "It was really nice to see how excited the clients were to hear their names called," said Kristy Prattini, a GCTFS office staff member. Each participant was awarded a certificate, given a prize, and asked to pose for a photo op. Julie Barfield, one of the judges, attended the party and said that "it was heartwarming

to see the artists that we judged so happy when they were recognized. I was glad to be a small part of the process."

Several of the entries will be scanned to create Christmas cards. One card will serve as the official Christmas card of the Baton Rouge office and will be sent to our community contacts.



Carolyn, Overall Contest Winner

Cards for sale!

Christmas cards can be purchased by the public either at the GCTFS office, located at 5850 Florida Boulevard in Baton Rouge or on our website at www.gctfs.org/christmas.

Proceeds from the sale of the cards will go to support GCTFS programs.



Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services, Inc.

5850 Florida Boulevard
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Robert Goes to Congress *(continued)*

The anticipation of everything that will be happening finds him walking around with a constant smile on his face, especially when he once again sees all the friends he has come to know, both advocates and self-advocates alike, as it gives him a real sense of community, which is something often lost to folks like Robert.

Advocacy runs in the family

Advocacy has always been a strong part of the Berggreen family, going as far back as Leo's childhood days, having been blessed with his older brother, Nick, who was born with Cerebral Palsy. Leo's unique experiences in the area of disabilities pushed him to become a strong voice in the ARC of Baton Rouge, the ARC of Louisiana, and finally to be elected President of the ARC of the United States. In his current profession, as an attorney in private practice, a large number of his clients are individuals with a wide spectrum of disabilities. However,

Leo says when he accompanies Robert on his journey to Capital Hill to visit his congressman, his most important role at that moment, is to just be Robert's dad.



Robert and Congressman Charlie Melancon

Meeting Charlie Melancon

Robert was warmly welcomed by U.S. Representative Charles Melancon, and they had a great visit. Representative Melancon commented on Robert's Baton Rouge Fire

Department hat he was wearing that day, asking him if he knew what firemen did. Robert, smiling back at him in his usual warm way, confidently replied "They fire people". Well, the Congressman loved it!

Upon leaving his office, Robert thanked him for agreeing to co-sponsor the bills that will help bring about the needed changes that will greatly enhance the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in this country. Robert and his delegation were also able to visit with the staff of U.S. Representative Bill Cassidy on that same day, and received an equally warm welcome from them.

Robert and his parents returned home with a tremendous feeling of satisfaction, and he was very anxious to give an account to everyone of how successful the trip had been, but especially to his two sisters, Lori and Dana.