



Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services, Inc. is now doing business as Gulf Coast Social Services

Touching Lives

Issue 5 - Spring 2011

In this issue

- Spring Activities Make for Good Times at GCSS
- Louisiana Coordinated System of Care
- 5 Useful Tips to Improve your Gas Mileage
- Tuesdays with Kevin
- Cool Summer Slush
- Getting Life Back on Track

Spring Activities Make for Good Times at GCSS

Spring is always a busy time for GCSS clients and staff. Some of our school-age clients are occupied with Spring Break vacations and looking towards final exams, while others are involved in extra-curricular activities like the Special Olympics. Every year our staff tries to plan a few recreational spring activities that will allow the Gulf Coast Social Services family to get together, enjoy some good fun, and share a laugh or two.



Cherie having a great time fishing!

The annual Fishing Rodeo and Picnic started off this year's spring festivities on March 19 at the Waddill Wildlife Center.

(Continued on page 3)

Louisiana Coordinated System of Care

Some of you may have read about the Governor's initiative to develop a Louisiana Coordinated System of Care (CSoC) for Louisiana's at risk children and their families. This evidence-based approach is actually part of a national movement, the National Wraparound Initiative.

Community stakeholders and collaborative partners in each Region of the state have been encouraged to partner together in an effort to respond to the Governor's Request for Proposal. Capital Area Human Services District facilitated the process of planning meetings and enabling stakeholders and collaborators to join together in making decisions in DHH Region 2. Everyone in the Region was invited to participate.

(Continued on page 2)

5 Useful Tips to Improve your Gas Mileage

This year, we are seeing extreme increases in the price of oil. This means that we are all paying a lot more when we reluctantly pull into the service station to fill up. Although there is not much we can do about oil prices, there are better driving habits we can adopt that can help us consume less fuel whenever we get on the road. According to AAA, here are five tips that can save you some money until the prices begin to relax a little:

- Clean out your car!** Carrying less weight will help lower your gas consumption
- Check your tire pressure!** Under-inflated tires can lower your gas mileage: look on the inside of your vehicle's door for the recommended pressure
- Tune it up!** A well-maintained vehicle will run more efficiently
- Slow down!** Once your vehicle hits a speed of 50-55 mph, your GPM (gallons per mile) will increase exponentially
- Resist fast starts and screeching halts!** Accelerate and brake smoothly for higher gas performance

Although this will not completely save you from high prices, it will help lower your cost and make you a safer driver. If you are looking to upgrade your gas guzzler to a more fuel-efficient model, consider donating your old car to GCSS. Call us at 201-AUTO or visit www.TowForFree.com for more details!

Tuesdays with Kevin



Kevin Baronne, a client of our Supervised Independent Living (SIL) program—a service for adults with disabilities that enables them to live independently in the community—started a support group for young adults with disabilities that meets once a month on Tuesdays.

Kevin, who has Cerebral Palsy, is a bright young man. He holds an Associate Degree from Louisiana Technical College, and was working for Chase Bank until they moved their operations to Texas. He is an Eagle Scout and is very involved with his church through their Young Adult Youth Ministry Team.

Kevin initiated those meetings so “young adults who are disabled, but work in the community” can socialize, share their experiences, and plan group activities. The recently formed group hopes to grow fast, reaching out to the community through flyers, calendar listings, local media and very soon a Facebook page.

Kevin feels a lot of the activities available for people with disabilities are geared to either children and teens or senior citizens. He started the support group to fill this void and offer young adults an opportunity to discuss topics relevant to their age group like dating, socializing, job searching, transportation, or bullying. Kevin mentioned that lack of self-esteem is an issue faced by a lot of his peers that often leads to depression. Kevin hopes that by sharing their experiences, group members will be able to learn from each other how to handle conflicts and rejection so they can bounce back and grow stronger instead of quietly withdrawing into themselves.

If you are interested in joining the group, or know someone who would benefit from it, please contact Kevin at kevinbaronne@yahoo.com.

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Louisiana CSoC *(continued)*

This is the first time a system like this has been attempted in Louisiana, and it is a very exciting adventure with great possibility!

Gulf Coast Social Services (GCSS) embraced the process that invited numerous community stakeholders and partner agencies to collaborate with State Agencies including:

- the Governor's Office
- the Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ)
- the Department of Social Services (DSS)
- the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH)
- the Louisiana Department of Education
- Capital Area Human Services Districts (CAHSD)

GCSS has been very involved in the planning meetings, and our Regional Director, Ms. Gloria Ethridge, served on the selection committee that designated Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge as the Family Support Organization (FSO) and NHS Human Services as the Wraparound Agency. Both organizations will provide excellent leadership in the DHH Region 2 for our Wraparound Initiative.

GCSS is excited about being a part of the mechanism to transform our local system of care for youth and families! We look forward to expanding our capacity as mental health providers, as well as our services as a Medicaid provider as opportunities present themselves.

For more information on the CSoC, please visit their website at www.dss.la.gov/csoc.

Spring Activities *(continued)*

This was the 15th year the event has been celebrated as GCSS continued to partner with the Exchange Club of Baton Rouge to offer our clients a great day of fishing, games, prizes, and food.



Ernie and Lisa at the picnic

The weather was perfect, the fish were biting, and the crowd was large. Everyone enjoyed bingo, barbecue, face painting, and balloon animals from Bubbles the Clown. This annual event is something our clients and workers look forward to every year and it is through hard work and partnerships with groups like the Waddill Wildlife Center, the Exchange Club of Baton Rouge, and Coca-Cola of Baton Rouge that we were able to make the day so much fun. A huge “thank you” to all our supporters!

On March 25 you could find our clients and staff moving and grooving at the BREC Park on Jefferson



Michelle and Laurette all dressed up

Highway. “DJ Jazzy Pat” was spinning modern jams and old school classics, while our clients showed off their best dance moves. A photo area was also set up, offering guests the chance to dress up in feather boas, disco wigs, and other crazy props. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but our dance photos were truly priceless—and can be viewed on our Facebook page! Between the limbo and the electric slide, our gang had a blast on the dance floor: we can’t wait to plan another dance this Fall.

And, last but not least, it would not be Spring time without a visit from the Easter Bunny! On Friday, April 15, our clients were waiting, baskets in hand, to find all the Easter eggs hidden in the back lot of our office on Florida Boulevard.



Linda and the Easter Bunny

Some lucky hunters found eggs with special surprises inside and everyone enjoyed a free lunch. Thanks to a generous donation from a friend in the community, everyone who participated in the egg hunt received a Beanie Baby to take home as a gift, and this thoughtful treat brought a smile to many faces. The whole crowd was delighted when the Easter Bunny “hopped” by to say hello and take a few pictures. It was a great day to be outside and enjoy the beautiful weather, and we truly hope to make this an annual event.

Cool Summer Slush

(Courtesy of Kathy Blackman, GCSS Program Director)

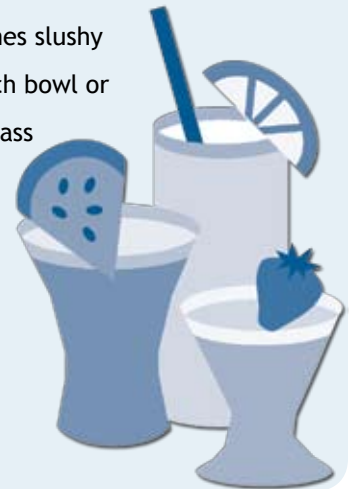
Ingredients

- ⊕ 4 cups pineapple juice
- ⊕ 1/2 cup sugar
- ⊕ 1 can frozen concentrated orange juice
- ⊕ 1 can water (using the orange juice can)
- ⊕ Juice from 1 large jar of maraschino cherries (cherries can be added if desired)
- ⊕ 1 2-liter bottle of Sprite or 7UP

Directions

- ⊕ Mix all ingredients in a large bowl
- ⊕ Pour liquid in a freezer-safe container
- ⊕ Place in freezer until mixture becomes slushy
- ⊕ Serve in a punch bowl or directly into glass

Enjoy!



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Getting Life Back on Track

GCSS offers mentoring and tracker services to youth under the Office of Juvenile Justice's (OJJ) supervision, facilitating their reintegration in the community. Devin is a young man our Trackers team worked with over the past few months, and he has seen tremendous positive changes in his life due to the program. Devin offered to write this article and share his story.

When I was first placed in the tracker program by my probation officer, I was living in a group home. We were often hungry and couldn't get our hair cuts and supplies and materials for school. When my trackers, Mr. Jackson, Ms. Chris, and Mr. Scott came into my life I was ready to run away. I couldn't take it anymore. But Mr. Jackson started talking to me about college, he started coming to my basketball practices and games and talking to me man to man, and telling me how important it was for me not to run away because I had too much

to loose. He would make sure I had a hair cut each week and all the supplies I needed for school. I'm a straight A student and I almost gave it all up.



Ms. Chris would come to the group home with cereal, milk, peanut butter,

bread, chips and juice every week. And it was always enough for me and my roommate, who was not in the tracker program. Everyday she would ask about homework and are we doing what we need to do at the group home. She never focused on why we were on probation, but instead she always wanted us to get our education and she helped us get our home passes for the weekend.

Mr. Scottie would come to my games with Mr. Jackson and he always had a story to tell. These three people have been very important in my life. Next week I will graduate and this summer begin college at ULL. If it wasn't for them I may have run away from the group home and still be running today.

I know this story was supposed to be about me, but I wanted everyone to know about them. I spent two sessions in the tracker program and I appreciate what they did for me.