Gulf Coast Social Services

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

Touching Lives

Issue 6 - 2011

# Plans Underway For Holiday Activities, Agency Seeks Community Support

*As the Baton Rouge office prepares for the 2011 holiday season, we look to community partners to help make the holidays special for consumers and youth*

It may seem silly to be planning for Christmas when the thermometer reads 100 degrees, but that is exactly what the staff of GCSS has been busy doing. "October thru December is always such a busy time for us, we have to start planning early" said Regional Director, Gloria Ethridge. "We want to provide as many fun activities as we can for our consumers, but it takes time and resources." The holiday season kicks off in early September with the annual Christmas card contest and sale. Consumers, Foster children, and Tracker youth submit original artwork with a chance of having their artwork chosen as the official Christmas card of the GCSS BR office. In addition to the overall winner there are ten other categories of distinction and all of the participants are celebrated at an end-of-contest party in October. The cards will be available for purchase through the agency website, www.gctfs.org, starting in early November. 100% of the proceeds go to the client assistance fund to assist clients in need.

In addition to the card contest, the Baton Rouge office holds a potluck lunch for consumers and staff in November, as well as an annual Christmas party in early December. While the costs of the Christmas party are deemed a necessity, events like the potluck lunch are at the mercy of available funds. We have been fortunate in the past to partner with or receive donations from groups like Coca-Cola of Baton Rouge, St. George Church, the Baton Rouge Bar Assoication, Hammonds & Sills, Kleinpeter Dairy, Allied Waste Services, and many other private donors. In addition to receiving gifts we also try to give back with our annual food drive in support of the Baton Rouge Food Bank.

If you are looking for a way to give for the 2011 holidays, we ask that you consider Gulf Coast Social Services. We are always in need of extra funds to help with Christmas gifts and food for our less fortunate consumers, Foster children, and Tracker youth. Other donations, such as food, drinks, and paper goods, would also be a huge support for our potluck luncheon in November. For more information on donating, please call (225) 201-0696. *Donor documentation available for tax deductions.

Lawyers from the office of Hammond and Sills pose with Mike Ecuyer, TFC Program Director.

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## On The Right Track

***An Interview with Tracker Program Director, Anthony Jackson***

Anthony Jackson, Program Director for GCSS' youth Tracker/Mentor program was asked to share some information about his program.

*Q. What is the Tracker's program and why is it important?*

A. The Trackers program assists youth who have been in custody transition back into the community once they have been released. The program offers kids the opportunity to have an advocate; someone who will support their efforts to do the right thing. We spend only 90 days with the youth in the program, but we expect big results. We would love to have more time to mentor these kids.

*Q. What is a typical day like for a tracker staff?*

A. We conduct fact to face visits with the youth at their school, home, or place of employment. We question them daily about any changes going on in their lives, if there are any particular needs or concerns they have, and how they are dealing with the transition.

*Q. In the last newsletter, we read a letter from one of your past youth who graduated high school and will soon begin college. This must be gratifying for you.*

A. We get gratification daily from helping youth succeed. Several youth remain in contact with us after leaving the program, asking if they can get back in the program or just to let us know how they are doing. It's good to know that you've touched others' lives. A young lady who graduated from the program, volunteers by speaking to other youth. She was very resistant to the program when she entered, but made a personal decision to accept the program and succeeded. She has been successful at reaching youth because she speaks on their level and they respect her for sharing her experiences.

*Q. How do you know which ones you are able to reach?*

A. Working with kids daily, you kind of know which ones are there because they have to be there and those who really want the help. Ultimately, those that want to change are going to have to make the hard decisions themselves to help them succeed.

*Q. What advice would you give to parents who are having behavior problems with their child?*

A. Don't give up. Get involved early with your child's life and stay involved. Be diligent about what information you what to know.

*Q. Is there something you would like the community to know?*

A. We are looking for community service activities where our youth can give back to the community as well as opportunities for job shadowing and job coaching, where they can learn valuable skills to help them succeed.


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Gulf Coast Social Services

GulfCoastInHomeCare.org

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## Overcoming Obstacles and Living the American Dream

Dawn M., a consumer in the Supported Living (SL) Program in Baton Rouge, decided several years ago that she wanted a piece of the American dream and to become a homeowner. Dawn saved, budgeted and planned with her GCSS Coordinators and direct care staff until she was able to purchase her own home. This newfound independence was a perfect fit for Dawn. She has lovingly cared for her home over the years, living with her cat and hosting friends whenever possible. After hurricane Katrina, she even opened her home for a displaced consumer from the New Orleans region.

Always a hard worker, Dawn rarely missed an opportunity to pick up extra hours at her job downtown with one of the casinos. Unfortunately, after some time in the position, Dawn lost her job and experienced what many other Americans are going through in these tough economic times…unemployment. Initially, she was not too worried, knowing that another position was out there for her. She utilized Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) for assistance in locating another job and tried to keep a positive attitude.

As the months went by, Dawn became more concerned about her ability to pay her mortgage. She also ran into some unexpected expenses with her home when the air conditioner stopped working. When it rains, it really does pour! Fortunately, Dawn was able to borrow money from the Client Assistance Fund, a rainy day fund for Baton Rouge consumers comprised of local donations, and fix the unit.

Through all of the misfortunes, Dawn remained hopeful. One of her direct support employees, Gwenda J., tried very hard to keep up the optimism. Gwenda was there to take Dawn to interviews and encourage her when she would become disheartened. Dawn was also lucky to have an exceptional Coordinator, Wanda R., who helped Dawn renegotiate her mortgage terms to get the note reduced. Wanda was a comforting and steady presence for Dawn throughout the rough times, keeping her budgeted down to the penny!

Through Dawn's sheer determination and the perseverance of many GCSS and LRS staff members, Dawn finally secured a position at a local Goodwill store. She is as happy as she can be and loves to tell people about her new job. Dawn is not only an example to her friends in the SL program, but she shows us all how hard work and a positive attitude can pay off.


**Therapeutic Foster Care**

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Gulf Coast
Social Services

*For more information call 225-201-0696*

Gulf Coast Social Services

5850 Florida Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## 2011-2012 Football Schedule (Tigers, Saints & Jaguars OH MY!)

### LSU TIGERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9/3 | Oregon | 7:00pm |
| 9/10 | **Northwestern St.** | 7:00pm |
| 9/15 | Mississippi State* | 7:00pm |
| 9/24 | West Virginia | TBA |
| 10/1 | **Kentucky*** | TBA |
| 10/8 | **Florida*** | TBA |
| 10/15 | Tennessee | TBA |
| 10/22 | **Auburn*** | TBA |
| 11/5 | Alabama* | TBA |
| 11/12 | **Western Kentucky** Homecoming | TBA |
| 11/19 | Ole Miss* | TBA |
| 11/25 | **Arkansas*** | 1:30pm |
| 12/3 | SEC Championship TBD (if necessary) Georgia Dome | 3:00pm |

Home games in bold
*Conference game

### SAINTS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9/8 | Green Bay | 7:30pm |
| 9/18 | Chicago | 12:00pm |
| 9/25 | Houston | 12:00pm |
| 10/2 | Jacksonville | 12:00pm |
| 10/9 | Carolina | 12:00pm |
| 10/16 | Tampa Bay | 3:15pm |
| 10/23 | Indianapolis | 7:20pm |
| 10/30 | St. Louis | 12:00pm |
| 11/6 | Tampa Bay | 12:00pm |
| 11/13 | Atlanta | 12:00pm* |
| 11/28 | New York | 7:30pm |
| 12/4 | Detroit | 12:00pm* |
| 12/11 | Tennessee | 12:00pm* |
| 12/18 | Minnesota | 12:00pm* |
| 12/26 | Atlanta | 7:30pm |
| 1/1 | Carolina | 12:00pm* |

*Subject to Cox scheduling

### SOUTHERN JAGUARS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9/3 | Tennessee State | 6:00pm |
| 9/10 | **Alabama A&M** | 6:00pm |
| 9/17 | **Jackson State** | 6:00pm |
| 9/24 | Florida A&M | 2:30pm |
| 10/1 | Mississippi Valley State | 2:00pm |
| 10/8 | **Prairie View A&M** | 6:00pm |
| 10/15 | Arkansas – Pine Bluff | 6:00pm |
| 10/29 | **Alcorn State** (Homecoming) | 5:30pm |
| 11/5 | Texas Southern | 6:00pm |
| 11/12 | Alabama State | 1:00pm |
| 11/26 | Grambling State (Superdome) | 1:00pm |

Home games in bold