

# Touching LIVES

Issue 7 - 2012



**Gulf Coast  
Social Services**  
*Personal Care, Quality Outcomes*

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



## DHH Secretary Visits Day Habilitation Program

For several years, Day Habilitation services have been offered at the Baton Rouge Gulf Coast Social Services office. Day Habilitation provides adults with disabilities assistance with developing the social and adaptive skills they need to function within the community. The consumers in the program participate in several different activities, including arts and crafts, group socialization exercises, supervised volunteer experiences, and life-skills training such as shopping, money management, and housekeeping. This program has been a wonderful addition to the Agency, and it has allowed the on-site staff members the opportunity to interact with our talented consumers every day.

On October 21, 2011, the GCSS Baton Rouge Day Habilitation Program received a very special visit. Secretary Bruce Greenstein and Anita Milling from the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) came to experience a day at our facility. That morning, our consumers and staff volunteered at the Baton Rouge Food Bank. Secretary Greenstein worked with a small group of our consumers, providing direct supervision and assistance. In addition to offering the Day Habilitation

consumers a chance to give back to the community, the outing also gave Secretary Greenstein the opportunity to interact directly with our consumers. The experience was inspiring for everyone involved.

In addition to the visit to the food bank, the Day Habilitation consumers worked on a year-long project to support the Battered Women's Shelter. Members of the program launched a campaign to collect cans and recyclables. After turning in the cans to the recycle center, the Day Habilitation consumers invited a representative from the Battered Women's Shelter to their Christmas party and presented her with the funds raised from their project.

Both the recycle project and the food bank trip allowed our Day Habilitation consumers to learn important social skills, but also to teach those around them that having a disability does not limit your life experiences. If you are interested in more information about our Day Habilitation Program, please call (225) 201-0696.



*Regional Director, Gloria Ethridge with  
DHH Secretary Greenstein*



*Day Hab staff members Keisha Wilkins (left) and Kim  
Wright (right) with Secretary Greenstein*



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# DID YOU KNOW?

*GCSS operates a free Activity Center program for GCSS consumers to experience new learning opportunities, encourage social interaction, and make new friends.*



The Activity Center is located on the 2nd floor of the GCSS building and it is open to GCSS consumers during regular office hours (8am-5pm Monday thru Friday).

The Activity Center was facilitated by a grant from the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation in May 2008. The grant allowed us to purchase a television, computers with internet access, educational computer games, board games, books, craft projects, and art supplies. A big Thank You goes out to the Wilson Foundation for their generosity!

Several consumers and their DSW visit the Activity Center daily to take advantage of the supplies and spend time visiting. They play games, surf the internet, and just enjoy each other's company. The Activity Center provides them a safe place to meet old friends and make new ones.

## Your Donation Questions Answered

Many people know that Gulf Coast accepts vehicle donations, but we get lots of questions about how the process works and whether we accept other kinds of donations. We collected some of our most commonly asked questions and set out to give you the answers you need!

### **Do you only accept vehicle donations?**

Actually, we accept all sorts of vehicles: cars, trucks, boats, motorcycles, RVs. We also accept household items in good condition, furniture, clothing in good condition, and monetary donations. All donations are tax deductible and our staff can help you get the tax forms you need.

### **What's the process for vehicle donations?**

The process for donating is very simple and you can find all the important details at [www.TowForFree.com](http://www.TowForFree.com). The website will explain how the process works and what information is required to make a donation. The website even features an online donation application, so you can get started right away. Also, our helpful staff is always available Monday thru Friday 8am-5pm to answer your questions and help you through the process.

### **If I have furniture or household items to donate can I just drop them by the office?**

While we are always thankful for donations that can benefit our consumers, we don't have access to a storage facility to house donations. If you have items you think our consumers might be able to use please call the office and ask to speak to the donations department. Once we hear from you we will start contacting our consumers to see if anyone could use the items. If so, we will work with you to arrange the donation.

### **What if I wanted to donate money? How would the money be used?**

Monetary donations are always encouraged and appreciated! In most cases monetary donations are posted to the Client Assistance Fund, a fund that was created to help clients with emergency needs during hard times. In the past the fund has been used to help purchase medicines, eye glasses, air conditioning units, and clothing. In some cases, donors prefer to donate to a specific program like Day Habilitation, Trackers, or Foster Care. If you are interested in donating to a specific program, please contact the donations department and make your wishes clear.

**Your donations are very important to our consumers and programs, so we hope to make your donor experience a positive one. You can call (225) 201-2886 to donate, and always feel free to contact us with questions.**

**Congratulations to Anthony Jackson and the trackers staff on your program contract renewal and the success of your program!**



**You are making a positive difference in our community!**

**The Trackers Program** is a community-based program that provides goal directed, highly structured, mentoring and tracker services to youth under the Office of Juvenile Justice's (OJJ) supervision or custody.

## Program Wish List

### Activity Center Needs:

A television set (29" or larger); a sound system or nice radio; art supplies; different size paint canvases; Wii games; microwave; educational materials or teaching tools; chalk board & chalk; new or gently used children's books; family-friendly CDs and video tapes; exercise videos; pencils; ink pens; computer printers; Office Depot gift cards to purchase ink cartridges

### Trackers Needs:

School supplies; toiletry items; fast food gift cards; donations towards YMCA memberships

### Caregivers Needs:

Adult diapers, fleece throws; flash lights with batteries; toiletry items (soap, shampoo, conditioner, unscented baby lotion and Vaseline)

### Waiver Program Needs:

Gift cards to Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Target ,or Lowes; pots & pans; household items; cleaning supplies; box fans; bed sheets; heaters; throws/blankets; adult diapers/pull-ups (Med/Large/XLarge)

### Day Habilitation Needs:

Gift cards to Wal-Mart, Louisiana Nursery, Hobby Lobby, Michaels, or School Aides; art supplies; dry erase boards & markers; bulletin boards; craft paints; craft projects; hand sanitizer; pencil sharpeners

### Therapeutic Foster Care Needs:

Assorted school supplies; donations towards youth summer camps for TFC children; gift cards to McDonalds, Wendy's, Popeye's, Ryan's, or Piccadilly; gift cards to Wal-mart or Young Fashions to purchase school uniforms



## Therapeutic Foster Care

Open your heart and home  
and help change a life.

For more information call 225-201-0696

## An Interview with DSW Janice Williams



The heart of our services lie with our Direct Service Workers (DSW). Every day these individuals ensure that our consumers are doing whatever is necessary to meet their dreams and goals. We would like to introduce

you to one of these individuals who will explain what it takes to be a DSW and some of the rewards you get from the job.

Janice Williams has been employed by Gulf Coast Social Services since May of 2011 and has worked with the same consumer since her employment began. She tells us what it's like to be a DSW.

### What drove you to become a DSW?

I took care of my grandmother and great-grandmother and really liked the feeling I got so after being a substitute teacher for years, I decided to work with kids in a different setting. I really enjoy seeing him smile after I helped him.

### What is the most rewarding part of your job?

When the person I'm working with says "Thank you" for the smallest deed and showing appreciation to you for helping them.

### How has Gulf Coast Social Services helped you in reaching your dreams?

Gulf Coast gave me the opportunity to work as a DSW and I was able to work with a great consumer with good hours.

### What would you say to people who are thinking of working in this field?

Make sure you have the heart, are compassionate, and are very patient.

### What are some of the challenges you face?

I haven't run across any and I like what I do so that makes my job easy.

### What advice do you have for current DSWs?

Take your job seriously. Be honest and trustworthy about your work. Always have a caring attitude and never forget that these services are for the consumers, not you.

Thank you, Ms. Janice...and thank you to all of our hard-working DSWs!



# Gulf Coast Social Services

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## 2011: A Year of Challenge & Change

As we look forward to the possibilities awaiting us in 2012, we look back at 2011 as a year full of ups and downs.

### **FACING THE CHALLENGES**

The beginning of the year found our agency facing more Medicaid rate cuts, which left us looking for ways to save. Central Office worked hard to ensure that all the regions were able to continue to provide the highest quality services by making the most of the resources available. On a regional level, we worked to increase our fundraising efforts and to expand our programs. As an agency we know we could face more cuts in 2012, but we have taken steps to prepare for change and meet the new challenges head on!

### **HELLOS AND GOODBYES**

Growth in the Day Habilitation Program led to a need for additional staff, so we were thrilled to welcome LaQuitta Morris and Kimberly Bell to the office staff. The Waiver staff welcomed NOW Coordinators Adrian Joseph and Kathleen Benedetto to the team, as well as Supported Living Coordinators Maxine Chatman and Stephanie Spann-Gilmore. Tara Davenport joined the Central Office staff housed at the BR office, and Chris Ann Coughlin was hired as the newest Administrative Assistant. In addition to the office staff we had 37 Direct Service Workers who were hired in 2011 and still remain with our region as of December 2011.

With heavy hearts we mourned the passing of consumers Troy B. and Gloria B. Troy and Gloria had both been members of the Gulf Coast family for several years and their smiling faces are sorely missed.

### **FUN TIMES**

Despite the budget challenges, we tried very hard to continue making consumer events a priority. The Annual Fishing Rodeo and Picnic took place on March 19, and the following weekend we hosted a consumer dance. We celebrated spring with an Easter egg hunt and picnic, and the 4th of July was the perfect time for a barbeque at the office. The 2011 Christmas card contest was a hit, with over 40 entries submitted. The contest winner was Ashley K., and Ashley and all the contest participants were celebrated at a party on October 20. Plans for the 2012 events are already underway, so look for upcoming news about consumer events.

In 2012 we are bound to face new challenges and find new opportunities to celebrate. The success of our agency is directly related to the commitment and flexibility of our administration, supervisors, support staff, and direct service workers. Thank you to everyone who helped us offer quality services in 2011!