

current SOLUTIONS

Winter 2007



GCSS

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Together We Will Make A Difference!

Your special gifts help GCSS do extra things for many of our consumers in need.

Please consider making your most generous contribution today.

...ringing in a joyous New Year

Michael's Big Adventure !

Michael Haney, one of the people with a developmental disability we support, recently went on a big adventure with his Adult Foster Care support provider Lois Thomas.

Michael and Lois went to California which provided him with an abundance of "firsts." For the first time, Michael flew on a plane, checked his own luggage, rode a bus and a trolley, ate at a variety of restaurants and saw the ocean for the first time.

While on the plane Michael started laughing. Lois asked him why he was laughing, and Michael exclaimed "Happy!" Lois smiled and gave him a big hug.



Michael Haney, a GCSS individual in our Adult Foster Care and day program, rides a bus for the first time

Fostering Independence

In April Michael moved from a group home and now lives with Adult Foster Care provider Lois Thomas. Michael has learned a lot and greatly improved his social skills in a short period of time.

In addition to now knowing how to pack his own luggage for trips, Michael does chores at home, does his own laundry and house cleaning, selects and purchases his own groceries at the self check out, cooks then washes his own dishes. Michael says his favorite things to cook are "pizza, spaghetti, waffles and sausages."



When asked how it makes him feel to now be so much more independent, Michael says "Happy!"

By all indications, Michael is a proud, happy person.

Pictured are Lois Thomas and Michael Haney.

Leadership and Advocacy

Happy New Year Families and Friends;

I hope everyone had a great holiday.

With the new year comes the beginning of the new legislative session which starts on January 8th. The session runs for 40 legislative days.



GCSS Parent and Advocate Heidi Fernandez with her 13-year-old son, Andrew, who has autism

If you are unsure who your legislators are go to www.vote-smart.org.

Disability Day at the Capitol is February 22, 2007. You can register at www.gcdd.org. This is a great opportunity to talk with your legislators and advocates from all over Georgia.

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities has put together a great booklet called "Understanding the Medicaid Waiver". You can view a copy by going to: www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/MedicaidWaiverManual.pdf

During the session I will be sending out email Action Alerts. To ensure that you receive the Action Alerts and other important updates -- please send me an email with your name, contact information and most importantly your email address to:

Advocacy@gacommunity.org

*Thank you so much,
Heidi Fernandez
GCSS Parent and Advocate*

Remember -- knowledge is power. To request receipt of our email Action Alerts or telephone updates, contact Heidi at:

**404-634-4222 Ext. 550 or
Advocacy@gacommunity.org**

Great Job Guys!

Did you notice the cool holiday card you received from GCSS?

For the second year GCSS custom designed the card. For the first time some of our guys with disabilities did all of the printing, assembly, stuffing and sealing envelopes.

Our thanks to the guys pictured left to right for all of their help and cost-effective hard work: DeMarkus McCrary, Mike Oberdorfer, Seth Kaiserman, Mike Hampton, Tavoris Hendrix, and not pictured Donald Langley.

Meaningful, paid work is deeply important to the people GCSS serves. If you and your company have project work and are willing and able to help -- we'd love to explore possibilities with you. Please contact Community Relations at 404-634-4222 Ext 250.



Special Thanks to the following for their major support of \$1,000 or more this past quarter

Carrabba's Italian Grill
in Kennesaw

IDPromotional.com

Bruce Edens

Bob Burg

Russell Corporation

SunTrust Atlanta
Foundation

Women's Basketball
Coaches Association

Anonymous

Celebrating Holidays

This year GCSS's all-volunteer Excitement Committee, and members of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, adopted 56 of the people in need we serve to ensure they received holiday gifts and joy.

The Excitement Committee threw a "Holidays Around the World" party



Although we celebrate holidays around the world, Santa presents gifts to Lurlene Milner

Pictured with Santa is Lurlene Milner, one of the people we serve through our Family Support Respite Services. Granddaughter Lurlene lives with her grandmother, also named Lurlene. Grandmother Lurlene is quick to say how much she appreciates the respite breaks provided for her by GCSS. Everyone needs and deserves a break from the day-to-day caretaking of a loved one with a disability, especially a grandmother. Recently Grandmother Lurlene was honored by her church, Cascade United Methodist, for serving communion for twenty years. Congratulations Grandmother Lurlene!

To learn more about the Excitement Committee, please call Community Relations 404-634-4222 ext 370.

Why give? ...and ways to give

Each year, GCSS supports over 2,500 children and adults in 11 metro Atlanta counties. Your special gifts -- large and small -- help us help people like those highlighted in our feature stories.

* In addition to cash, you can make a credit card gift at our website by clicking on *Make a Gift*

* And we can accept stock gifts

Please call if you have questions or would like assistance 404-634-4222 Ext 250

Message from Whitney

A Sense of Belonging

In the cold of winter, the thing that warms me most is the feeling of belonging that comes from being with my family and friends and the support I receive from those around me. This season continues to prove that there is no exception for me in the essential part of life.



Whitney Fuchs
GCSS Executive Director

season passes and the roles we play in this support change as well.

For the people we support, the need for acceptance is no different than that of our own. With the appearance of support staff to take over some (or all) of the duties that family and friends have typically provided, the intensity of the relationships fade and change. Too often people with disabilities are left out of the social groups that help fulfill this need as their relationships with family and friends change over time.

The challenge faced by people with disabilities in participating in their community is by and large only perceptual. It is the understanding of others in the group that makes belonging possible.

When someone belongs to a group, the acceptance of them and the consideration of their contributions bridge any gaps and differences between members. The opportunities for people to participate in the community can be either discouraged or enhanced by those who support them and those that gate keep these social groups.

At GCSS the challenge is to make possible the opportunity for people we support to involve themselves in their community, letting them decide what part they can play and when and how they participate. The role of others is to be open to understanding and accepting of their participation and contributions. With these things in place we can share in that we truly are creating a sense of belonging for those we support.

I believe that while this need remains the same for us all, the faces of those around us change as each



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SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Who we are...and what we do

Georgia Community Support and Solutions (GCSS) is a leading 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides supports and services each year in metro Atlanta counties for over 2,500 children and adults with disabilities and their families; as well as individuals with mental health, emotional or substance abuse issues.

To learn more about our programs and services:

Visit at our website at www.gacommunity.org

- Behavior Health**
Ext. 284
- Nursing Services**
Ext. 245
- Intake**
Ext. 275

404-634-4333

- Residential Services**
Ext. 236
- Adult Foster Care**
Ext. 236
- Family Support**
Ext. 367
- Respite**
Ext. 271
- Youth and Justice**
Ext. 261
- Day Programs**

- Art and Food (Marietta)**
678-560-3215
- Marietta Enrichment Center**
678-354-9144
- Gwinnett Enrichment Center**
770-921-7221
- Our Place (Conyers)**
678-413-2361

www.gacommunity.org



Customer Service Questionnaire

Your feedback could make a difference for the people we serve, their families and our organization.

We will greatly appreciate your feedback regarding:

- 1) What does GCSS do well?
- 2) What can GCSS do better?
- 3) What would you like to see GCSS do differently?
- 4) What would you like to see remain the same at GCSS?

Please also check if you are a:

- GCSS Consumer GCSS Family Member
- Support Coordinator Other

Please submit your comments by mail, telephone or email to the GCSS Director of Quality Assurance.

404-634-4222 ext 597 or ext 233
Quality@gacommunity.org

Thank you for your feedback and help!