

# current SOLUTIONS

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Fall 2009

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## A Decade of Service

In 1999, we were a small agency headquartered in Atlanta with a dream to provide community-based services and supports to people with disabilities and their families. Today, we have broadened our mission and creative options of service to include not only individuals with Developmental Disabilities, but people with Mental Health and Addictive Diseases and those who are in need of Aging and Support Services. And we are continuing our expansion.

*10 years of life-enriching solutions to people in need, and innovative, expert services...*

This year, we at Georgia Community Support and Solutions (GCSS) celebrate our 10-year anniversary: 10 years of life-enriching solutions to people in need, and innovative, expert services: a decade of continuous growth made possible by people like you. We want to take this opportunity, our diamond anniversary, to pull back the curtains and share with you 10 facts about GCSS that you might not know:

### Ten Things You Might Not Know About GCSS:

1. We serve a total of 1350 individuals, equating to hundreds of thousands of hours and services.
2. We have over 300 employees with 80% of our workforce devoted to direct individual and family support.
3. We manage 37 sites and hundreds of homes in 13 counties, and operate a fleet of 42 vehicles.
4. We provide not only residential services, but respite care (for families of people with disabilities) and job training through our EmployABILITY program.
5. Currently, our oldest client is 84; our youngest is 6.
6. We have a Facebook page, under the "Causes" Application, called Support Individuals with Developmental Disabilities. Through the Application, members can donate money, raise awareness, and share stories of how this Cause has affected them personally.
7. We save the state of Georgia \$23,175,000 a year by providing respite services, as opposed to state residential options.
8. We touch more than 5,000 lives through 14 different programs across 13 Metro-Atlanta counties.
9. We have 14 programs including Family EASE, Life @ Home, EmployABILITY, Art & Food, and A.L.O.M.O. (A Life of My Own).
10. Our Community Events blog, at GCSS Community Events, is maintained by Eric Pudalov, a participant of A.L.O.M.O. and EmployABILITY, as well as Community Relations extern (he's also a guest columnist this month!).

*Whitney A. Jacobs*

Please take a moment to visit our website at [www.gacommunity.org](http://www.gacommunity.org) and click on "Leave us Feedback" and let us know how we are doing.

## The Envelope Please...

We had the privilege of honoring Atlanta's best at the 2009 GCSS Golden Goals Awards, held this past September in the Penthouse of The AmericasMart building. The stars were out that night, strolling along the red carpet, grinning for the entourage of photographers, and basking in a night of delicious main courses and desserts. Over two hundred consumers, caregivers and supporters filled a room lined with lush paper palm trees twinkling bright white lights, and even the famous Hollywood sign! It was a wonderful night spent applauding the true stars of our community. So without further ado, we give you this year's GCSS Golden Globe Awards winners:

***New Star of the Year Male:*** Timothy Thomason

***New Star of the Year Female:*** Rebecca Tanner

***Best Actor:*** Robert Itnyre-Steele

***Best Actress:*** Joyce Taylor

## Better Than Diamonds

In the case of GCSS, are we expecting diamonds on our 10th anniversary? Well in fact, we just received something better. The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities (GDBHDD) has selected GCSS as one of just three participants in the Person Centered

## Free Tax Preparation – Service Compliments of the Center for Financial Independence & Innovation, GCSS, and the Internal Revenue

The Center for Financial Independence & Innovation (CFII) is partnering with GCSS and the Internal Revenue Service through their Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program to provide free tax preparation assistance for individuals who earned \$49,000 or below in 2009. There are many reasons why it is important for you to file your taxes. One reason is to make sure you did not withhold more than you are legally required to do. Another very important reason is that our highly qualified certified volunteer tax preparers can assist you in taking advantage of all the tax credits for which you qualify. These credits could reduce the amount of taxes you owe, which could result in a much welcomed tax refund!

## The Autism Transition Program

GCSS is proud to announce that we are prepared to answer the community call for much needed Autism Transition Program. We have received over \$125,000 in grant money needed to implement our new Autism Transition program. The program is a unique service for adults with autism and severe behavior challenges. This program will work with these individuals so that they can ultimately transfer into a traditional, less intense service option and be included in the daily activities in their community. As reported in an April 2002 TIME Magazine article and a New York Times op-ed piece

***Best Supporting Actor:***

**Tavoris Hendrix**

***Best Supporting***

***Actress:*** Judith Platek

***Best Art and Design***

***Male:*** Anthony Davis

***Best Art and Design***

***Female:*** Keisha Allen

***Mr. Congeniality:***

**Lance Stephens**

***Ms. Congeniality:***

**Jennifer Katz**



Congratulations again to the winners, and we look forward to seeing you all at the next ceremony!

Organizations Training and Technical Assistance Series in FY10. Together we will work with DBHDD's team of experts to demonstrate how good agencies with sound leadership can become great agencies. Thank you all for all your support and making GCSS what we are!

In addition to the free tax return preparation assistance, the VITA program offers you free electronic filing (e-filing). When you e-file, you will receive your refunds in half the time compared to returns filed on paper – even faster if your tax refunds are deposited directly into your bank account.

Our VITA volunteer tax preparers will be available to assist you in your income tax preparation at the GCSS office. For more information, please contact Meredith Cardwell, Program Manager at the Center for Financial Independence & Innovation, at **404-5541-9005x106** or **meredith@thecfii.org**.

entitled "Symptoms, Diagnosis, Treatment of Autism," options for adults with autism are limited at best, and currently there is no program available for adults with severe autism in Georgia. The Autism Transition program is designed to continue where the high schools leave off, and work aggressively to help move our consumers from an intense facility-based structure to an inclusive community-based environment. This program will allow families to remain together, which is the foundation for a healthy and happy life.

## Transitioning to the Cyber-Age

twitter

facebook

As with many organizations today, GCSS is on the Web, and making use of it as a promotional tool. However, due to the fast-changing nature of the Internet, this form of promotion requires constant

updates and feedback from those we serve.

Though our main website has already been in effect for quite some time, more recently, our Community Events

Blog on Blogspot, specifically at GCSS Community Events. Community Events Coordinator Eric Pudalov is responsible for updating this blog at least weekly, with all the latest happenings or simply relevant news in the community. GCSS is now on the social networking/micro-blogging service Twitter, and is receiving more attention at its Facebook Cause, "Support Individuals with Developmental Disabilities." This, of course, is an ongoing project, but expect to see more news as it develops!

*-by guest columnist Eric Pudalov, Community Events Coordinator at GCSS. Eric is a participant in the GCSS A.L.O.M.O. and EmployABILITY Program.*

## A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving

Well OK, maybe not "Charlie Brown," per se, but with childhood memories of A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving, that would be my ideal November holiday.



This year's Thanksgiving baskets, developed by the Excitement Committee contained a \$10 gift card towards the purchase of a turkey, as well as additional non-perishable food.

In difficult economic times, it is still important to be thankful for those blessings that we have, whether they be food, water, clothing, shelter, loving family, or even less tangible things such as freedom. We would all do well to remember the rights that we sometimes take for granted in the U.S., such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. Though some might debate the truth of that statement, we have also seen that in some nations, both men and women are often executed or tortured for opposing religious beliefs or taking actions that are considered unethical.

That said, I personally spend Thanksgiving in NY, my home state, with my parents and sister. Living in GA, in various programs like this one, has helped me to better

appreciate my family, in that they supported my decision to come here and have partly provided me with the funds to do so.

A young woman in her 20's might say that any time she's spent living at home with her parents has been a challenge...I'm sure many of us would agree with her. Nonetheless, when we're apart from our families (assuming they're not abusive or psychotic), we ideally begin to realize how much they love us, and how thankful we are to have them.

In my case, as well, I will admit that sometimes I've gotten very frustrated over some of my limitations, especially in the areas of short term memory, judgment, and emotional control. On the other hand, having spent time around people with other kinds of disabilities (and even other people with brain injuries), I've realized how much I'm capable of and also how I may have misjudged some people that I first saw as "low-functioning."

So, as always, I write this blog not only for myself, but to inspire others at GCSS, as well as the random stranger who just might happen upon our site.

*-by guest columnist Eric Pudalov, Community Events Coordinator at GCSS. Eric is a participant in the GCSS A.L.O.M.O. and EmployABILITY Program.*



## Georgia Community Support and Solutions

1945 Cliff Valley Way, Suite 220

Atlanta, Georgia 30329

**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**

# Supporting People in their Community



## Supporting People in their Community

### MISSION

The mission of Georgia Community Support and Solutions (GCSS) is to be the best provider in the Georgia communities we serve by consistently delivering innovative, life enriching solutions to people in need of special services and quality supports for their families.

### VISION STATEMENT

GCSS consistently delivers innovative, well managed and high quality services to people and their families with needs related to disabilities, substance abuse, mental health or aging. We strive for continuous improvement in our:

- Organizational capability
- Strategic alliances with all our stakeholders
- Close partnerships with associated government agencies
- Prudent stewardship of our assets, resources and donor contributions

[www.gacommunity.org](http://www.gacommunity.org)

### VALUES

We have a passion for the people we serve and the families we support.

We are committed to diversity in our staffing and in the communities and people that we serve.

We strive to achieve highest standards of organizational excellence through implementing best practices.

We provide creative responses to community needs.

We honor our commitments. We will not promise what we cannot deliver.

We honor people as individuals. We offer choices to the people we serve.

We will manage the organization so that we remain financially strong with an overall fiscal strategy that supports the delivery of quality programs.

We are committed to team work through building relationships, establishing partnerships and developing leadership.

### Call Us! 404.634.4222

**Life@Home** - Ext. 258

**H.O.S.T. for Adults** - Ext. 238

**H.O.S.T. for Children and Adolescents** - Ext. 248

**FamilyEASE** - Ext. 367

**Beyond Behavior** - Ext. 248

**Quality Companion Care** - Ext. 245

**EmployABILITY** - Ext. 277

**ALOMO** Ext. 276

**Intake** - Ext. 275

**Community Relations** - Ext. 250

**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

**QA Customer Service** - Ext. 597