



Summer 2017 | Issue 17

Magnolia Community NEWS

Leading the way for individuals with developmental disabilities since 1935.

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A Note from Our Executive Director

It seems like our summer is speeding by, and we have been busy at Magnolia with several projects! We opened three new work centers and a workforce resource center in the basement of Whitehall. We are working on a sensory room and library that will soon follow. This new space will allow us to admit 50 participants, which will almost eliminate our waiting list for the vocational program.

We are also implementing a new scheduling and payroll system, which will be

Hal Harries Musical Garden



Music will meet nature in the new Hal Harries Musical Garden. Providing both recreation and respite, the garden will be a therapeutic space for self-expression and self-soothing. Specially made outdoor musical instruments will enhance the sounds of nature, and several groves of Magnolia trees will be featured. Magnolia's are associated with nobility, perseverance, dignity, and a love of nature which complements our own commitment to safeguarding the dignity of our clients and embracing the natural beauty of our 11 acre campus.

Hal Harries faced challenges with communicating and mobility but his staff recall his cheerful disposition and positive attitude. Music was a source of great joy in his life and he particularly enjoyed the piano, tambourine and harmonica. The Hal Harries Musical Garden will honor Hal, and a "Tree of Life" in the center of the garden will serve as a reminder of his happy spirit and his family's commitment to honoring his memory and improving the lives of all his friends who remain at Magnolia.

For more information, please visit www.mcs-nola.org/vocational-services

accessible for employees. All employees have received a Magnolia email account, which is linked to Outlook 365. Once logged in, the employee has access to our newly designed Intranet, which holds volumes of information such as: forms, our electronic residential census, work orders, a variety of calendars, a Magnolia blog page, and links to sites commonly accessed by all employees.

As you may know, we completed two new homes in January, and we have begun renovations on our Schwegmann Group Home. We expect this work to be completed in 6-8 weeks. We will then move on to Karen Group Home and begin renovations there. Both of these homes will be equipped with electric lift systems to allow for easier transfer from bed to bath to wheelchair, as necessary. We plan to outfit similar lift systems in Henican and Maison Central Group Homes as well.

Lastly, we are in process of installing the Hal Harries Music Garden. This project received generous seed money from Hal's estate, and we are close to reaching the amount needed to finish this project. If you would like to contribute, please contact Jessica at jbrush@mcs-nola.org.

Three New Vocational Centers

Whitehall's basement was recently renovated to expand Magnolia's Vocational Program with three new centers. The Workforce Center was made possible by a grant from Capital One, and will increase job training and skill development in order to assist clients in their search for competitive employment. This Center is set up with both a mock grocery store, and restaurant; it also has 4 computers and a laptop. The new Sensory Room is a therapeutic space specially designed to provide clients with a safe place of solace. The Library and Reading Area are stocked with many books and games, and its shelves were generously donated by Domino Sugar.

The 2017 Talent Show was a Hit!

Twenty acts performed in our annual client talent show, Moonlight Under the Stars, in June. Clients showed off their talents, singing, dancing and rapping before a packed house - **standing room only** - in the Nims Center. News with a Twist even stopped by! Our clients have great musical taste and even better talents, tackling songs by Whitney Houston, Fats Domino, Usher, George Strait, and more. Rhonda Pierce, Stacey Seruntine, and Michele Israel all brought us to tears with each of their own renditions

of a Whitney Houston hit. Charlie Savage blew everyone away with the most amazing freestyle verses in *Started From Magnolia Part II*. The Dream Factory performed a Glow in the Dark dance to Jason Gray, our Magnolia Who Dats enjoyed a spirited Saints-inspired dance medley, and the latest styles on the runway were debuted in a Fashion Show set to Right Said Fred's *I'm Too Sexy*. Our staff also got in on the act, choreographing, designing costumes and even singing! We can't wait until next year's event!



Betsy Guste singing Celine's *Love Can Move Mountains*



Stacey sang Whitney's *I Will Always Love You*

Client Spotlight: Glenn Sims

Glenn was a very intelligent young man in his early 20's, an electrician by trade, and engaged to a gorgeous girl when a motorcycle accident left him with a traumatic brain injury.

Despite the best efforts of his family, specialists, and rehabilitation, he was unable to walk or talk.

Then one day without warning, as his mom recalls, he stood up from his wheelchair and took a step. Glenn started reading simple sentences and impressed everyone with his ability to complete puzzles, word searches, and math equations.

It was over 20 years ago when Glenn found a home at Magnolia. There were no facilities around at that time specializing in traumatic brain injuries, so he settled in to a life with other disabled individuals though he was very different than the average Magnolia resident. In his previous life, he had been very capable and independent, and there is still a part of him holding on to that life. He prides himself on his "Tom Selleck" mustache and will often grin mischievously while smoothing it out, or surprise you with a random kiss on the cheek and offer a stick of gum.

Holley Coleman, his former case manager, remembers the first time she saw Glenn figure out a complex math equation; zipping through 3 and 4 digit problems, but he was solving them from left to right, instead of from right to left. His brain was working hard, but there were still some gaps and pieces missing. His frustration would easily show when someone did not understand what he was saying to them. He did not take kindly to other people, especially staff, giving him directions. But these outbursts would quickly fade and be forgotten by Glenn. His head trauma and the years of scar tissue that had accumulated, left him with an extremely short memory (but, if you moved something of his in his room, he would notice!).

Holley needed to see if there was more to Glenn below the surface. She reached out to Dr. Traylor, a neuropsychiatrist at Tulane who specializes in Traumatic Brain Injury. After looking at Glenn's CAT and MRI scans, she was in awe of his current abilities, and wanted to see what else he could achieve. Glenn was admitted to Touro's Outpatient Neuro Rehabilitation Center. The sessions were weekly, for three hours at a time, and he was exhausted by the time the day was done. Then, it was up to the rest of the Magnolia team to keep things going. Holley recalls this as one of the most exciting times she has experienced as a case manager- to be able to see all of the things that he was actually capable of. The Touro team had never worked with anyone with a brain injury this old, and they were constantly trying new things and making small breakthroughs. For example, they discovered that the best way to communicate with Glenn was to write things down for him on a small dry erase board. The sentences need to be short and to the point. Staff at Magnolia soon employed this same method in his group home and his outbursts and behaviors quickly decreased. He is using new vocabulary and cruising with a three pronged cane.

Glenn's achievements continue to surprise and inspire everyone around him. Every traumatic brain injury is unique. But to be able to continue to make progress on an injury like Glenn's is considered a small miracle.



Glenn and Holley

CALENDAR

JULY

National Fragile X Awareness Month

AUGUST

Gulf Coast Bank & Trust Auctions in August

Please visit their website for additional information about how you can support Magnolia in this community-wide fundraiser: www.auctionsinaugust.com

SEPTEMBER

Labor Day

Monday, September 4, 2017

Vocational/Day Hab Program Closed

OCTOBER

Friends & Family Association Meeting

October 10, 2017 @ 6:30 PM

What is Fragile X Syndrome?

Fragile X syndrome is a rare disease which affects 1 in 5000 people. It occurs when a single gene, FMR1, on the long arm of the X chromosome, shuts down and fails to produce a protein, FMRP, which is vital for brain development. Fragile X is inherited, and is the most common known cause of autism worldwide. Fragile X may cause intellectual disability, learning and behavioral challenges, and sometimes - seizures. It tends to be more severe in boys than in girls, and unlike many genetic diseases, it may not be apparent at all that a person has fragile X.

Red Cross Lifesaver Awards

Congratulations to Magnolia staff Charlita, Diedrea, and Pip who were recently honored by the American Red Cross and presented with their *highest Lifesaver Award* for their efforts in saving a Magnolia client's life last summer! When a residential client in the Shrewsbury Road group home became unresponsive, these three employees used their CPR training to assess the client, call 911 and begin CPR, continuing until the paramedics arrived. Each year, The American Red Cross honors local heroes who have exhibited extraordinary efforts to help those in needs. CPR is a required and on-going part of employee training at Magnolia. Our residential and vocational staff re-certify annually so that they can spring into action if anyone on campus has an emergency. We would like to once again commend Charlita, Diedrea, and Pip for their quick thinking and action!



**American
Red Cross**

Southeast Louisiana Chapter



\$5,000 RAISED

Thank you for giving!

www.mcs-nola.com

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100 Central Avenue | Jefferson, LA | 70121 | (504) 733-2874