



## A Message From Our Board President

### DAVID GALLO

I am so honored to serve as President of the Board for Magnolia Community Services. From addressing the Fiesta guests at our annual gala in November and advocating for Magnolia within the community to meeting clients and their family, I am proud to represent such a vital cause.

I take my new role as President to heart and aim to be a true ambassador providing guidance and leading by example to ensure that Magnolia will continue to lead the way to support and meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities.

My involvement with Magnolia started 20 years ago when I was recruited to join the board to help with rebuilding the River Road campus. Over the years, I have grown to appreciate and understand the opportunities and challenges of meeting the needs of people who live with developmental disabilities.

Each time I visit the Magnolia campus and embrace all the activities and programs, *I just feel better that I am being there for people that need our help.*

As we embark on 2025, with campus building repair and facility enhancements, along with the implementation of key strategic goals, I am fully committed to ensure Magnolia leads the way in providing the highest quality of service, leadership and advocacy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities now and for generations to come.

I hope to meet and hear your Magnolia stories, listen to your concerns and learn about why Magnolia is important to you.

Wishing you all Happy Holidays and a joyous New Year.

With Gratitude,

David Gallo

SAVE THE DATE



**SATURDAY**  
**MARCH 29TH**  
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

**We are so excited to celebrate, engage and have fun at MAGFEST 2025!**

Taking place during Developmental Disability Awareness Month, MAGFEST will be a time to build community awareness of developmental and intellectual disabilities, engage with one another, and support the services of Magnolia Community Services. All our clients and their families along with the community are invited to engage and celebrate.

Enjoy a fun filled welcoming day featuring live music, games, a kid zone, food trucks, and a curated selection of art and novelty vendors.

For more information about Magnolia Fest, including sponsorship opportunities, vendor application, volunteering or donating in-kind items visit [www.mcs-nola.org](http://www.mcs-nola.org).

# TEAM MAGNOLIA TO RUN IN CRESCENT CITY CLASSIC 2025!

SATURDAY, APRIL 19TH



We hope you join us as a runner, walker or donor as the New Orleans community walks throughout the city to complete the 10K route.

**Registration to sign up for Team Magnolia will open December 20, 2024.\* Go to [ccc10k.com](http://ccc10k.com) for all the details on the Crescent City Classic race.**

This year we are encouraging our clients to join us! To ensure all will be able to complete the race, you can bring wheelchairs if walkers get tired. (both care giver and clients need to register).

**Email Liz at [lizy@mcs-nola.org](mailto:lizy@mcs-nola.org) for more details.**

*\*The Magnolia Team needs to recruit at least 25 participants.  
Each runner/walker must raise a minimum of \$200.*



Magnolia has again been selected as a featured nonprofit for the Crescent City Classic Race! Taking place on **Saturday, April 19, 2025**, we are excited to have the opportunity to not only raise funds, but further engage with our community and build awareness of our mission. Each registered walker or runner will have the opportunity to reach out to their networks to raise funds.

## THANK YOU TO OUR Christmas Angels

We appreciate our Christmas Angels! During the Holidays, many of our clients may feel isolated and left out. With the giving spirit of the season, we are grateful for our Christmas Angel donors who have either adopted a group home or bought gifts for individual clients. We are excited to have Santa and his Elves distribute the gifts on Christmas Eve Day.



## THANK YOU TO OUR ANGEL DONORS!

Sandra Andrieu  
Carl Danna  
Bellwether Technologies  
Dawn Busters Kiwanis Club  
Mark Firmin  
Greek Ladies Philoptochos  
Growing Magnolias  
Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency  
Catherine Hazlitt  
Home Instead  
Kiwanis Club of New Orleans  
Lagniappe with Love (Mike Labat)  
Sheriff Joseph Lopinto  
Julie Mermilliod, MD  
TBC Healthcare Solutions

If you wish to support our residential program or Christmas Angels, donate at [mcs-nola.org/support](http://mcs-nola.org/support), call Liz Yager at 504-731-1308 or mail a check payable to Magnolia Community Services to 100 Central Avenue, Jefferson, LA 70121. Note "Xmas Angels" in the comments or memo.





## Client Spotlight

### CHERISH CRAWFORD

*Magnolia client since 2021; resident at 821 Jefferson Heights*

*“When I started, I was scared and quiet.”* noted Cherish as she recollects her first few months at her new home at Magnolia. Upon joining, Cherish was not used to structure and had limited relationship experience. Coupled with living with her developmental disability, the transition was hard on Cherish and was a challenge.

Over time, Cherish began to trust her new home. She began to make friends and started sharing how she felt. She realized that her case manager had her best interests at heart and learned that the people in Magnolia followed through on their promises. Alongside fellow Magnolia clients, Cherish engaged in day activities such as art, park walks, group therapy and community outings. She acquired new skills and learned to live cooperatively with her housemates. Occasionally, Cherish would show her broad smile.

With her ongoing personal growth and positive demeanor, along with no work experience, Cherish was a prime candidate to join the Ochsner/Magnolia Supported Employment Internship program. As one of four participants, it was during this intensive year long program that Cherish truly blossomed.

Cherish learned perseverance and determination. With the program, there were 4 rotations including environmental services and cleaning of which she did not feel comfortable; yet she did not give up. She showed up every day and did her work exhibiting her commitment and accountability. Cherish noted, *“If you are afraid to do something, try it anyway.”*

When asked about how she feels after completing the internship program, Cherish shared how proud she was of herself and all the goals she accomplished. Her future goal is to qualify for Supported Independent Living where she can live in her own place with minimal supervision. Cherish already has applied for job openings in the new year and is determined to continue her path of accomplishments.

Jay Sevin, PhD, Magnolia Psychologist, smiles with pride as he thinks about Cherish. He noted, *“When Cherish joined Magnolia, she was unsure and isolated herself. Over the past three years, with attention, care, social engagement, and structured programming, she has become a fully-fledged participating member of the Magnolia community. She has many relationships and is confident with her friends. Not only is she now comfortable speaking up and advocating for her peers, but she also has a great sense of humor and one of the principal jokesters!”*

We are all proud of Cherish as she continues to live her best life in Magnolia.





100 CENTRAL AVENUE  
JEFFERSON, LA. 70121



## GIVE TODAY

MCS-NOLA.ORG/SUPPORT 

LIZY@MCS-NOLA.ORG 

504.731.1308 

FOLLOW US:  @MCS.NOLA  @MCS\_NOLA

## Magnolia's Annual Impact:



**148 residential clients** served with  
153 licensed beds



**327,860 hours** with 24/7 round the  
clock client care in 21 group homes



**2948 hours** where clients volunteered  
with local community partners



**9 clients** successfully employed through  
community supportive employment  
program



**4 clients** in Ochsner supportive  
employment internship program

**Your support makes a difference.**



**YOUR SUPPORT** ensures our  
clients' needs are met.



[mcs-nola.org/support](https://mcs-nola.org/support)



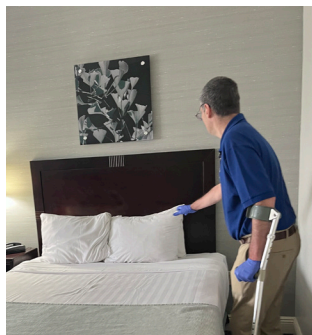
**Magnolia Community Services**  
100 Central Avenue, Jefferson LA 70121



**SCAN TO GIVE**  
*with your phone's camera*



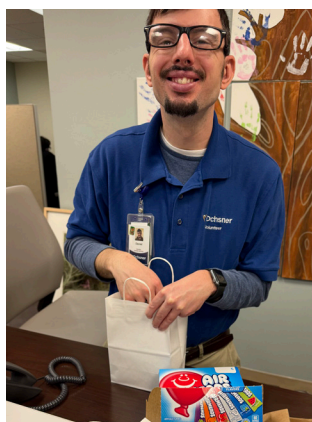




# MAGNOLIA CLIENTS GET THE JOB DONE

Magnolia Ochsner Supported  
Employment Internship 2024

In January of 2024, Magnolia Community Services entered a collaborative Supported Employment Internship program with Ochsner Health System offering a full year of intensive vocational training. Four of Magnolia's clients were accepted into the state funded pilot program. Each day, Daniel, Robbie, Stacey and Cherish were exposed to on-the-job experience learning accountability, interpersonal communication, teamwork and task specific skills. The Ochsner staff and Stacy Bell, Magnolia's Employment Coordinator, along with 3 job coaches, acted as mentors throughout the year setting personal goals, working through work issues, and providing moral support.



*"The main reason why many people with developmental disabilities do not succeed in their jobs, is lack of social and interpersonal skills. This program allows for on-the-job teaching with immediate reinforcement resulting in more impactful learning."* -Stacy Bell, Employment Coordinator, Magnolia Community Services

*"This internship program has been truly inspiring and fulfilling for everyone involved at Ochsner. It's been incredible to see interns challenge themselves to learn new skills, leaders grow as they learn new ways to support and develop their teams, peers encouraging each other, and patients showing appreciation. This program encompasses Ochsner's values of teamwork and inclusivity and highlights the power of opportunity."* Casie Woods, MS, PMO Director, Ochsner Health System, Project Management Office

On December 5th, all our clients officially graduated from the program equipped with the experience, skills and self-confidence to apply for a real-world job. Many have already applied for jobs! This graduation was certainly a proud moment for Magnolia, Ochsner and our 4 graduates and their families. The program was

a success, with state funding already in place for next year. Ochsner and Magnolia are assembling Class of 2025 with 4 new candidates.



*"A major goal of the Supported Employment Internship was to provide a variety of unique and meaningful work experiences to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. By providing multiple work rotations across the year, each intern was able to gain valuable firsthand experience related to four vocational areas. This allowed them to cultivate and generalize new skills, work with a variety of individuals as co-workers and leaders and end the internship with the ability to be informed and active participants in important decisions about future employment opportunities."* -Nicole Lasserre, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Neurodevelopmental Intervention Services, Michael R. Boh Center for Child Development, Ochsner Children's Hospital



Daniel, one of our graduates, notes, "I have learned so much. I was scared and did not know if I could do this in the beginning. But now that I have learned and know that I have the support of Magnolia and my supervisors, I feel so proud of myself."







# Supported Employment

