



**GULF COAST TEACHING
FAMILY SERVICES, INC.**

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Touching Lives

Issue 1 - Spring 2010

In this issue

Celebrating Foster Parents
Spring is in the Air!
Great Gift Ideas for Mom and Dad
Judy's Gardening Corner
Local Experts Predict LSU Repeat!
Andrew's Entertainment Picks
Caring for our Veterans
Memorial Day at the Museum

Celebrating Foster Parents

May is National Foster Care Month and GCTFS would like to introduce you to a very special couple, Henry and Thelma B. Over the past twelve years, they have opened their home to dozens of youths. They provide emergency respite for children in crisis and belong to our Therapeutic Foster Care program.



Henry and Thelma B.

What differentiates this program from other foster care services is that the children in our care have special needs due to mental, emotional and /or physical disabilities. *(Continued on page 3)*

Spring is in the Air!

It is that time of year again! The temperatures have warmed up and it feels great to be outdoors, working in the yard.

This is exactly what the residents of our Baton Rouge group home did recently.



Laurette and Jasmine preparing the plants.

The three roommates, Laurette, Michelle, and Linda worked on planting some spring containers for their back patio.

(Continued on page 2)

Great Gift Ideas for Mom and Dad

Having trouble coming up with the perfect gift for Mother's Day or Father's Day? Let Mom and Dad know just how much you love and appreciate them with one of the following original gift ideas. You will be sure to make their day extra special!

Mother's Day 2010—Sunday, May 9—is approaching fast. For the fashion conscious mom, reconcile comfort and style with the new pajama jeans! Pajama jeans are so comfortable you can sleep in them and they are perfect for traveling! Visit www.PajamaGram.com for more details.

To help Mom unwind, consider a spa adventure where she can relax and have a facial or massage. If your mother prefers a livelier pace, bring her to the

Audubon Zoo Mother's Day Concert in New Orleans. All mothers will have free admission to the zoo and enjoy Louisiana's own Irma Thomas, live in concert! This 26-year tradition is a celebration of togetherness honoring mothers of all ages. Contact the Audubon Zoo for more information at (504) 581-4629.

You still have plenty of time to find a present for Dad, as Father's Day 2010 is on Sunday, June 20. Consider fog free mirrors for shaving, standing valets, voice recognition grocery lists, golf bag organizers or gift baskets for gardeners: they all make terrific gifts! Cargo pants and 5 pocket carpenter jeans are the way to go for the practical father who does not want to compromise utility for style. If Dad is a sports enthusiast, surprise him with tickets to his favorite sporting event!

Spring *(continued)*

Laurette, Michelle, and Linda were assisted with their project by their caregivers, Dorothy and Susie, as well as GCTFS staff members, Jasmine and April. Using window planters and different size containers, the girls planted an array of bright spring buds, including petunias, marigolds, and gladioli. The size and shape of the different containers helped create an interesting and striking patio feature. Just a few flowers here and there helped make the outdoor area feel more manicured and inviting. Guided by Dorothy and Susie, the girls learned tips on how to prepare the containers, cutting out holes for the water to go through. This was as much a teaching experience as it was about enjoying the outdoors with friends and family.



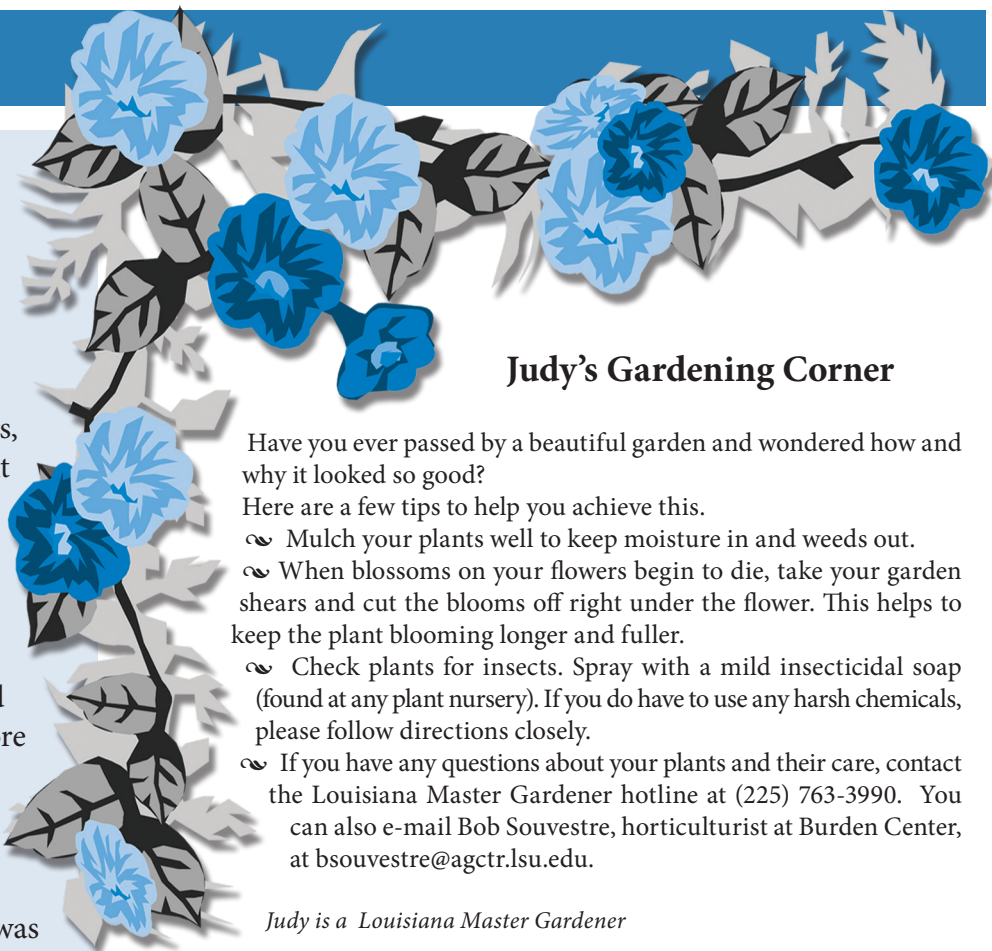
From left to right: Jasmine, Michelle, Dorothy Laurette, Susie, and Linda

Contributors

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Judy's Gardening Corner

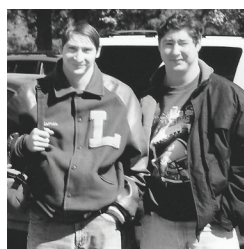
Have you ever passed by a beautiful garden and wondered how and why it looked so good?

Here are a few tips to help you achieve this.

- ☞ Mulch your plants well to keep moisture in and weeds out.
- ☞ When blossoms on your flowers begin to die, take your garden shears and cut the blooms off right under the flower. This helps to keep the plant blooming longer and fuller.
- ☞ Check plants for insects. Spray with a mild insecticidal soap (found at any plant nursery). If you do have to use any harsh chemicals, please follow directions closely.
- ☞ If you have any questions about your plants and their care, contact the Louisiana Master Gardener hotline at (225) 763-3990. You can also e-mail Bob Souvestre, horticulturist at Burden Center, at bsouvestre@agctr.lsu.edu.

Judy is a Louisiana Master Gardener

Local Experts Predict LSU Repeat!



Thomas and Gregory R.

Gregory R. and his younger brother Thomas, two clients of our Personal Care Attendant Program (PCA), are huge LSU sports fans. They follow and read anything regarding the Tigers' exploits in football and baseball.

When you ask those two LSU baseball supporters what they did last year when the team beat Texas in game 3 to win its sixth national title, both replied they were "really excited" and they

and their family "were jumping up and down." Our GCTFS baseball experts predict that the Tigers will, once again, travel to Omaha and return with their seventh national title. Two of their favorite athletes are pitcher Austin Ross, who will, according to Thomas, "strike 'em all out", and Leon Landry, who "hits a lot of home runs." Both are confident that the Tigers will reach the championship game, but disagree on who the challenger will be. Gregory believes the Tigers will play the Florida Gators for the title, whereas Thomas is convinced that they will defeat the Florida State Seminoles.

We will find out who is right next month during the Men's College World Series held from June 19 to June 30 in Omaha, Nebraska.

Andrew's Entertainment Picks



Andrew C. is a client in our Supervised Independent Living (SIL) program. He is a bright young man, full of energy, and extremely creative. Andrew is the author of this

column, as he is also very passionate about arts and entertainment.

Music

A song I listen to mostly everyday is "Take on Me" by a-ha. How I heard about the song was, a few years ago, I was playing Twilight Princess (Zelda Wii) and I turned on 96.1 the River. This lovely tune came on and I fell in love with it. I also enjoy the music video. Just check it out on YouTube. Did you know it took a-ha and the song "Take on Me" several tries to get started? Did you know as well the song was going to be called "Lesson One"?

Movies

My favorite movie of all time has got to be Labyrinth. This movie was made in 1986, and don't let the year fool you: it is an awesome movie! The movie stars David Bowie as Jareth the Goblin King and Jennifer Connelly as Sarah. It is about how Sarah has to get her baby stepbrother Toby—just an innocent, cute baby—back from the goblins. I love the creativity of Jim Henson and George Lucas, the work of Trevor Jones in the music background and the vocals of David Bowie: it made this movie magical.

Books

My favorite book is a series called Return to Labyrinth. It is in four parts (yet the fourth book does not come out until supposedly August 3, 2010). The series is the sequel to the movie only it is about Toby who is thirteen years old. Like most teenagers, he is trying to fit in, learning to be king in a different, bizarre world. I wish I could tell you more but go seek this book series, it is amazing!

Foster Parents *(continued)*

Henry and Thelma were blessed with five healthy children of their own, and both had more love to give to other children who had been faced with a lot of challenges early in life. They agree that you have to be prepared for anything. Each child is different and you have to be flexible and adapt to each new situation, but the rewards surpass anything you could imagine. "Foster parenting extends your life and makes you feel good" explains Thelma, "especially the little things". Her face displays a great smile when she mentions how Alvin* brightens her days. If Thelma ever has the blues, the little Alvin offers to cheer her up with "noogie time".

Alvin entered Thelma and Henry's lives about five years ago when he was an infant. Alvin's condition was very severe, and at the time, the doctors' prognostics were extremely pessimistic. Henry and Thelma did not get discouraged when physicians announced that Alvin would never walk, talk or even survive. They took care of Alvin and never lost hope. Today, this young boy walks, talks and goes to school. He still has some challenges, but he also has two supportive foster parents at his side to help him overcome them.

If you would like more information on our Therapeutic Foster Care program or about becoming a foster parent, contact us at (225) 201-0696.

*The child's name is fictitious to preserve his anonymity.

Your Donation Makes a Difference!

Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services is a private, non-profit corporation founded in 1983. We empower people with mental, physical, behavioral, and other challenges to improve the quality of their lives and to live as independently as possible in the community.



Support our programs at
www.gctfs.org/donate

Vehicle donations are also welcome!

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Caring for our Veterans

GCTFS is accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide personal care attendant services for disabled military veterans.

Donald M. is a recipient of our services. He was drafted in 1968, and served in Vietnam as a Sergeant through December 1970. Donald defended his country in the artillery and as a member of a helicopter crew. As many who came back from war, Donald suffers from Post



Donald M.

Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He is doing better now as he does not have as many flashbacks as in the

past. Melanie is the GCTFS caregiver who has been working with Donald for the past four months. She visits him three times a week

and helps him to get ready in the mornings. When asked about the upcoming Memorial Day holiday, Donald answered that, for him, it is a day of remembrance. Though it was not his decision to go to war, he is proud he was able to serve his country. He also mentioned that

he will be celebrating the day like the rest of the nation by barbecuing with friends and family.



Memorial Day at the Museum

Here in Louisiana, we have several unique oppor-

tunities to learn about those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their fellow man.

The National World War II museum in New Orleans is a wonderful way to spend the day and pay tribute to the fallen. You can immerse yourself in the war, as exhibits from both European and Pacific battles are depicted in artifacts and film. WWII veterans and volunteers are stationed throughout the museum to answer questions and provide first hand accounts. A little closer to home are the USS Kidd and the Veterans Memorial Museum, both located on the Mississippi River levee, downtown Baton Rouge. The two are an excellent way to view history up close.