

November 2013

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EAST COBBER



Joy Evilsizor

Director, Humane Society of Cobb County
with her husband and #1 volunteer, Gail

**7th Annual
PET GUIDE**

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The Center for Children and Young Adults (CCYA) Gears Up for the Holidays

By Andrea Brantley – Director of Special Events & Community Partnerships

Over the past several months, The Center for Children & Young Adults (CCYA) has received considerable interest and support from the East Cobb community. This desire to help reminds me of when I first learned about The Center. I was interviewing for a position at The Center and was surprised to find out there was an organization that helped homeless children right in my own community. From the first time I walked through the front door, I was instantly drawn to The Center's mission and knew I could make a difference.

Many of our Board Members are proud to call Cobb County home; in fact, our Board President Maureen Lok is a fellow East Cobber. Maureen stumbled upon CCYA in 2001 as she was finishing up her course with Master Gardeners of Cobb County. She was helping to oversee The Leadership Cobb Alumni Project, where they built a gazebo and planted trees and plants in our yard. Maureen fell in love with our campus and saw the potential for a community garden, which we still have today! She then began working with the children at The Center, teaching them how to prepare the ground and plant and harvest fresh vegetables which we currently farm to table. In 2008, she joined the CCYA Board of Directors and is now our current Board President.

The Center for Children & Young Adults has been around for almost 30 years, and we could not serve our youth aged 13-21 without the help of our community! Our kids are homeless, but we give them so much more than a roof over their head, a bed to sleep in, and three meals a day. We are here to take them on their first bus ride to Chattanooga for a field trip. We are here to take them to football tryouts and hug them when they make the team (or not). We are here to take them to the airport for their first airplane ride to Oklahoma for boot camp. We are here to see them perform in their school play and laugh extra hard at the funny parts. And even beyond that, we are here to keep in touch with them after they leave us to go to college or join the military or move out into their own apartment.

I developed a close relationship with one particular young man while he lived at The Center. When he graduated to living independently in his own apartment, we kept in touch and to this day, we still do. Late one night, he called me to ask if I could come and pick him up. He had gotten off work late and missed the last bus for the day. Unfortunately, I was working a fundraiser and was unable to leave. I felt sick that I could not help him in that very moment but together, we talked about his options. He could not walk home because the distance was too far so he would have to call a cab, even though it would be expensive. I am not sure why he missed the bus, but I don't believe he ever missed it again. This was an important life lesson for him, but at the same time, he had the comfort of knowing he could call someone who cared. He was 21 at the time, and he still needed advice and reassurance. As a mother of a 16 year old son, I often get emotional thinking

about these kids without parents and not having anyone to call because they missed the bus. Some people tell me they could not work at a children's shelter because it would be too sad but more often I get sad thinking about what it would be like for these kids if The Center were not here.

We are continually looking for ways to improve the services we provide. We are very excited about our new Dog Therapy Program being launched in January and already have our first dog "Dallas" who has started her certified training. In addition, CCYA will be breaking ground in early 2014 for an Outdoor Recreation and Therapy Art Park, which would not be possible without the Million Matters Grant we received in October! We know the benefits of exercise, art therapy and unconditional love from the dogs will benefit our kids.

If you would like to learn more about our mission to love and support these children, we would welcome the opportunity to talk with you. If you feel ready to jump in and make a difference, let us know! With the holidays fast approaching, we have a number of opportunities for you and your family to get involved:

- > **Empty Nester's Booster Club:** Miss some parts of parenting but not others? You can pick and choose what you want to do – and the best part is that it's not a full-time commitment! The first meeting will be Wednesday, November 13th at 6:30 pm on the CCYA campus. For more information, please contact Director of Volunteer & Activities Kimberly Tinsley at 770-485- 1627 or ktinsley@ccyakids.org.
- > **Midnight Santa Program:** During the holiday break from school, we are looking for volunteer groups and families to surprise our kids each night with a late-night snack. Some suggested items are doughnuts, cookies, popcorn, you get the idea. We provide the Santa hats and you provide the treat! Our kids had a blast last year waiting with anticipation each night wondering what yummy treat would be delivered. This is a great way for families to come together and spread some holiday spirit. Please note – although the program is called Midnight Santa, we will take treat deliveries between 9:30 pm – 12 midnight.
- > **Santa's Workshop:** We are looking for volunteer groups to work a shift in our Santa's Workshop, where we sort and wrap all the presents for our children. We have almost 40 teens so we need a lot of help with this task! Shifts are 10am-12noon and 2-4pm beginning December 18th through Dec 23rd.
- > **Sponsor a Child for Christmas:** The kids at CCYA have wishes for Christmas just like other kids. If you would like to shop for one of our youth, we can help by providing a personalized wish list. This is a great project for families, groups and teambuilding with coworkers.

Please contact Director of Special Events & Community Partnerships Andrea Brantley at 770-485-1639 or abrantley@ccyakids.org for more information. ❶