

Family Notes

ABILITY CONNECTION TEXAS

Sharing Our Family's Stories with You

IN THIS ISSUE:

PAGE 2

Getting to Know CLASS

Saluting PepsiCo for 10 Years of Partnership

PAGE 3

No ACT? Unimaginable!

A Solution for Life

PAGE 4

Message from the Board Chair

Ninth Annual Vine and Dine

ACT a “Lifeline” for BB’s Family

Brenyon (BB) Evans’ mom was still in school when he was born and she learned that her son had cerebral palsy. Despite the fears of the medical staff, BB survived his first days in the hospital and his mom, Stacey, prepared to take him home.

Cerebral palsy affects a person’s movement due to damage to the brain during its development and it is not curable, so Stacey knew she needed help – and her mom, Ganna, stepped in. Ganna admits thinking, “I don’t know what I’m doing and I never will. I guess we will figure it out.”

BB, who will celebrate his 13th birthday next month, is part of our CLASS program (see sidebar on page 2). Reflecting on the services we’ve provided for his family, Ganna says, “Ability Connection Texas is our lifeline.

“I don’t believe in giving up,” she continues. “I want BB to stay at home and be able to take care of himself. I want him to go to college, to

get a job. I want him to be just like anyone, except he’s in a wheelchair.”

With guidance from Ability Connection Texas, BB’s family has support in the daunting task of caring for a special needs child. “If

we need something, we just ask our ACT case worker,” Ganna says. “We were determined that



BB was going to have some kind of a life, and it is going to be the best we can do for him,” Ganna and Stacey agree. And thanks to Ability Connection Texas, BB enjoys a very full life.

Raising BB also helped Stacey choose a direction for her own career: “Because of BB, I went into social work. Hopefully someday I will be a case worker and people will think of me the way I think of Kathy” (their ACT case worker).

Thank you for supporting ACT so we can, in turn, support BB’s family – and hundreds of others – helping them give their loved ones a full and meaningful life. 🇺🇸

“We were determined that BB was going to have some kind of a life, and it is going to be the best we can do for him . . .”

Getting to Know CLASS



Derelle Walker, CLASS Program Director

Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) focuses on helping people with special needs live at home instead of in an institution. “The biggest benefit,” says Derelle Walker, CLASS Program director at Ability Connection Texas, “is that we give those we serve all the support they need to actually live in a community.”

The CLASS program works with each individual and his or her family to provide the

services they need to remain at home. This can include attendant care, adaptive equipment (like the motorized wheelchair we helped BB’s family obtain), minor home modifications, therapy, and respite care. For BB, this includes a week each year at summer camp while his mom and grandmother receive much-needed rest from daily caregiving.

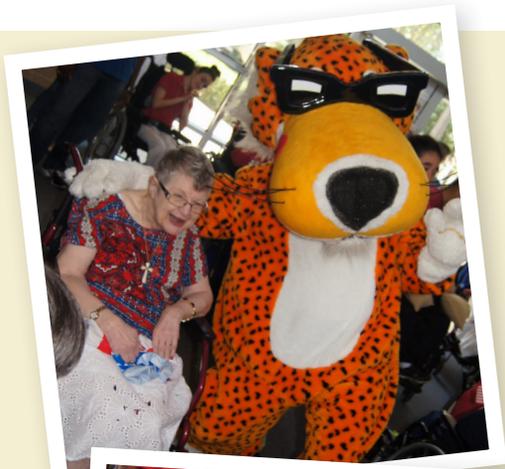
Your donations make many CLASS services possible. “A lot of people in our program solely depend on their case managers and ACT,” Derelle explains. “Donations help make sure we can support them and provide all the care they need.”

Saluting PepsiCo for 10 Years of Partnership

For the last 10 years, PepsiCo’s employee resource group, EnAble, has helped our clients celebrate Independence Day with a very special event. Every year, approximately 20 EnAble members come to our facility and grill hot dogs and provide Frito Lay and Pepsi products for more than 100 clients and staff members of ACT. Plus, Chester Cheetah, the Cheetos mascot, makes a special appearance and poses for photos with everyone.

This annual event is capped off with an “indoor fireworks display,” a unique experience as clients and volunteers parade through the halls that are lined with bubble wrap. As they are walking or traveling in their wheelchairs over the bubble wrap, it sounds like firecrackers going off! After the parade, everyone gets party poppers and streamers fill the lobby.

On this, the tenth anniversary of our partnership, we say a very special thank you to EnAble for their dedication to our clients.



Life Without Ability Connection? It's Unimaginable!

Most parents worry about their children's futures, but for parents of a special needs child, the concern is even greater. That's why Simon and Maria Lewis were so thrilled when their daughter, Constance, was accepted into the Home and Community Based Services (HCS) program at Ability Connection Texas. "We don't have family here," Maria says, "so we're interested in a group home for the future."



Constance with her parents: Simon and Maria.

But for the present, the Lewis' are grateful they can keep Constance at home and devote all their energies to giving her a fulfilling life.

When Constance was five months old, her doctor confirmed that she had Down syndrome, which causes intellectual disabilities and developmental delays. One of

Constance's biggest challenges was learning to speak. "We were very upset that she couldn't communicate," Maria recalls. But through a lifetime of speech therapy, Constance is now both verbal and able to communicate in American Sign Language.

Constance became part of HCS when she was 18. "Somebody told me this was the best agency," Maria says.

"It is not for profit, and it is very professional. I'm very happy with it." Plus, Constance says, "I like it a lot."

For the last two years, Constance has been receiving job training. "She wants to work," Simon told us, "and she has a good resume." Constance will be attending job fairs over the summer and hopes to find employment.

Simon credits Ability Connection Texas with the fact that their family is "able to actually lead a fairly normal

existence and give Constance a chance to be part of the community. It takes both our energies to keep Constance moving forward. I can't even imagine our lives without ACT."

"Without ACT, she would not be with us," Maria adds. "All of our lives would not be the same." 

"It takes both our energies to keep Constance moving forward. I can't even imagine our lives without ACT."

A Solution for Life

ACT's Home and Community Based Services (HCS) program ensures that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive the best possible care for life. Clients may live with family, live alone but receive in-home support, or live in a group home – but one thing is constant: Each person "receives a multitude of services to help them become more independent," says Rachel Hopkins, HCS Program Director. "We get limited funding from the State, but rely on donations to make up the difference for many things that we would like to do but funding isn't always available."

Rachel explained that one of the biggest needs is dental care. "A lot of the time, our clients just don't have the money, so they have to wait to see the dentist." But thanks to gifts from donors like you, we're able to help with dental expenses, as well as other needs that ensure they have a healthy and fulfilling life. 



Rachel Hopkins, HCS
Program Director



Our Priorities Never Change!

Can you believe Ability Connection Texas (ACT) turned 63 this June? But as the saying goes, we're not getting older – we're getting better!

From our founding as United Cerebral Palsy in 1953 to the ACT of today, our dedication to caring for individuals with disabilities remains our most important priority. That's why our board of directors recently approved some new measures to improve and streamline the organization. Ultimately, these will enable ACT to invest even more in its service to clients and to be poised for future growth. These measures include:

- Providing services that are in ACT's core competencies — State Medicaid Waiver Programs that allow clients to remain in the community, adult day habilitation, group homes, and our Non-Medicaid advocacy, information and referral services. These represent the heartbeat of ACT — maintaining close relationships with our clients and their families, and providing the highest quality care possible.

- Reallocating some resources to enable ACT to be more efficient and effective in delivering needed services and the best care to the greatest number of clients possible.
- Diversifying funding sources to significantly increase community support. In doing so, the goal is to provide ACT donors with a trustworthy and cost-effective way to positively impact the lives of people who would otherwise have no other care options or only have state-supported living centers as choices for care and housing.

We are very excited about the future of ACT, and I am honored, on behalf of the Board of Directors, to thank you for your partnership and generous support.

Don Laidlaw, ACT Board Chair

"We are very excited about the future of ACT... thank you for your partnership and generous support"

What's Coming Up? *Ninth Annual Vine and Dine*

Plan now to attend the Ninth Annual Vine and Dine dinner and auction benefiting Ability Connection Texas on **Thursday, November 17** in the Zodiac Room at Neiman Marcus Downtown. We are grateful to our founding hosts and dear friends at Neiman Marcus who make this special evening possible.

The evening includes delicious cuisine prepared by Chef Kevin Garvin and a live auction of specialty items carefully selected by

the expert team at Neiman Marcus and curated by Heritage Auctions.

Proceeds from Vine and Dine enable Ability Connection Texas to meet the critical needs of children and adults in our community living with life-long disabilities such as traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, Down syndrome, or hearing and speech disorders. To reserve your place or to make a donation, please contact us today!



8802 HARRY HINES BLVD.
DALLAS, TX 75235
(800) 999-1898
www.abilityconnectiontexas.org