



## Spring News Letter

The Dream Program continues to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to experience and enjoy activities that only a few years ago were not possible! This year we're making additional efforts to team with other organizations on the gulf coast to provide even greater experiences. We're strengthening our relationships with organizations such as the Gulf Coast Down Syndrome Society, Special Olympics of Mississippi, and Kiwanis Club of Pascagoula while establishing new ties with groups such as the Fight the Good Fight Foundation, South Mississippi Special Needs Organization and Gaits to Success.

2016 started off with a bang as we were completing the "scheduled" season for Unified Basketball at Ocean Springs High School while at the same time, kicking off the Dream Program Basketball season plus the Music Class! Kudos to the coaches, referees, volunteers and Board members!

The teaming of the Dream Program and Ocean Springs High School for a second season of Unified Basketball is producing those results originally envisioned. We've had more opportunities to demonstrate the ABILITIES of people with disabilities to an expanded audience. In addition to playing the four scheduled games at OSHS we were invited by St Martin High School to come to their facility in January and play an "exhibition" game in front of their fans. Representatives from the Jackson County School District, Pascagoula – Gautier School District and Special Olympics were in attendance. FOX WXXV was on site conducting interviews and recording the excitement. Now we have established contacts with representatives of high schools at St Martin, Pascagoula, and Moss Point along with Vancleave Middle School and will be teaming with them as they establish unified basketball teams next year. Capping off this successful season, the OSHS teams are traveling to Hattiesburg on March 5<sup>th</sup> to play a unified team from that city on the campus of the Golden Eagles of the University of Southern Mississippi!

Meanwhile, Dream Program basketball is already nearing the completion of our season. We've had another successful year as we've been joined by new athletes as well as new volunteers. Next season we must find a way to establish additional teams to ensure increased playing time for all athletes in both, the Jr Varsity and the Varsity leagues.

The Dream Program Music class led by Ms. Lauren Watson has been meeting each week and is preparing for a concert soon and hopefully, a performance at the Silent Auction on April 1<sup>st</sup>. This year we have fifteen athletes participating, demonstrating and expanding their singing capabilities. Lauren certainly is to be commended for the passion and ability she brings to this effort and her willingness to share her talents with our athletes.

Thanks to parents and care givers for participating in the recent survey concerning the type of new activities you would like to see the Dream Program pursue in the future. At least two of those new activities are imminent as we seek to provide opportunities which benefit **all** our athletes while reaching even more people with disabilities.

The Dream Program is digging deeper into our partnership with the Pascagoula Kiwanis Club as we're in process of establishing the "Aktion Club" we have discussed recently. A special thanks to Ms. Lori Pausina coming from Mandeville and meeting with us to share her experiences with the establishment of the Aktion Club there. Thanks also to the Kiwanians who participated in the meeting and voiced their commitment and support. This club will be comprised of adults with disabilities and one of their missions will be to provide community services. The Aktion Club will elect its own officers, conduct its own meetings and plan its own events as members are given opportunities to participate in the active life of our communities, increase their leadership skills and improve their self-esteem. The group will function under the umbrella of Kiwanis with an oversight committee and a "hands on" Advisor, and another Advisor from the Dream Program. Dawne Jakubik has volunteered to be the Advisor for the Dream Program and will be our interface. Our other partners in this effort include Mill Creek of Moss Point, South Mississippi Regional and Brandi's Hope. More information is coming very soon!

For some time we have been interested in starting a fitness class to allow our athletes to participate in events that would give them the opportunity to exercise together as a group, and also help them with their endurance in the other unified sports in which they participate. That opportunity is materializing very quickly and is expected to start in April. Ms. Laura Pylate, owner of BOX LIFE CROSSFIT in Ocean Springs, has volunteered to conduct a work out class twice monthly in the Field House CrossFit facility on Bienville Blvd. Meanwhile, we continue to explore additional opportunities with the Ingalls contractor and their fitness facility at the Home Port on Singing River Island.

Now it's time for everyone to get excited about the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Silent Auction & Golf Tournament scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Gulf Hill Hotel and Conference Center! New fliers have been mailed out to businesses and organizations who so graciously contribute to our program. More are available for you to provide to your friends and contacts. We need golfers to sign up to play! We need items to be sold at the Silent Auction! We need even more items for raffling off at the Silent Auction! And we need our athletes, parents and care givers to be spreading the word about this event! This **IS** our fund raiser for the year. It's the funds raised from this single event that provides the resources which allow the Dream Program to provide nine activities, soon to be eleven, at no cost to the participants! There is no other organization like the Dream Program on the gulf coast nor in the state of Mississippi. We need everyone to pitch in and do what they can!

Here's some other near term events;

**The Shamrock Shuffle** March 12 7:30 AM, at Fort Maurepas sponsored by the Fight the Good Fight Foundation to raise funds for Special Education programs in the Ocean Springs School District. We'll have our booth set up and will be passing out literature about the Dream Program and soliciting new athletes and volunteers.

The **Area 12 Special Olympics Swim Meet** is scheduled for March 18 from 9AM – noon at the YMCA in Ocean Springs. This event leads to the State Games at Keesler in May!

The third annual **Easter Extravaganza** is being hosted by the Kiwanis Club of Pascagoula, Jackson County Civic Action Committee and the Junior Auxiliary of Pascagoula & Moss Point Saturday March 19<sup>th</sup> 9AM – Noon in the Family Interactive Center in Pascagoula. This free event targets school age children and their parents. There'll be candy, pictures with the Easter Bunny, face painting and informational booths. We'll be there handing out Dream Program literature and fliers.

The South Mississippi Special Needs Organization is sponsoring **"The Beautiful Me"** Pageant March 19 at 1PM for ladies of all ages at the Wool Market Community Center. Entries are \$35 with a \$5 admission fee for spectators.

The monthly Gulf Coast Down Syndrome **"Friends – 4- Life"** meeting will be at the **Kroc Center** in Biloxi March 19<sup>th</sup> at 6PM. This event reflects the GCDSS effort to reach people of all disabilities and is a good "come together" activity for gulf coast families.

Meanwhile, look for registration applications for Dream Program Softball, Aktion Club and fitness class very soon!

The 2016 schedule is posted on our web site and new events will be added as we become aware.

Here's looking forward to a great spring!

Thank you.

Billy Dungan  
Executive Director  
Dream Program