

In This Issue:

Mark A. Jacoby, Executive Director	2
New logo / mission statement unveiled	2
MaryLou Davis, Board Chair	3
Ron Tilley, COO	3
Dental / Health Update	4
Grants Update	4
2007 Golf Fore Gompers Recap	4
Who Is Gompers?	5
Special Feature: Erin Abernethy Poem "That Boy"	5
SNAPSHOT: Sedona Oak Creek Lions Club Fishing Trip	6
Collaborative Partnerships	7
Artful Minds Around Town	
Calendar of Events	
Miscellany	

Celebrating 60 Years of Service: Gompers...Then and Now

Since 1947, Gompers has existed exclusively to serve the needs of people with disabilities. While times have changed, our mission remains the same; to empower individuals with disabilities with the support, education and training they need to reach their individual maximum potentials.

While we reflect on the past 60 years, we honor those who we are fortunate enough to have served during these years, and we honor the great strides forward we have all taken together.

2007 marks a milestone for Gompers Habilitation Center as we consider the Valley's growth, our continuing efforts to meet the needs of our students

and clients, and the expansion of our own facilities. Why? Because as we have evolved over the past 60 years, we intend to continue our evolution to grow and expand our programs and to serve more of the wonderful people who count on us every single day. As our population grows, so must Gompers and we look forward to another 60 years of providing exceptional service, support and education to adults and children with disabilities.

Obviously one of those evolutionary changes is *The Gram* as it has taken on a new look and more informative features to keep you updated with the goings-on here at Gompers. So get ready because this is only the beginning!

Remembering Our Roots

From our humble beginnings on 7th Street to our satellite office on West Osborn, the photos below represent our past students, clients and patients, as well as some fundraising efforts such as the Gompers Regatta. So much to be proud of and yet we've only just begun to define who we truly are.

We are Gompers!

This Just In:

More Bad News: Over the weekend of September 8th, vandals struck Gompers again and did an additional \$20,000 worth of damage to four more air conditioning units. Once again a good portion of Gompers Habilitation Center was without air conditioning including the Dental Clinic, part of the School and one of the DTA Program rooms for two weeks.

The good news? Summer is almost over.



Original location on 7th Street



Those we served



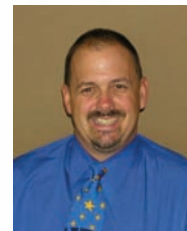
Facility on West Osborn



Gompers Regatta

What's In A Name? A Lot Actually.

By Mark A. Jacoby, Executive Director



Words tell stories. Words evoke emotions. Words that were appropriate yesterday are no longer appropriate today. Think back on the field of disabilities. There was a time when words such as "invalid", "feeble-minded" and "retarded" were acceptable. In fact, in Gompers' own annual report back in the 1980's our Executive Director referred to the amazing individuals we serve as "limited."

The story of our very own name shows how the use of words evolves. One of the most frequent questions we get is "Why Gompers?" When we opened our door in 1947 with a staff of three and an annual budget of \$23,000, we were the Maricopa County Crippled Children's Society. Shortly thereafter we became the Arizona Easter Seals Society for Crippled Children. Today we would not dream of using the word crippled.

The real change occurred in 1951 when Gompers Center was preparing to move out of rented spaces and into its own facility. That year more than 10,000 American Federation of Labor members each donated one hour of pay to assist us

in opening that first center. In return, they simply asked that we honor the founder and first president of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers. Gompers Center was born, and yet we still were not done. Whether we were Gompers Center for the Handicapped or Samuel Gompers Memorial Rehabilitation Center or Gompers Center, Inc., the most important aspect was not that we were the agency with the "goofy" name, but rather the important services and opportunities that we provided.

In turn, this is why words alone should not define who a person is. Rather their actions, dreams and abilities should. It is why we do not say that someone is "autistic" but rather someone "has autism". It is why we do not say someone is "non-verbal" but rather "non-speaking." You see, non-verbal implies an inability to communicate, and everyone can communicate whether it is through emotions, head nods, eye blinks, sign language, the use of technology or the spoken word. It is why we no longer use words like "invalid", "feeble-minded", "retarded" and "crippled." Those words can

tend to drag someone down, when instead our mission is and should continue to be to empower people.

So in this our 60th Anniversary Gompers Center, Inc. is becoming Gompers Habilitation Center. A new, empowering and uplifting logo has been created to go along with the change in name...a name and logo that speak to the potential of the individuals we serve, not to whatever perceived shortcomings they may have. It is why the new name and logo do not focus on wheelchairs and crutches, but on a symbol that represents an individual soaring toward their greatest potential.

In short, the disability is not who the person is; the disability is simply an obstacle thrown in front of them while in pursuit of the same dreams and aspirations we all have.

And now, I am proud to present Gompers Habilitation Center's new logo and mission statement. We hope you love it as much as we do!



OUR MISSION:

Gompers Habilitation Center's mission is to empower and advocate for adults and children with disabilities in an environment of compassion, dignity and respect.

Gompers Habilitation Center promotes and maximizes individual potential through a full range of exceptional education, social integration, vocational, therapeutic and dental programs and services.



MaryLou Davis, Board Chair: In Her Own Words

Throughout her life, MaryLou Davis has dedicated herself to serving those in need and lucky for us, she has been serving Gompers Habilitation Center for more than seven years now. Her service to Gompers encompasses more than just the students and clients we serve; it also includes our fiscal and community needs. MaryLou Davis served as Chair of the Fundraising Committee until she was recently elected to the position of Chairwoman of the Board. These are her words and describe her inspiration, her motivation and why she is so committed to serving the very special population Gompers represents.

My parents were children of the depression. I feel that, in and of itself, left a lasting impression on their generation. They taught my sister and I to count our blessings and share with those who need our help, and instilled in us the understanding that charity begins in the home.

I grew up wanting to apply that lesson to my life and I chose to be an educator, teaching for 26 years. My degree is in early childhood education with an additional A.A. in Child Development. My Masters Degree was in

education with an emphasis on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and its effect on children. I taught several years in the inner city and many of the children in the school were compromised either by drugs or alcohol at birth. Their disabilities were not as physically obvious as some, however their needs were immense.

I finished my career teaching college freshman English as a Second Language, and Reading Comprehension and Study Skills and began doing volunteer work with Phoenix area non-profit organizations. I was an organizing member of FFAST (Foster Angels of Arizona Serving Together), I was a Court Appointed Special Advocate, I served on the Camp Fire Board of Directors, and have proudly served on Gompers' Board for the past seven years.

As an educator, I have affiliated myself with organizations benefiting children. I feel strongly that our clients need a Board of Directors that will be their voice in the community. So often those with physical and cognitive disabilities are dismissed and ignored. I have chosen to lend my voice and support to Gompers because I am hopeful that it might just make a difference.

I am inspired by people who have had profound challenges in their lives, yet have overcome adversity and never dwell on it. People who live life at full speed, with no "what ifs" and who only look forward. People who don't talk about what happened to them because they wholeheartedly believe that yesterday is past and tomorrow hasn't come; but the present is now and it is a gift. These are the people that truly inspire me.

The vision I have for Gompers is to see our organization reach out and embrace all those who need our services. I see our Dental Center growing and serving individuals outside of Gompers. I see our Vocation Department increasing in size and training ability. I want the community to be more aware of our clients and their talents and skills...of their individual potentials!

As Gompers grows, I want to see its compassion, appreciation for individualism, the sense of family, the total acceptance of one another, and the respect continue to make our clients feel like they are an intrinsic part of the success of Gompers everyday.

Thank you MaryLou for your dedication!



Introducing Ron Tilley, Gompers' New Chief Operating Officer

Gompers is proud and excited to announce that Ron Tilley has joined the organization as our new Chief Operating Officer. Ron brings more than 30 years of experience serving people with disabilities in both the United States and abroad. Locally and most recently, Ron was the Executive Officer of Operations with the Civitan Foundation, as well as Arizona Health Care. Ron also has a personal investment in the very special population Gompers Center serves, as he grew up with a sister with disabilities and watched firsthand the struggles she endured. Ron is a "change" manager who is guided by a defining principle – a deep commitment to improving the lives of those in need through the creation and development of the highest quality services for all individuals.

Having worked in both *for* and *not* for profit organizations, Ron's experience in managing properties and group homes for people with disabilities, nursing homes, home and

community based services, day programs, recreation and respite programs, thrift stores and a camp for people with disabilities will prove invaluable to the staff and clients of Gompers. In addition, Ron's experience includes rescuing operations from threatened closure, reversing negative cash flow, elevating employee morale and overcoming lacking community support. In addition, he has provided organizational development, fundraising strategies, supervision of up to 200 employees and budget management of up to \$20 million annually.

Locally, Ron is responsible for restructuring entire organizations, rewriting personnel and financial policies and procedures, fiscal management, job descriptions and specifications, as well as recruitment of key personnel. During his appointments at both the Civitan Foundation and Arizona Health Care, Ron increased revenues by 40% and \$1.2 million respectively.

In addition to continuing his career managing services for people with disabilities, as well as participating on various disability committees and boards, Ron also spent many years traveling the world as a professional basketball player and coach in Europe, 11 of which was exclusively in Australia. Those 11 years were highlighted by a governmental appointment to assist in transitioning people with disabilities out of state run institutions into less restrictive environments including group homes and independent living settings. In other words, Ron's resume speaks for itself.

Gompers is thrilled to welcome Ron Tilley and knows that he will represent students, clients and staff with passion, commitment and a sincere desire to positively impact the organization and the community.

Welcome Ron!

Gompers' Dental Clinic and Health Department Updates

There are lots of great things happening at Gompers every day! Here's a peek into what's currently happening in the Dental and Health Departments.

DENTAL NEWS:

Welcome Our Newest Dentist

Dr. Alex Matheson, DMD, recently joined the dental staff at Gompers Habilitation Center. Dr. Matheson received his Doctor of Dental Medicine degree from Oregon Health and Sciences University. Following which he did a year-long residency at UCLA. Dr. Matheson is "happy to be at Gompers and excited to treat our special population."

Welcome Dr. Matheson!

Grants Update

CATHOLIC HEALTHCARE WEST

Earlier this year, Gompers Habilitation Center received \$8,000 from Catholic Healthcare West to support an unusual, but very much needed, program created to identify and reduce self-injurious behaviors. This generous grant provided Gompers' therapists with the necessary sensory equipment specifically designed and engineered to help identify the signs, signals and triggers of self-injurious behaviors. Along with the multitude of disabilities our clients are challenged with, self-injurious behaviors are a serious cause for concern. It

Landmark Legislative News

For the first time in history, we now have a preventive dental coverage plan through State Medicaid/AHCCCS for adults who are Arizona Long Term Care-eligible. The coverage provides up to \$1,000 per year of preventive dental services for eligible adults. Arizona is now one of only a handful of states in the country with such a coverage plan via State Medicaid. This is tremendous news and a huge victory for persons with disabilities!

HEALTH NEWS:

Flu Shots

Gompers Habilitation Center is hosting our annual flu shot event by Mollen Clinic on Friday, October 12, 2007 in the gymnasium

from 10:30a.m. to 1:30p.m. This annual event, facilitated by Gompers Habilitation Center health staff, is provided each year as a service to the clients, staff, families, caregivers of our clients, case managers and the general community. Some medical insurance plans are accepted and prices will be listed as well as participating plans on-site. Flyers will be available in September for reservations.

Friends of Gompers and the general public are invited to participate in the event. However we ask that you please call Gompers the week of the clinic to be placed on the list to ensure there will be enough vaccine on hand that day. Please consider this an open invitation to you and your family members.

is of paramount importance to everyone at Gompers that clients are safe and in an environment of compassion and support. Therefore, we are providing them with every available support mechanism to communicate their needs. There are many reasons why an individual with disabilities would inflict harm on themselves, not the least of which can be identified as frustration, the inability to communicate and self-stimulate to name a few. Through the implementation of this program and effective use of the sensory equipment, the potential for clients to cause themselves

harm is being recognized at earlier stages and thereby managed more effectively with a reduction in injuries.

CITY OF PHOENIX

The City of Phoenix has selected Gompers Habilitation Center to receive a 2007 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The \$25,000 award is earmarked for Gompers' Dental Center. The purpose of the grant will be to increase dental treatment access within one year for 100 newly qualifying patients residing in the City of Phoenix.

Recap of the 35th Annual Golf fore Gompers Tournament Presented by APS

The two things heard throughout the day during the 35th Annual Golf fore Gompers Tournament Presented by APS were, "Man, it's hot out here!" and "This is a fun tournament!" The truth is it was almost 110° that day, but even the heat and humidity couldn't put a damper on the fun that everyone was having...golfers and volunteers alike. Even the Phoenician lifeguard who told Ron Tilley, Gompers' new COO, that it was okay for him to jump in the pool to cool off had fun. And yes, Ron did jump into the pool mid-tournament! We're thinking of incorporating a 'dipping station' into next year's tournament if the weather doesn't cooperate.

Nevertheless, it was a great day because the tournament sold out, the golf was terrific as usual and the funds raised this year exceeded \$10,000! We extend our sincere gratitude to the ASPE (Arizona Society of Professional Engineers), the players, the volunteers and the Phoenician staff!

And we offer a very special thank you to the wonderfully generous sponsors of this year's tournament:

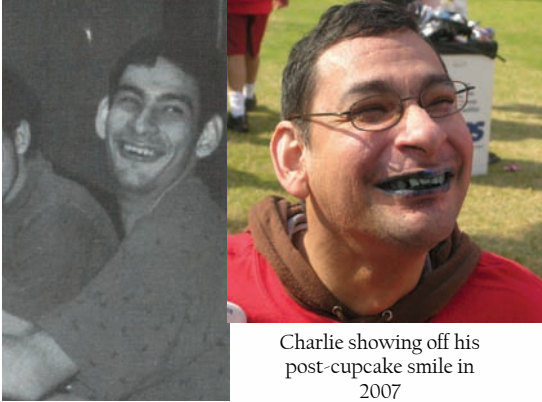


Carter Burgess | HDR | Haydon Building Corp.
Ritoch-Powell and Associates

Ames | Kmetty Consulting | Psomas | Wood Patel
Kimley Horn | Mark Jacoby | Ninyo & Moore | Scheifer Enterprises | Stanley | Willdan

Who Is Gompers? Charlie, Niki and Windsor are Gompers!

In sixty years, thousands of individuals have come through our doors and many have called Gompers their second home. Here are just a few that have happily spent their days growing up at Gompers, and we are honored they rely on us to provide them with every opportunity they need to be more independent and fulfilled. These wonderful and beautiful faces ARE Gompers!

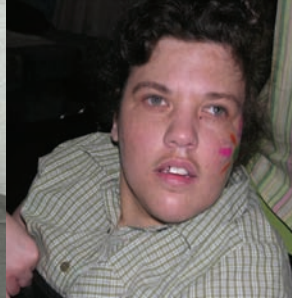


Charlie showing off his post-cupcake smile in 2007

Charlie Almanza, 1993



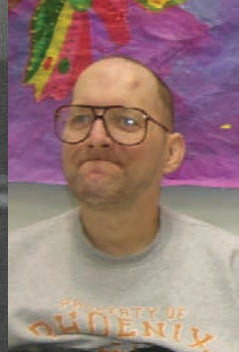
Niki Chilcoat, 1987



Niki at the Spring Fling's face painting booth in 2007



Windsor Bonnell, 1993



Windsor mugs for the camera in 2007

Special Feature: A Poem Entitled "That Boy" By Erin Abernethy

Erin Abernethy is a Phoenix 8th grader whose brother, Colin, has severe autism. This is a poem she wrote during her family's incredibly difficult struggle to stay together while managing life with Colin's profound disabilities. Colin's behaviors and bursts of violence lead the family to make an unenviable decision to eventually place Colin in a group home.

This poem is printed with the permission of Erin and her family and we are truly grateful that they have entrusted us with her honest and heartfelt words. Erin is a remarkable young lady who understands so much more than most 8th graders do. We're proud to include this beautiful poem in this very special edition of the Gram.

That Boy By: Erin Abernethy

If only one day he'd come home--
But we all know he won't
He's there... and he's there to stay
He's not coming home -- that boy that boy

After he hurt my mom and dad that way
I'm almost glad he's gone--
But, somewhere deep inside, I cry
We'll miss him forever -- that boy that boy

He bit my mom and dad
He broke coffee tables

He broke many things -- that boy that boy

But, it wasn't him
He's trapped -- in a madman's body
And -- he's fighting to get out
Kicking, screaming
As loud as he can
He can't control himself
He'll be stuck forever -- that boy that boy

It's just not fair that he was born this way
--Autistic--
No one has a cure for that--
If only they did
We're all sorry for that boy that boy
They took him away one sad, sad day

I didn't see him for many moons.
In the hospital's where he went--
No kids allowed but him--
They took him away -- that boy that boy

Our life was a living hell--
We all cried--
But -- the pain -- it stayed
The tears -- they drizzled down our cheeks
If only it were the pain inside
We wouldn't be so sad
We were sad for that boy that boy

He never came home --
And it hurt real bad
His bed was empty

There was a hole in our hearts from that boy
that boy

One day he found a home
He was happy there
Like he cared no more for us--
We were like pawns in his little game --
Things-- he just wanted to have--
Does he really love us -- that boy that boy?

He came to visit us one day
He was much happier
He was no longer trapped in a madman's body
He seemed better -- that boy that boy

No longer trapped, he could still not
communicate
He tried and tried
Frustrated were we
And so was he -- that boy that boy

He got better and better
But -- the autism never left him--
We are still sad for that boy that boy

He will never come home,
Or be the same boy--
We love that boy that boy

He is very special to me
I love him dearly
He is my brother -- that boy that boy

SNAPSHOT



This SNAPSHOT: Sedona Oak Creek Lions Club Fishing Trip

For more than 10 years, the Sedona Oak Creek Lions Club has hosted Gompers Day at the Rainbow Trout Farm in Oak Creek Canyon. As many as 30 clients from Gompers Habilitation Center and 15 staff and some families, shuttled up from Phoenix to the farm for a day of fun, fishing, and a nice break from the hustle and bustle of Phoenix. The Sedona Oak Creek Lions Club has been hosting this phenomenal event for so long because “Of all the service projects this Lions club engages in”, says Lion Dr. Jeanette Sasmor, “the Gompers Day of Fishing is the one hands-on activity that touches all of our hearts. It’s amazing to see these challenged young people and adults jump right in and participate in an activity that obviously gives them so much pleasure and a sense of achievement.” Rarely are smiles more evident than on this amazing day!



Thank you to the Sedona Oak Creek Lions Club and all the wonderful volunteers who make this extraordinary day happen! We'll see you soon!

Collaborative Partnerships

NAU - Gompers Habilitation Center is collaborating with Northern Arizona University's Phoenix-based Arizona Technology Act Program. The focus will be to identify and evaluate Gompers' more physically challenged DTA clients with the goal of determining ways to provide greater access to computers, thereby giving them greater independence through assistive technology. Gompers' goal is to empower our clients and give them the support they need to achieve greater independence.

Beatitudes Center DOAR - As Gompers Habilitation Center and Beatitudes Center DOAR (Developing Older Adult Resources) grow our relationship, we're finding many amazing opportunities yet to be discovered. The collaborative partnership that brings Gompers' clients and BCD's 'neighbors' together is proving to meet so many needs of both populations. In addition to the friendships that are being formed, the seniors from BCD are finding they are becoming mentors for many of the clients involved in the program. And Gompers' clients are providing

services the seniors need like serving as shopping partners.

This remarkable program will be expanding in the coming months as Gompers launches its own senior program to empower more of this viable, interesting and all too forgotten segment of the population. The partnership between Gompers and Beatitudes Center DOAR is only just the beginning of great things to come and we couldn't be more thrilled to have found our kindred spirit.

Artful Minds Around Town

PATHWAYS...

Twelve works of art by students in Gompers' Special Education School were on display at the Seventh Annual Transitions Conference, PATHWAYS... on September 17th and 18th. The event, hosted by the Arizona Department of Education, highlighted a fabulous display of student artwork and entertaining performances representing the outstanding talents of Arizona youth who receive special education services.

DDD HOSTS ARTFUL MINDS

Since June, several works of art have been on display at the Department of Economic

Security building, in the lobby of the Department of Developmental Disabilities offices on Washington Street in downtown Phoenix. These nine pieces were part of the Artful Minds Gallery Showing that took place this past May. In an effort to continually showcase the incredible talent of many of Gompers' clients, we are seeking venues throughout the metro area to host some of these beautiful pieces. If you are interested in serving as a host venue, please contact Gompers at 602.336.0061 ext. 162.

ARTFUL MINDS NOTE CARDS

Gompers Habilitation Center is proud to

present its limited edition Artful Minds Note Cards. This is a first time endeavor for the Artful Minds Program at Gompers and we have put together a beautiful collection of high-quality note cards with stunning images created exclusively by clients of Gompers Habilitation Center. For more information or to purchase cards, please call us at 602.336.0061 ext. 162.

A package of twelve note cards featuring three sets of each reproduction of the four select works of art sells for \$20.



Calendar of Events

It's that time of year again when we start gearing up for all of the festive events that are a staple of Gompers during the holiday season. This year, we've got so much more to celebrate as some new events have been added to the calendar. As is always the case, we are looking forward to the upcoming seasonal celebrations with our favorite supporters!

St. Joseph's Mission Services, Phoenix Suns Charities, Arizona Diamondbacks, Arizona Cardinals, Phoenix Coyotes, APS Volunteer Clown Troupe, Thunderbirds Charities and Old Country Buffet to name just a few.

October

- Annual Halloween Dance

November

- Gompers' 60th Anniversary and Thanksgiving Celebration

December

- St. Joe's Holiday Party

January

- Gompers Habilitation Center has been selected as the featured charity for the 50/50 Raffle on Tuesday, January 15th during the Phoenix Coyotes game against the San Jose Sharks
 - Gompers Habilitation Center and the FBR Open Birdies for Charity Program

Miscellany

- ◆ **Would you prefer to receive this newsletter via email?** If so, send your request to tsmith@gomperscenter.org and you'll receive the Fall edition of the Gompers Gram in your email inbox.
- ◆ **Would you like to make a donation to one of Gompers' great programs or services?** Then visit our website at www.gomperscenter.org to donate online.
- ◆ **Have you ever thought about volunteering at Gompers Habilitation Center?** We have many fulfilling and fun opportunities for people to volunteer a few hours a week or even once a month. Whether you'd like to spend time with our students or clients or support one of our great fundraising endeavors, we would be happy to match you with a program or project that suits your schedule and supports the wonderful work being done every single day here at Gompers Habilitation Center. For more information, please call our HR Coordinator at 602.336.0061 ext. 118.

All Board members can be contacted
via the following address and phone numbers:
6601 North 27th Avenue | Phoenix, Arizona 85017
602.336.0061 phone | 602.336.0249 fax

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