



Quest's News

The Quest, Inc. Newsletter • Spring Edition 2010 • www.questinc.org

Giving Everyone an Equal Voice



Each week, students in Miriam Roth's civics class at Quest engage in discussions about the political process, current events, voting rights, advocacy and community activism.

If you're visiting Quest's vocational center on a Tuesday morning, you're likely to hear a lively discussion about today's most pressing issues – from the current happenings of the state legislature to the latest issues surrounding the nation's health care system.

It's all a part of Miriam Roth's civics class for adults with disabilities, like Cerebral Palsy or Down syndrome. The course is offered at Quest through a partnership with Orange County Public Schools.

That program also offers courses in computer literacy, living skills, employability, social skills, communication and money management, but it's the civics class that always seems to be the most striking.

"People are surprised, but you can't underestimate other people's abilities," Miriam said. "They have opinions, and they can back up their answers."

Empowering Education

What began 14 years ago as an initiative to encourage these adults to vote has evolved into a full-fledged social and political discourse that's giving disability a voice in our local community.

The 10 students currently enrolled in the class are all registered voters and are required to keep up to date with the news. Miriam believes it's important for them to be informed so that they can express themselves in effective and appropriate ways.

"They're part of the process," she said. "They feel like contributing members of society, and there's no greater feeling than that."

Making a Direct Impact

Though weekly topics change to keep pace with current events, issues impacting disability care always incite the most passion.

But the action goes beyond class debates. Students regularly write e-mails and make calls to lawmakers, and they will even go to town hall meetings and participate in voter forums to make their voices heard.

"Because they're the recipients of all of these programs, they will express how an issue would affect their lives."

Getting the Message Across

For students Lisa and Antonio, having a channel to express their opinions and take action has been a rewarding experience.

"Regardless of where you stand, it gives people the idea that you can think for yourself, and not that others just think for you," Lisa, 48, said. "We have to be able to speak for ourselves."

(story continued on back)

From the president

From the very beginning, Quest has been committed to empowering Central Floridians with disabilities, and that philosophy has never changed. What has changed throughout the years is our approach. With our mission in mind, we always seek to provide the best programs and the greatest opportunities to the people we serve, and as their needs have evolved so have we.

As the number of children diagnosed with developmental disabilities soared, Quest responded by opening the QuestKids Academy in Orlando and managing the Florida Autism Center of Excellence (FACE) in Tampa. As employment opportunities all but disappeared, Quest sought the funding that will launch Project SEARCH, a specialized job-training program with unprecedented potential for young adults with special needs. And now, as our nation tackles important matters surrounding health care, Quest will be part of the conversation to make sure the issues most significant to people with disabilities are represented.

We continue to pioneer ways to deliver our services, and we can't thank you enough for joining us on this journey. As an advocate of Quest, you help push us forward, inspiring and emboldening us to stay on the forefront of the field. Thank you for your generosity and for giving us the tool we need to succeed: your support.

Katie

Quest's Luncheon Success

This year's annual **Quest for Independence Luncheon** events in Orlando and Tampa drew about **400 supporters** and **raised \$130,000** for Quest! Guests heard from some of the families in our community whose lives Quest has impacted, and thanks to the generosity of people like you, those children and adults will continue to be able to fulfill their dreams of going to school, having a job, living on their own and experiencing summer camp.

We'd like to extend a special thank you to all of the **alliance members, donors, table captains, board members, staff, speakers and other supporters** that helped make both of our events a success!

Leave Your Legacy

Quest was founded nearly a half-century ago by a small group of parents who wanted to ensure that people with disabilities would have equal opportunities to succeed. Throughout the years, Quest has helped thousands of children and adults in our community achieve their goals, and with your support, we can reach thousands more. You can make it possible for us to continue to deliver our services in the future by making Quest a beneficiary in your long-term plans. There are a number of ways to make a financial commitment to Quest from your **will, living trust or other estate plans**, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss how a legacy gift can meet both your philanthropic and financial goals. For more information, please contact **Millie Erichsen** at **407.218.4365** or **merichsen@questinc.org**.





WineQuest Arrives June 11-13

WineQuest – Quest’s largest annual fundraiser – returns for its 14th year from **June 11-13** at **Grande Lakes Orlando** resort! Featuring a collection of fine wine tastings, dinners and auctions, celebrate this year’s series by sampling nearly 200 wines from around the world, savoring a delectable five-course wine dinner in chef's table style, and tasting the freshest local flavors with a champagne brunch designed exclusively for WineQuest – all to benefit Quest.



Funds raised at WineQuest support Quest’s residential, vocational, recreational and children’s programs, and go directly to reach more people in need right here in our community. The demand for these critical services is growing at an alarming rate, while at the same time the resources are only getting scarcer. Your participation in the WineQuest event series helps Quest begin to bridge that gap. Your attendance means we can continue to change the lives of more than 1,000 children and adults with disabilities each day.



Please support Quest by visiting www.winequest.org or calling us at **407.218.4300** to purchase your tickets for this year’s events.

Pictured left: In 2009, WineQuest delighted more than 600 guests with its world-class wine and cuisine, and raised more than \$220,000 for Quest. This year’s 14th annual fundraiser will be held from June 11-13, 2010, at Grande Lakes Orlando resort.

FACE Receives a \$10,000 Verizon Foundation Grant

Quest’s school for children with autism in Tampa, the **Florida Autism Center of Excellence (FACE)**, has been awarded a **\$10,000 grant from The Verizon Foundation!** The award will provide cutting-edge training opportunities for teachers and other staff at the public charter school.

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders can struggle with communication, social, academic and behavioral issues, and specialized schools like FACE were designed to focus on these areas. FACE strives to guide each student on the path to success by teaching essential skills through a structured environment, small class sizes, low student-teacher ratios and individualized programs for each child.

But in educating a population that is rapidly growing – the latest estimates predict as many as **1 in 91 US children are now impacted by autism** – where there is no known single cause and no cure, continuing education is vital.

The Verizon Foundation funding will help FACE continue to be a leader in the field of education for students with autism, where developments in effective teaching strategies are still being discovered – meaning the nearly 70 students currently attending FACE will greatly benefit from this grant! To learn more about the education program at FACE, visit www.faceprogram.org.



With techniques in educating students with autism evolving, continuing education and training for teachers is vital.

Civics Class at Quest Helps Students to Have their Voices Heard

(continued from front page)

Antonio, 29, couldn't agree more. The class has given him an outlet to get his message across.

"People with disabilities need to be heard. We need these types of opinions out there, and if you don't have the tools [like this class], you have nothing."

A Program in Jeopardy

Though the program has great value in the lives of the people served at Quest, it isn't immune to the economic hardships being felt around the country. Proposed funding cuts are especially impacting services like this one, meaning classes may have to be limited - or possibly even eliminated.

While the future of the course and the others currently offered at Quest remains unknown, that hasn't stopped students from sticking together.

"It's important to have a group of people who put you first, and who you can make sure are fighting for you," Antonio said.



Antonio and Lisa are students in Miriam Roth's civics class. "This class keeps me up with what's going on because it deals with our lives," Lisa said.

Help Quest Go Green!



You can help Quest become a little bit **greener** by signing up to receive our new electronic version of the Q's News, scheduled to launch in 2011. To join, please visit www.questinc.org/newsletter.aspx.



P.O. Box 531125
Orlando, FL 32853-1125

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. Postage
PAID
MID-FL, FL
PERMIT # 12020



The *Reliable One*®

OUC-The *Reliable One* is proud to sponsor the Quest newsletter.

Visit www.ouc.com for energy and water conservation tips, rebate information and to learn about OUC sustainable programs.