

OUR MISSION

Developing innovative opportunities for people with disabilities



Gompers Impact

Our Seven Core Values

- Person-Centered
- Dignify Others
- Enhancing Abilities; Seeing Possibilities
- Professional Excellence
- Responsible Stewardship
- Collective Impact
- Celebrate Daily

DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN USING EVIDENCED-BASED PRACTICES

Thunderbirds Charities generous support for Gompers programs has been extraordinary. Now topping nearly **\$212K since 2004**, Thunderbirds Charities have helped fund our multisensory room, contributed to our capital campaigns, resurfaced our indoor basketball court and helped build the physical infrastructure for our assistive technology (AT) program. When Gompers Private School recently identified the need to update our K-12 classrooms and increase staff training in technology, the Thunderbirds once again offered their support.

Special Education Director Becky Gurnick, M.Ed. recently shared the foundation for her educational philosophy and the basis for the grant request, "Educating special needs students to reach their highest potential requires not only an individualized, multi-faceted educational approach, it also requires a well-trained staff, teaching in a highly structured classroom environment and utilizing evidence-based curriculum." She went on to say, "The 2015 funding from Thunderbirds Charities provides the

essential partnership that makes this possible."

Four essential pillars define Gompers Private School, an Arizona Department of Education certified K-12 special education school:

1. Curriculum – Each student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) is generated specifically to support the learner with goals to increase academics and life skills. Our school utilizes **Unique Learning System** and **News 2 You** curriculums which are both aligned with common core standards using evidenced-based practices. These curriculums provide opportunities for all ages and levels of functioning to experience learning by using a differentiated learning strategy. In addition, our classrooms are structured to support a variety of behaviors by using a teaching model that supports **Positive Behavior Interventions (PBI)**, and allows the students to develop independent functioning.

2. Assistive Technology (AT) – The need and use of AT are assessed

through a collaborative process of integrating and implementing various assistive technologies using evidence-based strategies to support a student’s access to individualized curriculum across all contexts.



3. Community-based Instruction – Through exposure to a wide variety of activities out in the community, students are able to practice and apply learned educational strategies in real-life situations. In these often unfamiliar environments, multisensory activities provide opportunity to increase

> article continues on page 6

MARK'S MESSAGE

Gompers Habilitation Center's Executive Director

There is no doubt that change is coming to the way in which disability services in Arizona are delivered. What we need to determine is whether it's a light at the end of the tunnel or a speeding locomotive heading down the tracks right at us!


The biggest changes are coming from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The intent of these rules is a noble one: To provide individuals with disabilities the same access to the community everyone else has. The problem is that if we do not do this right, it is fraught with potentially damaging consequences. I applaud **AHCCCS and DDD** for engaging the disability community (members, families, providers, advocates) to work on an implementation plan together; as other states are simply saying, "Here's what you're going to do. Deal with it." We must work collaboratively to ensure that the health and safety of our members is taken into consideration, the voices of our parents are heard, and most importantly that choice is not taken away. One size does not fit all, one disability cannot be served

like another, and while we talk about services remaining person-centered, is that really possible when options are reduced and others restricted so tightly that you might as well eliminate them?

The rule changes from CMS are not alone though. The Work Force Innovation Act, Employment First, new overtime rules, the growing attack on sub-minimum wage certificates, and a plethora of other rules, regulations and advocate lead changes are going to reshape and redefine what we do and know in Arizona. Done right, these changes can lead to **advancements and improved outcomes** for the individuals that Gompers and so many other agencies serve. Done wrong, the consequences can be devastating in ways we cannot even imagine now.

So this is your call to **action to become involved**, to become knowledgeable and to make sure your voice is heard. We may not agree every step of the way, but only through respectful dialogue can we assure a **positive outcome for everyone**.

If you have questions or would like to find out more, please call me at **602.283.3933** or email me at mjacoby@gomperscenter.org.



MARK JACOBY



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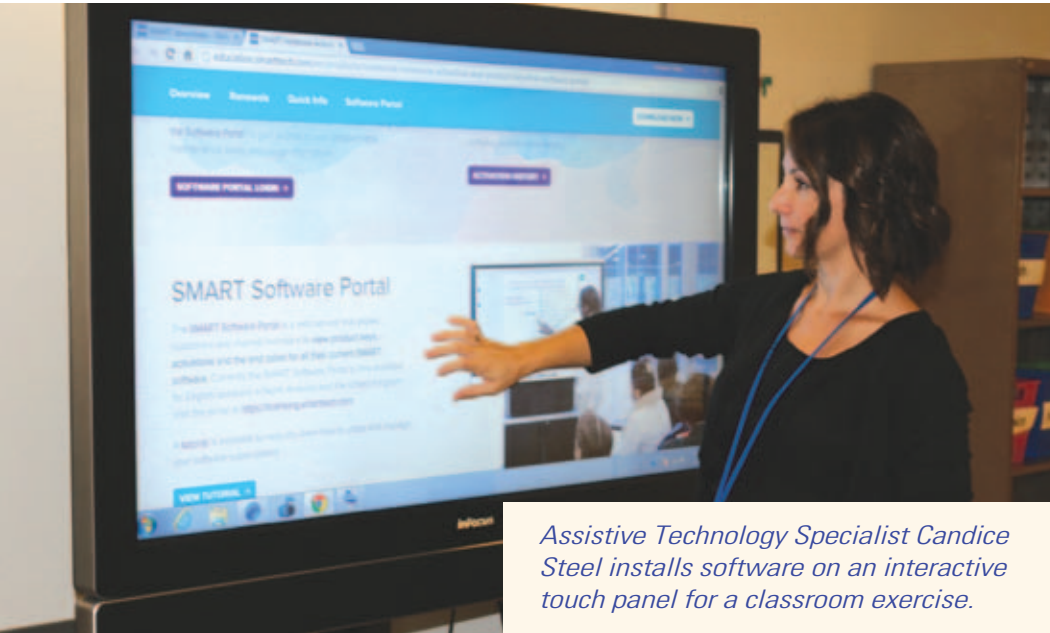
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GOLF FORE GOMPERS BENEFITS STUDENTS



Assistive Technology Specialist Candice Steel installs software on an interactive touch panel for a classroom exercise.

April 10, 2015 was a day of sunshine, fun, friendship and great golf resulting in net proceeds of over \$32K to fund necessary assistive technology in Gompers Private School. "We immediately knew our greatest need was to replace our aging Smart Boards with the **newest interactive touch panel technology**," Executive Director Mark Jacoby said. Becky Gurnick, M.Ed., Gompers new special education director agreed, "The software and technology have advanced considerably since our original Smart Boards were installed in 2008." She continued, "To comprehend

the level of technological advances, just think about the desktop computer you used in 2008 and the phone or tablet that you use today."

Interactive touch panels are an important educational tool for students with physical, developmental, behavioral, or communication disabilities. Many of our students experience multiple disabilities which can make learning even more challenging for them. And while each student is as individually different from another as any other human being would be, they all want

to learn and communicate in the classroom. "The importance of keeping up with technology for children who experience additional learning challenges is essential," Mrs. Gurnick explained. "Our teaching team finds it very exciting to watch **students progress and celebrate milestones**, so it is an ongoing process for our staff to develop new activities to spur these learning objectives."

Assistive technology like interactive touch panels and smaller tablets are important supports in creating interest bearing activities that engage the learner. Gompers assistive technology program was established and continues today as a direct result of **philanthropic support** from the community. Jacoby was quick to share the enthusiasm and gratitude of the Gompers students, members and staff when he said, "We continue

Our greatest need was to replace our aging Smart Boards with the newest interactive touch panel technology.

to be amazed at the level to which assistive technology has the ability to expand communication and learning for the individuals we serve."



Whether you are new to golf or consider yourself a pro, be on the lookout for our 44th Pioneer Golf fore Gompers **Save-the-Date card** later this fall. The fun annual event includes golfers with a wide-range of expertise who compete in a best ball format.



Mark Botterbusch and Fanny Alvarez (left and right) from Gompers Employment Services program work with Laura G. Briscoe (center), Executive Chef and Owner of Laura's Gourmet Granola on a time study prior to signing a contract to provide services.

GROUP SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (GSE) QUALITY WORK EXPANDS MEMBERS' OPPORTUNITIES

Increasing job opportunities in the community has been an important goal for Gompers Employment Services program, Director Mark Botterbusch explained. "One year ago, we were able to offer our members two Group Supported Employment (GSE) job sites – today we have six – a three-fold increase in opportunity."

GSE sites are important because the work occurs at the employer's place of business, not in Gompers' center-based training program on our Glendale campus. It is important for our members to gain **real world job experience**, as well as the social skills practiced with community integration. All of our current GSE sites have originated from center-based contracts.

"We celebrate small business owners who are inclusive in their diversity outreach to include individual with disabilities," Botterbusch said. "We encourage Gompers' supporters to not only support these fine companies, but to also reach out through their networks to help us grow our GSE sites even more."

LAURA'S GOURMET GRANOLA

A leader from Laura's Gourmet Granola reached out to Gompers Business Solutions program **through our website** to learn more about our efforts to train individuals with disabilities in competitive wage opportunities. Mark Botterbusch and his team quickly scheduled a time study to determine

Highlights From Our Four New Community Partners

what was needed to meet the specifications for a contract packaging granola and granola bars. "We began with a center-based contract a few months ago and are now ready to start the GSE job site," Botterbusch explained. "It has been our pleasure to be invited to work in the niche market of gourmet foods."

Partnering with Gompers simply makes good business sense.

HBI

It's been almost a year since Gompers members began assembling HBI packages of rolling papers. The contract with HBI came **through a referral** from one of our sister agencies when production levels increased beyond their ability to meet demand.

Work is now available at both our ES center-based campus and at the HBI job site. "We have so many members skilled in the assembly required for this contract that we now are able to rotate those who work at the job site," said Employment Support Supervisor Karen De Santiago. "It's a **real benefit** to our members to have transition opportunities between center-based and real-world employment."

RIGID INDUSTRIES LIGHTING & PANORAMIC PRESS

Rigid Industries approached Gompers a little over 18 month ago when they were seeking fiscally focused business solutions for their company.

"They needed a fixed cost for the assembly of their after-market LED light accessory kits," Xavier Conde, Gompers Business Solutions supervisor said. "We were able to nail down their costs, which was critical for them in order to be able to set their retail pricing."

Rigid was so pleased that when the time came to outsource their decal kits to Panoramic Press, they recommended Gompers Business Solutions for the assembly of the decal kits. "Our growth is directly related to

We can help entrepreneurial companies successfully meet their bottom-line objectives.

word-of-mouth recommendations," Botterbusch explained. "By producing **high-quality, dependable results**, we can help entrepreneurial companies successfully meet their bottom-line objectives."

IN GRATITUDE AND MEMORY

Frances and Fred Biermann
Esther and Loren Haugen
Arthur O. Willey

We would like to celebrate the following **generous, caring individuals** who recently honored Gompers with a legacy gift through their estate.

Would you like to leave **a legacy gift** to support individuals with disabilities?

PLEASE CONTACT

Diane Jezek-Powell, CFRE
at **602.283.3931**
or send an email to:
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DTA EXPLORES OUR WORLD THROUGH SCIENCE

Gompers Day Training for Adults (DTA) program has begun embarking on **a journey of discovery** with our new science initiative! Each month all of the DTA program rooms explore a new topic culminating in a month-end celebration of everything they learned.

Beginning last May, our members learned what happens when the earth trembles from inside and boils over.

They discussed, researched, and even created working volcanoes! It was a lot of fun but boy did they create a mess! A friendly competition in the parking lot celebrated the completion of the experiments.



*Each month all of the DTA program rooms explore a new topic culminating in a **month-end celebration** of everything they learned.*

In June, members went to the moon! Rockets and Space were all the buzz on campus. The members learned about the planets and how astronauts were able to reach the stars. With an exciting, early morning countdown, our members launch the rockets they made outside of Gompers Boundless Park™ and Playground. The rocket that went the highest won the competition.

July brought out the creepy crawlers! Sometimes things can be deceiving, like when a caterpillar metamorphosis into a butterfly or when a lonely ant becomes part of an active colony. DTA members were enthralled watching the changes and creation that took place right before their eyes. Each morning was a rush of excitement to observe the changes that had occurred the night before!

Who knows where their discovery will lead them next... Stay tuned!



Special Olympics

Special Olympics is **an important part** of our DTA program because it encourages members to stay physically active and well.

Left to right: Gompers Special Olympics coach, Jose Gonzales and Ali Gator pose with members Patricia H. and Patrick G. modeling the new softball uniforms and Ark A. wearing the new basketball uniform. The uniforms were made possible through a generous **Arizona Diamondbacks Play Ball** grant.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY: WHEN FUN AND LEARNING COME TOGETHER!



Victor N. right, delivers an iPad to Dominic C. in Program Room 30-9.

Every morning, Victor comes to our BHHS Legacy Foundation AT Lab to collect 11 iPads that will be used throughout the day by program members to meet their Individual Support Plan (ISP) goals. He is in charge of unplugging the iPads from their charging station, turning them on, placing them on his mobile cart and then delivering them to the program rooms one by one. Once an iPad has been delivered to a room, Victor checks that room off his list. At the end of the day Victor then goes back to each room to collect the iPads and once again checks each room off his list. He returns the equipment to the AT lab, closes all of the open apps, powers them down, and then plugs them into the charging station for the night.

“Delivering iPads to each room reinforces the life skills of **time management and open communication** that Victor is learning,” explains Mrs. Steel.

Mrs. Steel and Victor’s support staff have noticed how the added responsibilities have helped Victor to manage his emotions, and as a result enabled him to stay focused on projects. They have also seen a boost in his confidence and self-esteem, which has increased his motivation to seek additional duties.

“Victor takes his responsibilities very seriously,” Mrs. Steel explains. “He has a schedule to keep and most days he is the one telling me that it is time for him to start his duties.”

When you think of an iPad, you might think of it as a device to play games, chat with friends or even check email. Here at Gompers, iPads are an important component of our **Assistive Technology (AT) program** and they greatly assist our members with communication disabilities by helping them to communicate better, achieve everyday life skills, and increase their learning and retention. A great example of how AT at Gompers has transformed into much more than technology used for fun is seen when we look at one of our Day Training for Adults (DTA) members, Victor, as he assists Candice Steel, Gompers AT Specialist.

DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES > CONTINUED FROM COVER STORY

receptive and expressive communication skills as well. Each activity provides an opportunity to **gain knowledge** through self-discovery and building new social skill sets. Gompers large fleet of available, accessible transportation supports this important education experience. As our programs grow, we intend to add a variety of therapies including aquatics, equine therapy, community kitchens and the science museum.

4. Transition – A transition-based secondary curriculum, combined with Gompers adult programs, ensures students are prepared for life beyond

school. Special areas of instruction include career readiness, social relationships, environmental control and daily living skills. Instruction encourages greater independence and empowers the student to become more vested in their own transition into adulthood. Many of our high school students are participating in tasks that will provide them a foundation to take on multiple job duties.

Executive Director Mark Jacoby recently applauded the Thunderbirds for their **significant support** which has directly resulted in better programs and services for the individuals we serve.

He also noted their momentous impact in bettering lives throughout our larger Valley-wide community.

“Thunderbirds Charities’ dedication to improving the lives of individuals and families is clearly evident through the good work they do,” Jacoby said. “Our organization is a strong supporter of the Thunderbirds Birdies for Charity® program because their efforts benefit so many,” he continued. “To all the amazing men and women who volunteer their time to make this possible, Gompers shouts out a **big Gator salute!**”

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE LEADS TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



*Mrs. Gurnick has worked with students and their families for over **16 years**.*

Mrs. Becky S. Gurnick, M.Ed. *Director of Special Education*

Born and raised in the Midwest, Mrs. Gurnick attended Arizona State University, University of Phoenix and Northern Arizona University earning a bachelor of science in business management, and a Masters in Special Education, and a Masters in principal leadership.

Her professional experience has provided Mrs. Gurnick with a unique set of skills to lead students and staff. As a dedicated professional, child advocate, teacher, and administrator, she has served students and their families for over 16 years; as a certified special education teacher for children with multiple disabilities, mild to severe intellectual disabilities, and children with Autism. Her training in the field of behavior analysis allows her to **implement interventions and strategies** to create a positive learning

environment for all students. In addition, Mrs. Gurnick has a history of working with diverse populations in both the public and private sectors that have prepared her to lead and support public and private school education.

Our staff is focused on creating a positive learning environments for all students.

Her life has been blessed with a patient, loving husband, four sons, a daughter and three beautiful grand children. She resides in the foothills north of Phoenix where her family enjoys hiking the Maricopa trail with their crazy Jack Russell Terriers and riding their trusty steeds.



*Mrs. Steel has worked with students and their families for over **15 years**.*

Mrs. Candice M. Steel, B.S. SLP-L *AT Specialist*

Candice M. Steel received her Bachelor of Science in Speech/Hearing Sciences from Arizona State University in 2003. She began her studies in Music and Speech/Hearing Sciences at The University of Arizona and has taken graduate level course work through Northern Arizona University's Interdisciplinary Program for Assistive Technology.

Mrs. Steel brings 11 years of experience in Speech-Language Pathology plus four years of field work with mild to severe/profound developmental disabilities in private, charter and public schools. Her expertise has afforded Mrs. Steel opportunities to collaborate on developing and implementing inclusive service delivery models focusing on the **importance of life skills curriculum** for K-8 self-contained students.

Mrs. Steel has received training in various aspects of assistive technology, speech/language techniques, behavior analysis/management and leadership.

Assistive technology is the key that unlocks the smallest of possibilities for someone.

Assistive Technology has been an integral part of her approach to learning and using functional communication since the start of her career; "it's the key that unlocks the smallest of possibilities for someone."

Mrs. Steel is married, has a son, two dogs, a cat and a fish. She enjoys getting outdoors, nutrition and spending time with family and friends.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT HELPS INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

Recent generous gifts from **North Phoenix Kiwanis** and **Wells Fargo** foundations are providing the funding necessary to renovate space on Gompers Employment Services (ES) campus in order to create a dedicated career transition program.

“The soft skills necessary for successful job searching and long term employment are complex and often more difficult to learn for individuals with cognitive disabilities,” Mark Botterbusch, director of Employment Services explained. “Understanding social cues, writing a resume, explaining one’s experience, and clearly communicating during the interview process are very difficult for people with disabilities who have not interviewed or worked in a traditional job before,” he added.

As more members develop vocational skills that qualify them to look for competitive wage employment in the community, creating a professional space for career transition training became essential. In addition to the financial support provided for the physical renovation by the North Phoenix Kiwanis and Wells Fargo foundations, **Associated Billing Services** donated office furniture and a sister agency donated computers, monitors and keyboards.

Employment Services Transition Specialist, Sherwin Goldberg, works with Adam J. on how to fill out job applications.



“Our members work very hard to develop their employment skills,” Botterbusch continued. “Thanks to philanthropic support from the community, we now will be able to offer a job search training program specific to our members learning styles, while **increasing their opportunity for success** in finding employment.”