

# Your Gift Helps People Like Kat

## Providing a home away from home for disabled adults

For families of medically fragile and severely disabled children, there aren't many options for care once they reach the age of 21. But with the Children's Center Adult Program (CCAP), continued education and care is available in a stimulating and loving environment.

CCAP, a River Region United Way affiliate agency, is a structured leisure program, the only one of its kind in the region. The goal is not to provide trade or job training, but a recreational atmosphere complete with the comforts of home.

Stimulation is an important component of the adult program. It is Executive Director Cynthia McCaghren's goal to keep the young adults stimulated with age-appropriate activities, such as exercise, cooking, music appreciation and arts and crafts.

McCaghren said that keeping disabled adults stimulated can help to lengthen their expected lifespan and significantly improve their quality of life.

Kat Garner is affectionately called the "social director" of CCAP. The outgoing young woman is a friend to all of CCAP's clients and staff, and never wants to miss a day. "She's such a people person," said Pam Garner, Kat's mother. "She just



*Kat, a client of the Children's Center Adult Program, a River Region United Way affiliate agency, enjoys a horse-riding lesson at Montgomery Area Nontraditional Equestrians, another RRUW affiliate agency.*

loves being around people." CCAP was a blessing to the Garners when Kat aged out of the public school system at age 21.

"We would say, 'What are we going to do with Katherine? There's nowhere for her to go.'" Pam said.

The program's variety of activities were what sold the Garners on CCAP. "She likes the fact that they give her responsibilities, because she's able to help with a lot of different things," Pam said. "They allow her to help and allow her to do what she can."

The program was started to give parents of severely disabled young adults an option for daytime care that didn't necessitate having to quit their jobs and place a financial burden on

the family. For many parents of young adults such as these, that is their only option.

"If I did not have this option, I feel like I would probably not have a life outside of her," said Pam Garner. "I think I would be home, I would not be working."

McCaghren and her staff are dedicated to finding new ways to improve the lives of the CCAP participants, such as trips to Montgomery Area Nontraditional Equestrians (MANE), another River Region United Way affiliate agency. "Without our United Way funding, we wouldn't even be able to even have CCAP," McCaghren said. "Our United Way funding is everything to us. It helps us meet that need."

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