

**Samantha Islas,**  
*Community Innovator*



# **Change Through Possibilities**



# NURTURING *growth*

In 1950, seeking a good home for their young family, Alton and Evelyn Fritts built a simple farmhouse and chicken coop on a 160-acre farm at the southwest corner of what is now Southwest 19th Street and Telephone Road in Moore, Oklahoma. The area was rural, shopping was limited and services were few, but a supportive community made it an ideal place to raise a family.

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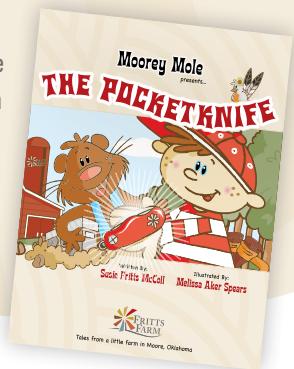
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# CHANGING COMMUNITIES...

Changing Communities...those 2 words sound so simple. Change is a very difficult process for many of us. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines change as something different. In theory, when most of us think of change it sounds like a great idea. It's great until someone tries to change what we are doing. How easy is it for you to drive a different route, to start eating new foods or alter your morning routine? For most of us, change comes with determination and a willingness to change.

All of us can struggle with change. Though a community may want different results, they don't always want to change the way they are working to get those results right away. There have been times that community groups have been encouraged to use an icebreaker or set group norms so that people feel included in the meetings they have. Sometimes people choose to keep having meetings without using any of those tools and then wonder why more people won't be involved.

An amazing aspect of the work of *Possibilities* is that not only do communities change, but the individuals within that community learn to embrace change through *Possibilities*. As you read the stories in this magazine and get to know *Possibilities* partners, you will see that the journey for them to create community change began with a willingness to change themselves. When you think of how hard it is to change, you will understand why *Possibilities* thinks our partners' stories are miraculous. Thank you for joining *Possibilities* in Connecting People and Changing Communities.



# Message from the President

Today, we proudly honor our founding board members, **John Rex and Linda Lambert**. *Possibilities Inc.* is forever indebted for their keen interest and tireless efforts to set us on the path to success. Oklahoma City is now experiencing one of the most exciting times in the history of our town with all of the new developments and innovations that are evolving. Our comparative isolation from the threat of severe economic impacts and unemployment that other parts of the country continue to experience has certainly favored us. The organization has had one of its most successful years ever in terms of participation; not only from our new program members, but more importantly from our alumni and graduates. That said, we continue to see not-for-profit agencies struggle to survive and carry out missions, especially in community outreach and improvement. Our organization has a significant need related to the investment in our

ongoing and future projects of the seasoned Community Innovators in our program. Support for charities that primarily support immediate needs has stayed fairly level, but there is still a lag in getting adequate support to continue the work that has already been started. Our staff provides an amazing level of service and strives to cover all possible avenues to manage through the challenges through which they must navigate. Like all organizations, we must find support from the area in which our work is done. *Possibilities* has reached out in some new ways to develop additional support networks. Our *In the Mood* event was a great success and we hope to see all of you there in May!



As a blooming development area, Oklahoma City is in great need of community involvement and connecting people who can and should work together for a better life in their neighborhoods and schools. Most people intuitively know this, yet there is a strong tendency to set aside goals that are difficult and require the support of others. Uncertain economic times have contributed to these pressures, and without the motivation and mentoring of organizations like ours, we cannot expect that community improvement will be strong and rise above the struggles that our Community Innovators are facing. Oklahoma City communities need the tools, training and moral support to lead their neighborhoods, schools, communities through improvement.

The programs of *Possibilities, Inc.* are long-term in nature by design. The journey begins with our new participants, but the most critical use of the funding received is deployed into supporting community work and projects that are underway and showing successful results, in addition to supporting current projects for our latest Community Innovators. This support is critical in allowing community changes to become permanent, rather than resulting in the need for assistance from various charitable organizations again and again.

In honor of our founding board members, we have our first annual **Founders Vision Match** to match donations that are received by the end of December. Please join in the continued support of the permanent positive changes resulting from the work being done by *Possibilities*, so that together we can pursue constant improvement for Oklahoma City and its neighborhoods, schools and communities. Many of you have faithfully and generously devoted your time and financial support to our organization over the years, and for that we wish to convey to you our utmost gratitude.

Lucy Fritts  
American Fidelity Assurance Company  
President, *Possibilities* Board of Directors

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Strong businesses, families and schools within safe neighborhoods create thriving urban communities. Since 1995, *Possibilities* has worked “to strengthen the ability of people to work together for community change.” Addressing issues such as poverty, isolation, dependency, struggling schools, crime and deterioration, *Possibilities* work is

critical for a vibrant city. *Possibilities*, a United Way partner agency, engages citizens at the grassroots level to leverage the power of cooperation, creativity and community.

To create community change, *Possibilities* teaches skills that develop local leadership. The formula of success is relationship equals connection equals community change. Program participants, known as Community Innovators, share a passion for community, working where people live, work, learn, worship and play. Community Innovators impact around 50,000 people annually achieving safer neighborhoods, stronger families, community schools and economic growth in greater Oklahoma City and beyond. Community Innovators and their community groups ensure that changes last and are self supporting.



## Change Through *Possibilities*

### Meet Marisol Jackson



I'm very grateful for the opportunity *Possibilities* has given me. *Possibilities Innovation Program* is just wonderful; it has helped my children's school by facilitating the planning of the end of the year carnival to celebrate the hard work of teachers, students and parents of OKC Educare. This program is helping me personally by assisting me with a project that I've wanted to put together for a long time. It consists of helping to educate the Hispanic community about children with autism. You might not know how difficult it is to access educational materials about autism in Spanish, but I will tell you.

In January of 2012, my son was diagnosed with autism. My first reaction was fear because I didn't know how to help my 2 year old son. I feared rejection of family and other people. When I finally came to terms with reality, I started looking for resources to help my son. I found many doors were shut due to my limited English. I realized that if those doors were closed for me, how about the thousands of families that don't speak or understand English at all?

The sooner you start helping a child with autism, the better chance he has of living an easier life. This is not necessarily to change their way of being, but instead educating the family on how to view life and things through the eyes of their child, along with various therapies, love and a lot of persistence. *Possibilities Innovation Program* has helped me overcome many of my fears and weaknesses and has taught me to be strong, to keep a positive mind and to say “yes, I can.” I would like to thank all of the wonderful people of PIP for being such a great support group.

# Possibilities Innovation Program



## *Engaging and Transforming Communities from Within*

Great transformations occur through connections we have with others. *Possibilities Innovation Program (PIP)* Community Innovators come from all walks of life and share the dream for a better community. They make their dreams a reality by participating in the yearlong *Possibilities Innovation Program* to increase their confidence and skills to work with others to create community transformations.

An opening retreat kicks off the program where Community Innovators are immersed in *Possibilities* tools and learn to base their community work on a set of values and principles. After the retreat, these Community Innovators attend a series training sessions on topics such as Building Participation, Effective Communication, Conflict Resolution, Creating a Collective Vision, and Raising Resources. They also participate in practice opportunities, putting the tools they have been taught to use.

Then, Community Innovators assess communities and decide on a community project to work on with others. They create a vision, plan, implement and evaluate their projects, working in neighborhoods, schools, houses of faith and businesses throughout greater Oklahoma City and beyond. They celebrate and share their journey during graduation in June.

A few recent projects focused on connecting a neighborhood that struggles with gangs and crime, encouraging healthy lifestyles in a local school community, reaching out to help meet needs in apartment complexes with high transition rates, and creating community, family and school connections to support successful young children and families.

Join us in thanking our Community Innovators who have the courage to explore the *Possibilities* for their communities through *Possibilities Innovation Program*! As always, we can't wait to see what innovative transformations are in store for our communities next...

# PARTY, PARTY, PARTY!



Each year, Community Innovators plan a project they want to work on to create community change. One of the tools they learn is community assessment, where they go out and talk to people in the communities they want to work in to see if their idea is something the community supports. They tackle tough community issues like crime, schools under pressure, gang activity and poverty. In the last few years, one of the greatest needs our Community Innovators have identified is the need for connection. We have seen a big increase in our Community Innovators choosing to work on events that connect people, like block parties and community celebrations.

You might be tempted to ask, how can a block party help address serious community problems? Think back to a time where you experienced change in your life, such as going away to college or getting a job where you were expected to work with others. The first thing colleges do is have orientation parties so that students feel more comfortable in their new surroundings. Chambers of Commerce around the country have mixer parties so that business leaders can meet one another. Parties introduce people to one another and allow people get to know each other in a relaxed setting. They give people the opportunity to see what they have in common and break down barriers. If change efforts start with an invitation to come to a meeting to discuss crime, people usually report lonely meetings. Yet, you begin with an invitation to get together with your neighbors and bring your family, suddenly you have a crowd.

After participants go through the first two phases of the program year, they see how important building participation and connection are in creating community change. **Connected people change communities together.** A sure fire way to begin to build participation is to invite people to join you to have some fun. One of our early Community Innovators has turned block parties into an art form over the last eight years. Jerry Cable hosts regular block parties in his NE neighborhood that have 300 to 400 people attend. He partners with several surrounding neighborhoods, the fire department, the police department, Target, Farmers Insurance, elected officials and many other organizations and groups. At his block party this fall, Jerry had 14 graduated Community Innovators from different program years join his efforts. They help, they get ideas from him and they just want to be a part of the experience. Jerry also visits other communities and is a mentor for other leaders around the city.

One aspect of *Possibilities* that people don't always realize is that we are very intentional with our actions. What may look like a simple party actually has real purpose behind it. Block parties are not just a place to have a good time, they are a place to connect to others and gain skills as a community worker. They show the impact of building relationships to create community change. These relationships lead to other activities such as neighborhood clean-ups and crime prevention efforts and send a message that the community is united and strong. So it turns out the big deal about a block party is quite a bit!

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### Dignity

We believe in the worth of each person.

### Participation and Inclusiveness

We believe local people have the solutions to  
local problems & every person is a part of the solution.

### Growth

We believe success & failure give opportunity to learn.

### Responsibility

We believe people support what they help create.

### Service

We start where people are & join their journey.

### Trust

We believe people function best when they feel safe.

### Integrity

We believe our success depends on our actions  
matching our words.



## Possibilities Innovation Program Community Innovators' Communities

See [www.possibilitiesinc.org](http://www.possibilitiesinc.org) "At a Glance" in the About Us section for a full list of PIP Community Innovators' Communities.



## Katy Reagan

MARK TWAIN ELEMENTARY

I initially got involved with the *Possibilities* program because I had a project in mind for the school where I teach, Mark Twain Elementary. The initial project I had in mind was to put in a small-scale gym in our school. We are part of the Healthy Lifestyle program that promotes exercise and good nutrition and it seemed to be the right project for us. The *Possibilities* program started with a retreat that lasted a weekend. It was a very positive and nice experience to be around other people that wanted to give back to the communities where they lived or worked. It was followed by more sessions that were developed to create a cohesive group that could work together for a common goal.

Along the way, the vision for the project changed and we decided that a basketball court and walking trail in our playground area was what was needed. Our students participate in a basketball league after hours, and they don't have a place to practice. The P.E. teacher has to hold practice in a community center instead of at school. It was decided that the basketball court and walking trail would be what we would concentrate our efforts on.



After the training sessions, we started the implementation portion of our projects. It was time to choose what project we would be involved in. All the time I was going through the program, I was focused on my project. We planned for fundraising and involved the Oklahoma City Public Schools district in the project, getting the green light to proceed with it. Then we received some not so good news. We were

informed that the place where we had planned to put in our basketball court would have to be used to expand our school. We then had to regroup and figure out what to do next. I had forgotten about my initial project idea until *Possibilities* staff, in their wisdom, reminded me of it. We have, since then, changed our focus and have started working on getting a small gym at Mark Twain for families and teachers to use. I learned in my year with *Possibilities* that flexibility is a key factor not just when you are dealing with projects and things that involve a group of people, but in every aspect of your life.



CONTINENTAL RESOURCES

is proud to support Possibilities, Inc., because we share the belief that through teamwork our communities can solve issues such as poverty, crime and low school performance. And that our people are our states most important resource. Together our Possibilities are endless.



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## Change Through *Possibilities*

“The things I learned at *Possibilities* were invaluable. Not only the practical tools for how to run meetings, brainstorm, include everyone, etc., but also how to have perspective of the big picture within communities/groups and respect differences, mediate conflicts, and navigate through it all.” – *Crystal Partee, PIP Graduate*

“After going through *PIP*, I believe I can speak in front of people and feel more comfortable. I could not do that before.” – *Yolanda Bryant, PIP Graduate*

“Through *Possibilities*, I have come to the realization of how cohesive communities are due to the effort of committed leaders.” – *Madeline Whitehorn, People’s Network Participant*

“*Possibilities* taught me a lot about good ways to communicate with people, and how to help people feel comfortable in different settings. I am very grateful for the time I spent in the *PIP* program and for the relationships my family has made through *Possibilities*.” – *Darci Craghead, PIP Graduate*

“I have been impacted by *Possibilities* giving me new and different skills that allowed me to grow as a Community Innovator. The program has bought out things in me that I would have never felt comfortable doing before.” – *Walter Thomas, PIP Graduate*



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# People's Network



The People's Network is your opportunity to meet partners hard at work in our communities. Neighborhoods, schools, non-profit organizations, businesses, houses of faith and individuals from central Oklahoma come together once a month to share a meal and discuss what is happening in local communities. People from all cultures, ages and economic backgrounds gather for connection and fun at this event like no other.

Want to know more about *Possibilities* work and the everyday people we work with who transform communities? Join us to meet our amazing partners and stay in touch with grassroots efforts right here in Oklahoma City. A delicious dinner is served at no charge. Optional on-site childcare is available – if you are bringing your children with you it is VERY helpful for you to give us a heads up on the number of children you are bringing and their ages so we can properly plan. All that is missing from the People's Network is **you!**

# Meet Doreen



## ....A special gathering



### When:

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from 6:00-7:30 pm

### Where:

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email [opal@possibilitiesinc.org](mailto:opal@possibilitiesinc.org)  
or visit [www.possibilitiesinc.org](http://www.possibilitiesinc.org)

Doreen Miles-Williams was attending the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren meetings at EDUCARE School. Walter Thomas invited her to the *Possibilities* People's Network meeting.

Doreen says, "One of the most important ministries for any church to operate is a food program. Not only is it designed for the church members, but for the community as a whole. With our Food Ministry, we know it takes a communication effort to spread the word about our Ministry. This is where The *Possibilities* People's Network has come into this vision. At People's Network it keeps everyone connected and the word gets around and that's how we knew that it would grow over time. When I first shared the information about Greater Mount Olive Food Ministry at the People's Network Community Sharing section, people immediately took advantage of it. The demand was so high that we were able to set up a second location inside EDUCARE to cover some of south Oklahoma City."

*Possibilities* People's Network is open to all communities, anyone can participate and you connect to so many people and it doesn't have anything to do with race, gender, ethnic or economic background, it's all about networking with other people.

*Possibilities* People's Network is an excellent source of communication and an outlet for all communities to use for spreading what others have available.

GMO offers this great Food Ministry to everyone."



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## Change Through *Possibilities*

*Meet*  
Travis  
Mason



*Possibilities* has given me essential tools that now, I feel confident in my ability to work in any community and help make a difference and help create lasting change. I see what can be accomplished when you have a voice and use it.

– Barbara Thomas, PIP Graduate

This year has been an exciting year for Oklahoma City. With considerable construction occurring in the Central Business District and redevelopment appearing throughout the metro area, it is clear that Oklahoma City has a lot to celebrate. Oklahoma is showing strong signs of diversified economic development. Beyond Oklahoma's economic staples of agriculture, oil and natural gas, our state has seen new growth in several industries including the biotech and the aerospace sectors. This exciting new growth can be attributed to the strong identity our city currently enjoys.

One of the many areas that help to create our identity as a city is *Possibilities*. *Possibilities* is an incredible organization that helps an individual express oneself, bringing people together to work and understand different areas of our culture. Credit is due to the people of *Possibilities* who help teach leadership and put various communities on a solid foundation within Oklahoma City. Understanding the importance of local leadership, *Possibilities* gives our community leaders throughout the metro area the tools to grow and prosper.



## Samantha Islas

### SOUTH OKLAHOMA CITY

One day, Samantha Islas, a *Possibilities Innovation Program* Community Innovator, came to *Possibilities* and said, "I think I need to withdraw from the program." She stated that she was very busy and she didn't think she could complete all of the goals of the program. *Possibilities* asked Samantha to stick with it. Sam stayed in *PIP* and completed her program year. Before experiencing *PIP*, Sam says, "I was shy and not outspoken. I was more of a person to be in the back of the room, not talking, not taking leadership. I was more comfortable following rather than leading. I knew I wanted to do something to help people, but never knew how to go about it or what direction to take. I was interested in the idea of a block party in my neighborhood, but I didn't know how to do it. I had a pattern of not following through and not finishing things because I would get discouraged. When I got discouraged, I would quit."

Samantha lives on the south side of Oklahoma City in one of the toughest neighborhoods around. There is no active neighborhood association and high crime rates and gang problems. Samantha wanted to have a block party in a park that some families were afraid to bring their children. Samantha worked with a group of fellow *PIP* Community Innovators to complete her project. *PIP* pushed Samantha to try something new and to find something new in herself. Each person that goes through *PIP* discovers something about themselves and how they relate to the world. Samantha says, "Now, I have completed a project and I know that I can finish something. I got out of my comfort zone and succeeded. I am confident in speaking about my ideas. I am starting to be more decisive and more willing to speak my opinion. I believe in myself now and I know I'm capable of doing things that I didn't think I could do before."

The group passed out block party flyers door to door and at neighborhood schools. One resident told them that he just thought everything would turn into a big gang fight. The day of the block party came and there was apprehension on what might happen and if people would show up. On the day of the event, about 100 people came and brought their children. They danced, ate, got to know each other and had a great time. Sam made sure all the booths were there and made sure volunteers were at their spots.

Of this experience, Sam says, "I now know that I can work in a group to complete a project. Now that I have successfully completed the block party project, I want to do something long term in my community. I have a better understanding of how to take on big projects because of *PIP*. I see all the resources that are out there that I didn't know existed. I have met many people who offer resources and help. I'm thinking more about what I can do to help my community. I'm more hopeful than I was before. I used to think that I couldn't make a difference or that what I did wouldn't matter. I've seen what my group and what others have been able to accomplish. I know I can help my community. I was discouraged when our block party project hit roadblocks. Before, I would have quit. I've learned from that experience. I know now that I can accomplish things even when I get frustrated. I saw our success and I know I can do it. I'm happy our block party happened. I was scared people wouldn't come to it, but they did. They had fun and neighbors met each other. So many people helped out with the event. I was afraid I would be on my own, but I wasn't. It was the start of building a sense of community in my neighborhood. Even during the planning stage, we met many friendly people. I've learned that when you put yourself out there, people will open up. They will help and see that there can be change in their community."

Samantha graduated from *PIP*, and has continued her training. Samantha realizes that she has just begun to reach her potential of creating community change. The formerly shy girl who didn't want to lead is still hard at work in her community and speaking to hundreds of people about what she has accomplished. Change is what happens through *Possibilities*.

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Oklahoma Natural Gas provides natural gas service to more than 800,000 customers in the state of Oklahoma. It is a division of ONEOK, Inc. NYSE: ONG, a diversified energy company. ONEOK is the general partner and owns 43.4 percent of ONEOK Partners, L.P. (NYSE: OKS), one of the largest publicly traded master limited partnerships, which is a leader in the gathering, processing, storage and transportation of natural gas in the U.S., and owns one of the nation's premier natural gas liquids (NGL) systems, connecting NGL supply in the Mid-Continent and Rocky Mountain regions with key market centers. ONEOK is among the largest natural gas distributors in the United States, serving more than 2 million customers in Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas. Its energy services operation focuses primarily on marketing natural gas and related services throughout the U.S. ONEOK is a FORTUNE 500 company and is included in Standard & Poor's (S&P) 500 Stock Index.

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## Patricia Shoels

PARK ESTATES NEIGHBORHOOD

GREATER MARSHALL  
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I came to *Possibilities* with a vision, searching for a way to make a dream a reality. My vision was of a community center that embraced the arts as well as computer literacy, adult education and family counseling. I was a ball of creativity waiting to burst with no path to the vision. My palms were up, my mind full of questions, my heart filled with compassion, my ears open for suggestions. My five year journey with *Possibilities* has heightened my awareness and broadened my horizons. I would like to give a special thank you to Earnestine McClellon, a *PIP* graduate, for introducing me to *Possibilities*.

I now realize that my community is greater than my physical residence. *Possibilities* has connected me with individuals that are helping me achieve the reality of my original vision. I have met and collaborated with individuals and groups such as Girls Alive and Embrace, two successful projects that have allowed me the experience of implementing the tools that I've learned in the *PIP* program. My contributions include a design for the flyers, programs and invitations for Girls Alive and a logo for Embrace. I have done logos for Project Grace, a heart and stroke awareness banquet. I've collaborated in the organizing of Body & Soul, a nutrition program through Living in Destiny, a foundation created by a 13 year old boy, Destiny Long, which has helped me realize my vision. In *Possibilities*, I have found a venue for my artwork.

LaShawn Martin, a fellow *PIP* graduate, and I collaborated with the founding of the Certified Nursing Aide (CNA) Training Academy. Using the skills that we learned during

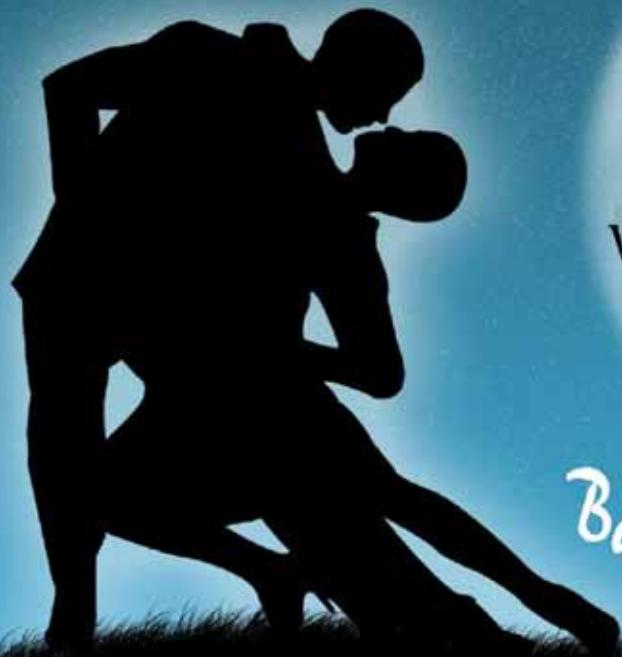
*PIP*, we overcame cultural and language barriers and helped to see this dream through. I designed the logo and brochures and LaShawn used her skills and knowledge to acquire the necessary paperwork. As a result, I am now employed as a home health care aide after graduating from

the CNA Training Academy. This program is instrumental in providing the necessary education and clinical training for men and women who may have previously encountered obstacles and provides help in job placement. My vision is being fulfilled every time someone graduates from that academy as I helped make it a reality.

Now, my grandson Delaun and my granddaughter Desiree are also *PIP* graduates, and my younger grandchildren look forward to coming to *Possibilities* classes and events. This gives me another opportunity to lead the way for them, not just talk about it.



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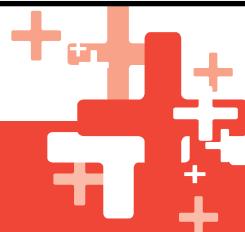
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# Change Through Possibilities

## Meet Travis Oneal



## Meet Andreina Perez



My experience with the *Possibilities* team at a community block party last year was nothing short of amazing. I wasn't even a part of the team at the time, and everyone on hand accepted me with open arms, and then put me right to work! (Ha ha) It was an incredible thing to see a group of individuals come together with ideas on paper and turn around and make it happen in real live action!! The community was so thankful and blessed to have something done for them for free and just out of love and compassion. It taught me that there are so many different ways that we can help people, and how gracious most people are to receive that. Also, it got me connected with a team/group of people that have a heart to help others and unite our world one community at a time, and that is something I'm proud to be a part of and hope to continue to grow and learn through the guidance of the leaders and my peers. Thank you!

I am glad to be here in the *Possibilities* program. *Possibilities* has been a great change in my life. I have met wonderful people. I have learned that it is okay to get out of my comfort zone. This program has provided us the opportunity to do something big in our community. I have learned what I am capable of doing. I always knew I had a purpose. As I always have said, I'm still a caterpillar finding its way to its wings.



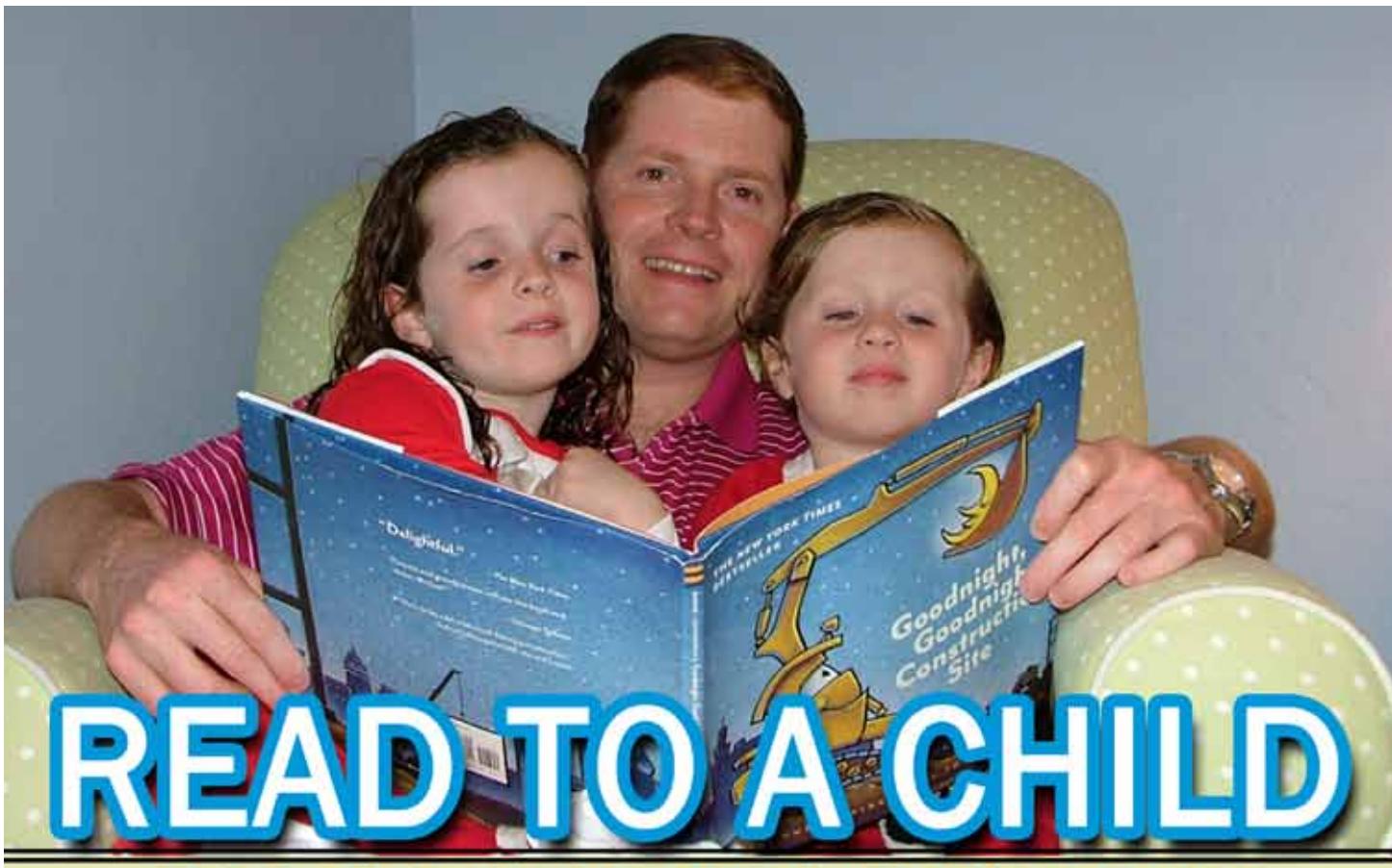
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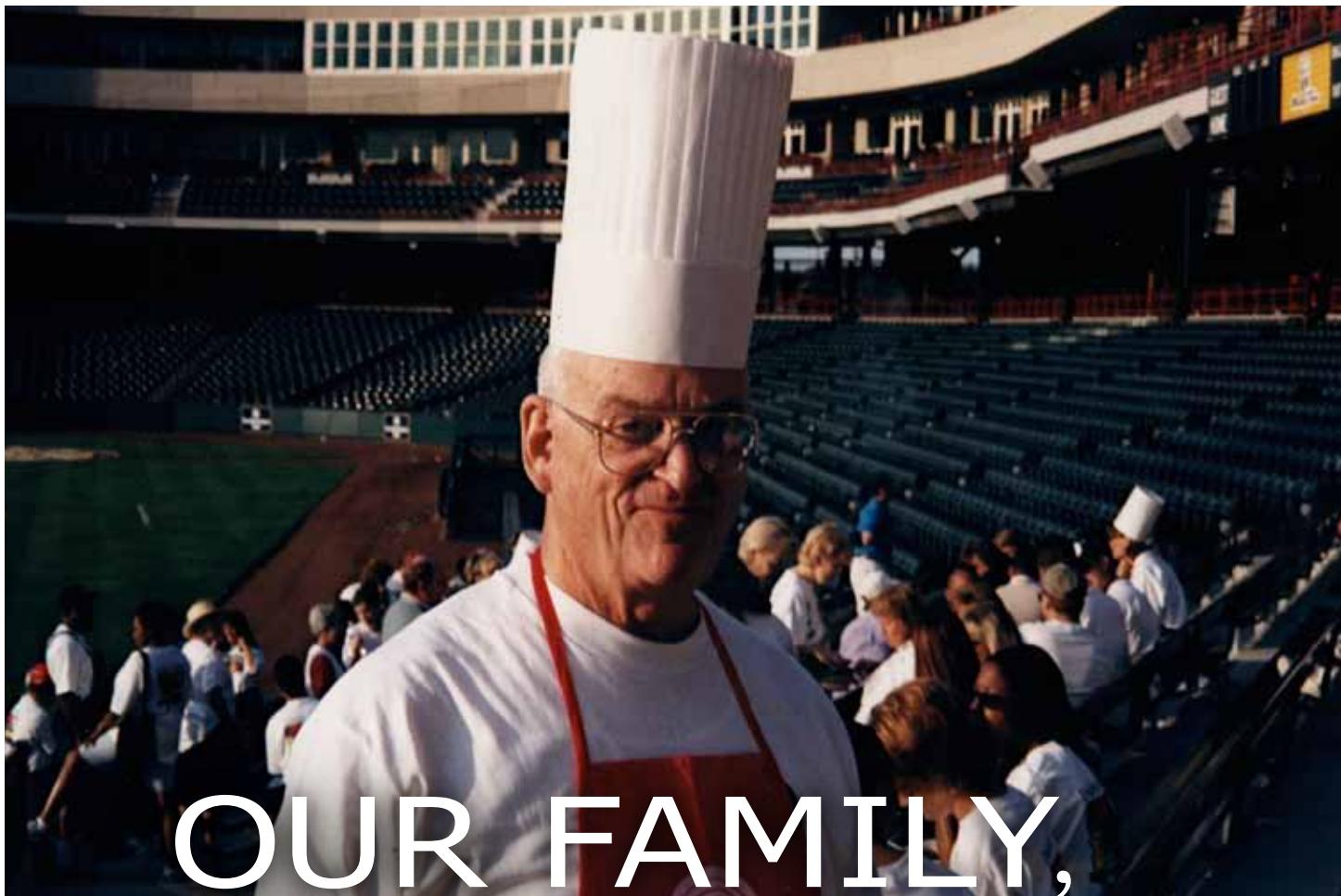
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