

**WHAT IF THERE WAS NO LAFAYETTE?**

By Dennis Dillon (Proud Parent and Proud Board Member)

If you don't find that hypothetical headline unsettling, consider the predicaments of two former Lafayette workers and their families who moved to Texas and discovered that not only are there no sheltered workshops comparable to Lafayette Industries, but services overall for persons with special needs are scarce.

Unlike Missouri, there is no state income tax in Texas, so that is not a funding source. There are few services available beyond what is federally mandated.

Some facilities in Texas that previously were sheltered workshops now operate as adult day care centers. The goal of the few workshops that do exist is to train people for jobs in the private sector — jobs that are ill-suited for many people with disabilities.

As for housing waivers, the waiting lists are regularly 10 years or more.

A 2023 study by *The Case for Inclusion* found that nationally there are more than 480,000 people with intellectual or developmental disabilities on states' waiting lists for Medicaid-funded, home- and community-based services. A map depicting each state's share of that number showed that Missouri had fewer than 1,000 people on its waiting list while Texas had more than 10,000 on its waiting list.

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Collin Gage worked at Lafayette for seven years. "And it was just wonderful," says Collin's mother, Carol. "We couldn't have found a better fit for him."

In 2019, Carol, her husband Gary, and Collin moved to Missouri City, a suburb of Houston TX, to be near parents who were aging. Gary Gage founded a company called Stream Biomedical in 2015, and he is researching a protein therapy for recovery from strokes and for other neurological and degenerative injuries or conditions.

Gary has been able to continue his work in Texas. Unfortunately, the Gages have not been able to find a sheltered workshop similar to Lafayette for Collin, 31, who has autism, and they are paying for a private, two days-per-week program per month for him.

"The only form of supported employment that I have found in Texas is associated with day programs or other programs that you have to pay for," Carol says. "Supposedly, there are a few workshops, but they are not industrial models like Lafayette, where you could work there your entire life."

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Rob Libera  
CEO & Executive Director  
[rlibera@lafayetteindustries.com](mailto:rlibera@lafayetteindustries.com)

**Mission:** The mission of Lafayette Industries is to provide employment opportunities to persons with developmental disabilities and to persons with other disabilities who are 18 years or older.

**Goals:** ♦ To provide a meaningful and productive work experience to persons who are disabled ♦ To maintain a safe and pleasant work environment ♦ To teach and to train persons with disabilities to acquire better work habits ♦ To enhance self-worth and dignity through employment ♦ To provide high-quality business service through packaging, light assembly and commercial mailings ♦ To operate the center in a professional, fiscally responsible manner ♦ To provide fair wages and good benefits

## What If There Was No Lafayette? – continued:

The workshop model in Texas is not for long-term employment but to train persons with disabilities to get out into the mainstream work force. While private employment is available, it would mean that Collin would be paid a minimum wage and lose many of his current benefits. One social services worker had the audacity to suggest that the Gages form their own company and hire Collin.

“Texas has got a whole lot of money,” Carol says. “We’ve got a whole lot of money in this state. Oil money. Energy money. And you tell me there’s not many services for disabled adults?”

Carol says she and Gary are at a “crossroads.” Both are 61, and they are worried about Collin’s future after they are gone. Although they have a daughter in Texas who would become Collin’s guardian, the state housing waivers for people with disabilities present long waits.

“It seems like most of them are either self-paid or Medicaid-paid by the state,” Carol says. “The Medicaid wait list is 12 to 15 years. I talked to one lady and she said the wait for her child was 17 years.”

Collin is basically bored and unhappy. His parents are frustrated — so frustrated that they are considering moving back to St. Louis. They still own a house in Valley Park, and they know Collin would be welcome to return to Lafayette. The Gages come back to St. Louis often, and when they do Collin sometimes volunteers at Lafayette.

“They treat him like a rock star,” Carol says. “He walks in and people are excited to see him. ‘Collin is here!’ And he gets all sorts of hugs. It’s such a feel-good situation.”

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When Jerry Bright retired from his job as a drywall supervisor, he and his wife, Tracy, decided to move from St. Louis to Fort Worth, TX to be closer to their two sons and two granddaughters.

“Plus, the weather is nice, my husband has a boat, and we boat all the time,” Tracy says.

Despite the idyllic sound of their post-retirement life, the Brights are facing the same adversity with their son, Charlie, who has Down syndrome, as the Gages are with Collin. Although they have been in Fort Worth only since last March, the Brights have yet to find a suitable program for Charlie, 31, who worked at Lafayette for nine years.

“Yes, we are in that same boat. We don’t know where to start,” Tracy says.

“There are no sheltered workshops down here, so it’s basically word of mouth trying to get hold of someone who knows someone who *may* be able to put you in contact with someone else. The only thing available to him right now would be working in a grocery store, and Charlie has the mentality of a seven- or eight-year-old so bagging groceries would not be something he would enjoy and that I would be comfortable with.”

Although having friends at Lafayette brought out Charlie’s social side, he basically is an introvert. He enjoys being with his two nieces, who are five and one, but he spends much of his time watching movies or playing video games. “It’s awful when you’re not social and you just don’t know where to start,” Tracy says. “He’s out and about with his family and our friends, but that’s about it. It’s kind of sad.”

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## What If There Was No Lafayette? – continued:

Tracy says Texas does not have a Down syndrome society. She joined a Facebook group and was contacted by someone who had a son with Down syndrome — but he was only three years old. “I don’t need to talk to someone with a three-year-old son,” she says. “I would like to talk to someone who has a 30-year-old son.”

“It would be nice to have some kind of resources. That’s one thing they don’t have down here. You can’t just call up the Down syndrome society and say, ‘Hey, can you send me a list?’ They have no regional center here. ... It’s totally different than St. Louis.”

Although it has been only three months since she has been in Texas, Tracy has felt the impact of Charlie and her not having Lafayette in their lives.

“I have to admit it was nice when he was working Monday through Friday because it was an opportunity to have some free time for myself, and it gave him a chance to go out and make friends,” Tracy says. “It was kind of nice to have that seven-hour break during the day. And you appreciate them all the more when they come home.”

“Now, we’re kind of stuck with each other 24/7.”

The Brights have decided to let Charlie take the summer off, let him spend time with his two older brothers and his two nieces, “and we will buckle down and look for something when school starts up,” Tracy says.

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If you haven’t realized what is the most important sentiment in these two stories, let Carol Gage express it:

“We knew Lafayette was a blessing for our son but had no idea just how lucky we were to be part of this organization until we left. To all the families of Lafayette: Be thankful for this workshop. You will be hard-pressed to find another like it anywhere else.”

***Board member Greg Steiner contributed to this story.***

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO OUR JULY FOLKS!

### NORTH

Jerome	Binder	3
Brittany	Sudin	4
Melissa	Jordan	5
Mary	Willenborg	8
Joseph	Cain	13
Lucretia	Hardy	15
Marie	Ball	17
Shawn	Flaherty	17
Colten	Lee	20
Brandon	Poindexter	20
Dion	Austin	26
Abibat	Akinola	31

### WEST

Nicholas	Altmeyer	8
Steven	Smith	8
John	Langley	9
Kathryn	Luckey	12
Nathan	Schiera	14
William	Hawn	15
David	Kendall	15
Zach	Adams	18
Bradley	Jandro	21
Claude	Turner	24
Diane	Hoeferlin	26
Jason	Marx	28
Tommy	Michael	30
James	Nash	31





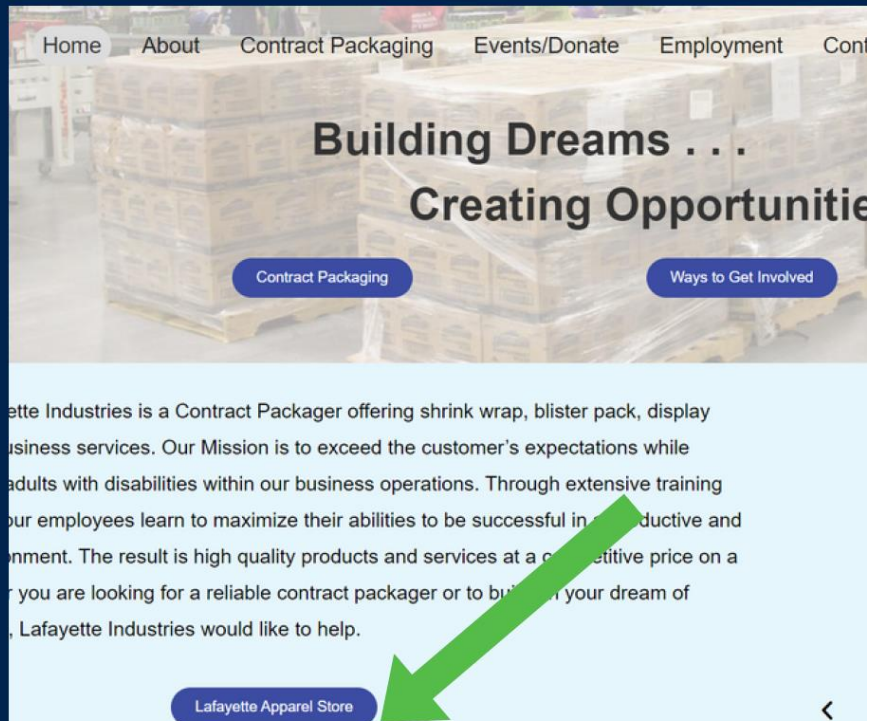
# Lafayette Spring Apparel Store!

Use QR code  
below or Link on  
Website front  
page

Store closes July  
31st Noon



[www.lafayetteindustries.com](http://www.lafayetteindustries.com)



## WEST – CAUGHT BEING RESPECTFUL AND CAUGHT BEING SAFE – MAY 2023



### RESPECTFUL:

Stuart Harlan, Carl Berger (United), Carrie McKaskel

### SAFE:

Kristin Kallansrud, Don Kline, Carl Berger (United)



### NORTH - CAUGHT

### BEING RESPECTFUL

### AND CAUGHT BEING

### SAFE

MAY 2023

**Left to right** - Jerry Ring, Glendall Davis, Sandy Hite, Stephen Bindbeutel, Erica Humphreys, Tina Tackett, Demitri Jamison, Laura Fortus, Cindy Behan, Mike Terry, Krystle Conroy, Henry Anderson, Anita Hightower, Jerome Binder, John Hope, Kevin Thompson, Sam Sullivan, Robert McCoy, Darrius Roberts, Dion Austin, Michael Sweeney, Antwaune Williams.



### LIFEBRIDGE OUTINGS

By Sheila Zigrye (Proud Lafayette Staff)

LifeBridge has started a new ordering program at North. Once a week workers can sign up for an outing. LifeBridge picks them up after work at North and takes them to the outing and then home. This was the first outing. They went bowling.

**Immediate left – left to right:** Darnell Wells, Mindy Proctor, Anita Hightower, Janiah Sanders, David Sims, Keith Muldrew



## KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #9522



Back on February 11<sup>th</sup>, earlier this year, the Knights of Columbus Council #9522, had a Trivia Night over at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Manchester. On June 6<sup>th</sup> they came by and made a donation from those proceeds for Lafayette. This group holds a special place in our hearts, as they are one of the oldest, most faithful and generous donor group we know. They've just always seemed to have a special place in their heart for Lafayette, and Lafayette has always thought what a great group the Knights were. Thank you, and the funds will be put to good use.

**Immediate above – left to right:** Joe LaFiore (Knight), Tom Landzaat (Knight), Angela Gentile (Lafayette), Beth Goodwin (Lafayette), Peter Bitzer (Knight) and Rob Libera (Lafayette)



## SAFETY THOUGHTS FOR JULY 2023

By Tom Heitert (The Safety Guru)

### RESPONSE TIME

Have you ever played the hand quickness game called “SLAP”? It's a two-person game, where one lays their hands out palms up. The second person covers the opponents' hands with theirs, palms down. The bottom hands must come up fast enough to slap the covering hands before the pull away. Bottom hands move first and rarely do they get the covering hands before they're gone. If the covering hand does not pull away quick enough, that's a “POOR RESPONSE” time.

Not a big deal in a game, but *vital* in Lafayette's emergency drills. Seconds matter. Saw an interview with a driver who had JUST driven over a bridge in Philadelphia as it collapsed early this week. Seconds matter. The roof collapsed on a large burning structure in the St Louis area this week just as the fireman were walking out. Seconds matter.

This is why you will see Sir Dan Libera, or Jim Bianchi with a stopwatch during the emergency drills. The assigned staff must get everybody to a safe location -- pronto. So, my safety conscious friends, how can we help?

1. Be Quiet! You will be able to hear instructions from staff, and they can do the all-important headcount quickly.
2. No locker stops on the fire drills.
3. Organize into your teams quickly.
4. In an earthquake drill, be quick to respond. Things WILL be coming down from the ceiling on you.

**SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT** - **MORE LATER!**

## NORTH WORKSHOP HAS A GROUP CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARIES

By Jerry Phillips (Proud Lafayette Staff)

18 years ago the people in the picture on the immediate left came to work at Lafayette Industries North from the Universal Workshop:

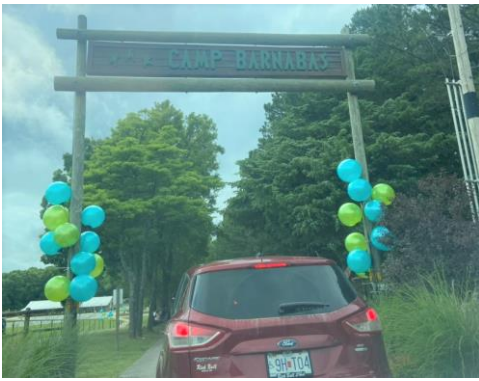
**Front – left to right:** Laird Simpson

**Second row – left to right:** Vaughn Caldwell, Jason Doss, Debra Coleman, Dorothy Gilmore, Sandy Shaw

**Third row - left to right:** Lamont Jackson, Donald Jackson, Anthony Williams, Melvin Cosey

**Last row – left to right:** Sam Sullivan, Carl Lampkin





## **DALANA GRAVES GOES TO CAMP**

By Maureen Rauscher  
(Proud Mother)

Dalana Graves is going to Camp Barnabas for the week!

## **REMINDER OF OCTOBER FLU CLINICS AT EACH WORKSHOP**

The two workshops will have on-site flu vaccination clinics in October again. The one for West will be held on Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, hours to be determined. The one for North will be held on Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, hours to be determined. Last year we offered an opportunity for the families of our employees to get their vaccinations with their family member at both Lafayette locations. We asked Rob again, a while back, if it was okay to have the families do it again this year. He said yes. The Visiting Nurse Association will administer the vaccinations again this year. We are working on getting the forms that people will need to fill out for the event. Please keep an eye out on the newsletter, and we will notify you when we get the forms. Thanks for your help.

## **DATES FOR KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS TOOTSIE ROLL DRIVES ARE BEING PUBLICIZED SOON**

We are starting to get in requests from the Knights of Columbus about the 2023 Tootsie Roll Drives taking place later this Fall. We have 2 or 3 Knights of Columbus Councils at West that we have actively helped out in the past during the drives. A new Council has requested that Lafayette help out during *their* upcoming Tootsie Roll Drive. You don't have to be Catholic to help out during these drives, so why should you help out? The answer is very simple - Lafayette benefits financially from our helping out. These Knights of Columbus Councils have been very generous these past few years. It would be great if we could show them that we appreciate them by volunteering to collect. We have had seriously declining numbers of Lafayette folks volunteering the past several years. By letting you know that most of these drives occur in October, we are hoping that we can get our numbers back up to what they were several years ago. The main ones that West has helped out in the past have been St. Joseph CC in Manchester and St. Clement CC in Des Peres. The new Council that has asked for some help this year in their Tootsie Roll Drive is St. Joseph CC in Cottleville, Missouri. Please give it some thought and when we open the drives up in a few months for signups, we hope that you will step forward and volunteer. We thank you in advance for your service.

## **LAFAYETTE EMPLOYEES: ARE YOU REGULAR? .... IN USING YOUR VACATION TIME**

At the end of last year we had a number of people at West that had so many vacation hours left over from not using them earlier in the year that the employees had to take an extended period of time off at the end of the year to use up those hours. We had fewer employees available to work and it made for smaller teams, and less production. In order to make sure that we don't have this situation happen again, we are recommending that everyone use their vacation time on a regular basis. Remember that personal days were rolled into the vacation time. We like seeing our employees at work, but we also know they need vacation time away from work. Two years ago the Editor found out she had a lot of leftover vacation time towards the end of the year from not using it earlier in the year. She was running out of time to use it up. She ended the year by having to take every Friday off from mid-November through the end of December. How much did she dislike being at home? To her it felt like she was missing out on a lot by being gone from the office. Plus, she didn't get any more work done at home than she would have if she had been at work. This memory is just to let you know that we know that staying at home isn't always as much fun as a lot of people think. There are lots of us who really enjoy the focus and the purpose that work brings to our lives. We hope you'll give regular time off a try.



## DANIEL'S MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

By Janet Zeller (Daniel's Proud Sister) and Gary Fink (Daniel's Proud Friend)

When my friend Gary needed help cleaning some equipment, I knew just who to ask - my brother, Daniel. He works on the deer production line at Lafayette Industries, and he likes to stay busy. He has helped Gary numerous times in the past, and he always asks about the air hose and security system. He loves all things to do with air hoses, electricity and security. Gary has a shop at his farm, and he buys/sells tractors and accessories. He needed to get them cleaned and ready for sale on Marketplace. Daniel helped him clean multiple tractors, brush hogs, blades, side by sides and zero turns. He first used the air hose to blow off the big dirt. Then he used the pressure washer to get it super clean. He also was using the blower to clean the area. (Of course, Daniel's favorite is the air hose). He was rewarded with driving the Kubota around the farm, which included checking on the cattle. His driving skills are improving "driving the small car". We also enjoyed a picnic lunch on the porch - Daniel found out he likes deer sausage. It was a great day for everyone. I am proud of my brother on how hard he works at Lafayette and also to help his friends.

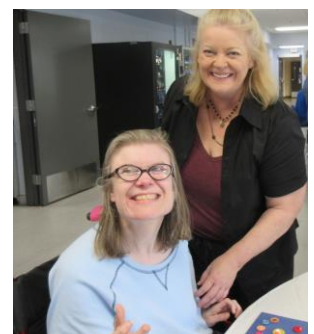
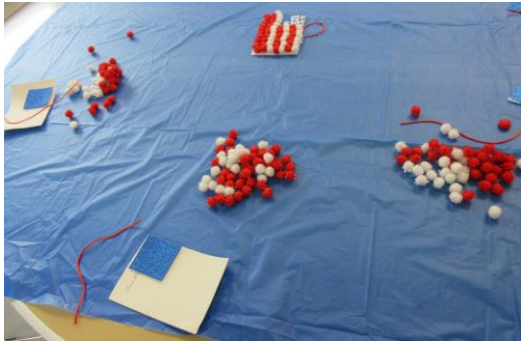


**Editorial note:** We encourage our employees to send us stories about things that they have done recently or are doing. It doesn't have to be a long article or have a lot of pictures, but we are always grateful to get these little glimpses of what people are doing when they aren't at Lafayette. Someone went to camp and someone helped a friend wash up his machinery. It's something we can enjoy reading about or looking at. Let us see and hear from you about what you are doing.



## WEST ART CLASS – JUNE 21, 2023

June 21<sup>st</sup> was the last Art Class at West until September. We hope you enjoyed the classes as much as you seem to have, and we'll look forward to their starting up later in the year again. Everyone needs a break, including our art teachers, so we'll see them in the fall. We hope you said "See you later, 'Gator" when you left them in June. Pictures are below of that last class. Enjoy!





**Immediate left – left to right:** Katie Moore, Ty Rogers (Group Sales Account Executive – St. Louis Cardinals), Ryan Eberhart (Director of Group Sales – St. Louis Cardinals), Marla DeHahn, Josh Stuart.

**JULY 2023**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3 <b><u>Both Workshops Are Open</u></b> today!  However, we get off ½ hour early at Both Workshops!	4 <b><u>Both Workshops ARE CLOSED</u></b> for the holiday today!	5	6	7	8
9	10 <b>PAY DAY</b>	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 <b>No Board Meeting</b>	20 <b>North Free Lunch</b>	21	22
23	24	25 <b>PAY DAY</b>	26	27 <b>West Free Lunch</b>	28	29
30	31					