

# December 2016 newsletter



SAVE THE DATE



8AM SATURDAY  
JANUARY 21

Wheatley Heights  
Sports Complex  
200 Noblewood Dr  
(near AT&T Center)

**KINETIC KIDS  
RACE FREE!**



**LEARN MORE & REGISTER**  
[www.kinetickidswalkrunroll.org](http://www.kinetickidswalkrunroll.org)

## Celebrating 15 Years!



Kinetic Kids celebrated 15 years of providing sports and recreation programs to children and teens with special needs on October 22. The celebration took place on the baseball fields where it all began at The University of Texas Health Science Center at SA.

Phillip Scotty Mena, one of the original Kinetic Kids and now 20 years old, kicked off the historic baseball game by singing the national anthem. Kinetic Kids from all generations and their families came out to support the "homecoming" and wore their Kinetic Kids mums with pride!!

Tracey Fontenot and Kacey Wernli, founders and executive directors, report, "We can't believe 15 years have passed. Kinetic Kids started with an idea—all children should have the chance to play sports. We are so proud our community has believed in our dreams and actively supports our programs so thousands of children with special needs are off the sidelines and on the field! There is no greater joy than to see children with special needs grow up and become confident teenagers and young adults in our community. We are thankful for their success and we look forward to seeing the next generation of Kinetic Kids thrive!"

Kinetic Kids started with one baseball team of 12 players in 2001 and in 2016 over 2,400 children with special needs participated in 169 year-round programs including baseball, dance, swimming, gymnastics, basketball, music, cheerleading, soccer, karate and more! Thank you to everyone who made their success possible!



## Thomas Mitchell & Coach Scott Leblanc A KINETIC CONNECTION

Thomas Mitchell is a veteran Kinetic Kid and current Ambassador for our organization. Scott Leblanc is a beloved coach and tremendous advocate for Kinetic Kids. Together this duo has overcome obstacles and soared to new heights! We asked Thomas to share their story with you!



Thomas & Coach Scott LeBlanc

*"I grew up with spina bifida and in foster care. Now both of those things alone are tough on any kid, and for the longest time I felt like I didn't belong! But then I met the guy who has been the closest thing to a dad I've ever had—Kinetic Kids Coach Scott Leblanc!*

*I started playing wheelchair basketball with Coach Scott when I was about six years old and it*

*changed my life because it gave me purpose. Scott taught me so much more than sports, he taught me how to be a man and that I can do absolutely anything I want! If it weren't for Scott, I would have probably ended up in a lot of trouble, but he kept my head on straight by showing me that someone really wanted me to be successful.*

*When Scott started working with Kinetic Kids, I followed him. I met so many new people who brought complete joy to my life by showing me that nothing was impossible. I've now come full circle. I hold a new roll as assistant coach alongside my mentor, Scott. I get to encourage other kids with special needs and prove to them that nothing is impossible. AND, as if that wasn't reward enough, I also get to act as a Kinetic Kids Ambassador and educator to local elementary students through Kinetic Kids Discovering Disabilities Days.*

*I get to talk to awesome elementary kids about what it's like having a disability. A lot of them start out scared of me*

*and my chair and don't wanna talk to me...and I understand that! But I think kids should be exposed to people like me. If you know me, you know I'm the biggest teddy bear ever! And kids need to know that people like me aren't bad or scary just because we're different. If they have questions, they should feel okay asking me or anyone else with a disability. We may be different, but we have just as much love to share as everyone else!*

*My condition doesn't define who I am at all! I know for a fact I wouldn't be who I am today without my "disability." My life may be hard but I've had amazing help from some very special people who've taught me that I can use my "disability" to educate others!*

*I'm so happy to be part of an organization where I can be myself. I get to talk to kids and show them that just because you are different doesn't mean you are useless. Being a part of Kinetic Kids taught me that having a disability just means you have more to offer the world! Words can't explain how much I love Kinetic Kids, Scott, the rest of the staff and their awesome volunteers who taught me how to be ME and showed me anything is possible through hard work and a little sweat!"*

At wheelchair basketball in 2006



Thomas at Discovering Disabilities Day



# Cheering all year!

Cheerleading is one of Kinetic Kids' longest and largest competitive programs that we host during the year. Our girls practice every Saturday at Stars Vipers Cheer & Tumbling from August through March and attend many competitions and events throughout the state! This year our girls have been BUSY and are only three months into their season! So far, they've performed at Stars Vipers Show Off, Cheer Power Halloween Competition, Accessibility Fest, Kinetic Kids' 15 Year Festival, and many fundraisers!



This December, they will perform under the guidance of phenomenal Coach Saren Ashley at the Cheer Power Competition right here in San Antonio! Twenty-three Kinetic Kids cheerleaders will present their full performance almost completely on their own and be judged on five sections: jumps, stunts, tumbling, pyramid and dance in front of thousands! Our cheer staff is very excited for this upcoming competition and would appreciate any support from the community to cheer on our cheerleaders! Here's what these cheerleaders love about the program:



"Forward rolls and cartwheels, it's fun!"

-Rachel



"I get to be the best person I can be and do everything I can."

-Samantha



"It's fun, it's cool and awesome doing the dance!"

-Lexi



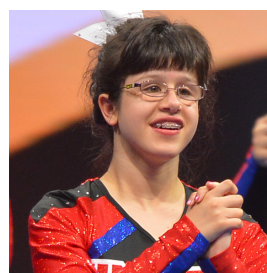
"The way we learn skills and routine."

-Wynter



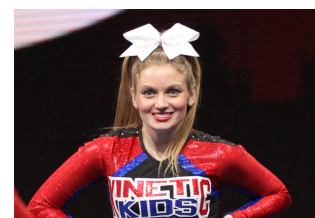
"It makes me happy and I like being a flyer."

-Julia



"I like the jumps and to have fun"

-Tori



"I love having fun and doing my cartwheel."

-Joanie



Kinetic Kids' Try It Before You Buy It Equipment, Service & Resource Fair has a **new name** and **new date** and a **new location**, but will have the same GREAT info & resources. The Kinetic Kids EXPO will be held in the **summer of 2017**. Plan for a wonderful morning of education & resources! New this year: a Continuing Education course will be available for healthcare professionals. Stay tuned for more exciting details in 2017!

# Hootin' & Hollerin'

Over 400 guests shined their boots and dressed in country chic for an evening at Pearl Stables marking Kinetic Kids' 15th Anniversary at the 2016 Hootenanny fundraiser.

The generosity of our corporate table sponsors and individual donors ensured that this year's 13th annual event raised a record \$276,315 to benefit Kinetic Kids' 169 sports and recreation programs. The Children's Hospital of San Antonio served as Presenting Sponsor for the evening while President, Elias Neujahr, served as Honorary Chair. Lisa and Ken Kingdon, the Gala Chairs, worked tirelessly behind the scenes for months to pull off our best Hoot ever!

Kinetic Kids' alumnus, Daniel Velasquez, joined by his mom, Lori Velasquez, shared their story of Daniel's premature birth and a subsequent brain hemorrhage which caused cerebral palsy. His doctors told them he might never walk or talk... they had a long list of what he couldn't do. At age five, he joined Kinetic Kid's t-ball team and they showed him what he could do. He now competes internationally in Paralympic sports.

Hoot veteran, Bill Taylor, KENS5 chief meteorologist, entertained the crowd as emcee throughout the evening as guests bid on over 130 silent and live auction items, enjoyed a gourmet meal by RK Catering and an open bar generously stocked by Cinco Vodka, Republic Distributing Company, Alamo Beer Company, Rebecca Creek Distillery and Gabriel's Liquor. At the night's end, guests raised lit glow sticks in the darkened room, symbolically lighting the way for Kinetic Kids' next 15 years.



# SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SMILE MAKERS\*

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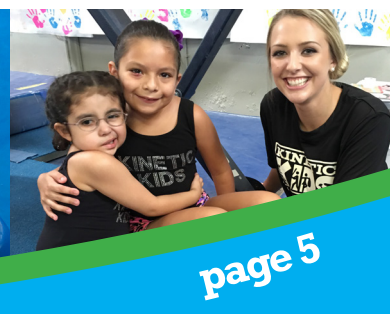
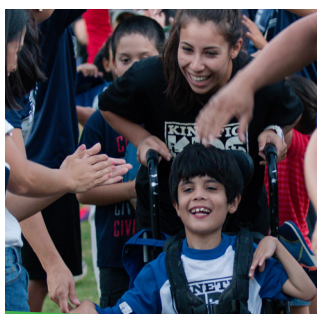
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Josh & Allison Zeller

\* July 1-November 25, 2016



# YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

## 'Birdies' lays golden eggs for charity!

Kinetic Kids' annual Birdies For Charity drive is under way. Last year, thanks to some busy Kinetic Kids, Arturo Liendo took top prize, and lots of generous donors, we raised almost \$7,000 this year. That, in addition to a check we received from the Valero Texas Open's Benefit for Children Fund for \$25,000, totaled a whopping \$32,000! These monies go a long way toward funding year round sports programs for our 2,400 kids. Be on the lookout for a list of fantastic prizes you could win for fundraising! **To donate, go to <http://bit.ly/2gF8lWx>.**



## BIG, BIGGER, BEST!

On May 3, 457 of you helped Kinetic Kids raise \$33,020 in the Big Give SA, a city-wide, online-giving day that raised \$4,302,417 for 1,054 area nonprofits.

It's never too early to mark your calendars for a great cause. Next year's Big Give is **Thursday, May 4, 2017**. Our goal is 500 donors and \$40,000. Help us win the hourly prize by giving between **6:00-6:59 a.m.** and you'll double your chances to win two Spurs tickets (fingers crossed, they'll be in the playoffs). What else can you do? Help us whip up a social media frenzy by following and sharing our social media posts throughout the day to benefit our precious Kinetic Kids!



# Little by little, a little becomes a lot. - Tanzanian proverb

Over the past year, groups large and small have hosted fundraisers on behalf of Kinetic Kids. We are so grateful to be able to share their success stories. Join the fundraising movement! It's as easy as going to [www.kinetickidswalkrunroll.org](http://www.kinetickidswalkrunroll.org) and setting up a personal fundraising page for the 5K/10K/1 Mile Race on January 21 or connect Kinetic Kids with a business/nonprofit that might want to partner with us!



## Food Fight SA - TBA

Sponsored by the National Kitchen & Bath Association South Plains Chapter, this October evening was a cooking competition patterned after TV's 'Chopped' series with five teams vying for 'Best Cooks in SA' honors. Kinetic Kids was the lucky recipient of the funds raised.



## JoyRide Cycling + Fitness - \$350

With a passion for supporting local organizations through 'Friendraisers', direct donations and community awareness, owners, Becky and Joe Cerroni, support the mission of Kinetic Kids. They too believe that every child should have the opportunity to be an amazing athlete! In April, JoyRiders donated to Kinetic Kids and JoyRide matched their donations.



## J. McLaughlin - \$380

This summer, J. McLaughlin, a clothing store for men & women, hosted an evening 'Sip & Shop' for their patrons with 15% of the total day's sales going to Kinetic Kids.



## Trilogy Dance - \$191

Kinetic Kids was the featured organization for their Community Class Series at Trilogy 09 where they offer a free dance class monthly in exchange for the participants making a donation to that month's featured organization.



## Mission CrossFit - \$2,085

Since 2014, Mission CrossFit SA has hosted 200 women from across Texas for "A League of Their Own" fitness competition. The highlight of the 2016 event was the incredible response to the Kinetic Kids' cheerleaders. As each girl was introduced and performed a movement, the crowd went wild! More than any other athlete there, the Kinetic Kids inspired the crowd. "We're humbled and honored with the money our volunteers, athletes, and spectators raised. Giving back to our community is the most rewarding outcome of our event. We look forward to partnering with Kinetic Kids in 2017," said Owner Drew Bignall.



## Chipotle - \$390

On July 29, the Bandera Chipotle store made dinner a 'selfless act' by donating 50% of proceeds from diner's tickets back to Kinetic Kids.



**United Soccer Club** will be hosting their event February 11-12, 2017. Open to U8-U14 soccer teams, it is the only San Antonio soccer tournament that gives back to the community through local charities who receive the proceeds. Kinetic Kids is their designated 2017 charity.

## Photo Credits to: Jennifer Vega Photography, Ternell Washington Photography and Lisa Kingdon Photography

Many of the pictures featured in this newsletter and on Facebook are courtesy of these wonderful volunteer photographers. A heartfelt THANK YOU to each of you for so beautifully capturing the joy our kids and volunteers experience in our programs!





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*Wishing you  
Happy Holidays  
touched with wonder  
and filled with love!*

