

Gate-Gateway to Independence

2025 Spring Newsletter



SPRINGing into fun!

Spring semester at the Gate has been full of fun, creativity, and friends! We packed in a lot from January to May, including DessertFest preparations, Special Olympics Basketball and Track and Field, a visit from mini horses, and making fruit salsa. The semester is almost over and it's time for summer break, but we will have so much planned for the next Gate year. We can't wait to see you again!

DessertFest 2025



DessertFest was on April 26th at Alcoa High School. In attendance were Gate participants and families, friends, and many community members.

There were so many sweet treats to sample, a silent auction, art, and cards made by participants. The GateCrashers sang "Count On Me" by Bruno Mars, "Roll With It" by Steve Winwood, and "This Little Light of Mine". The Gatecrashers showed off their sign language skills during "Count on Me" and it was impressive!

Over \$23,000 was raised at DessertFest! The funds will be used for programming at the Gate. Thank you to all who support the Gate all throughout the year!



DessertFest Preparations

Preparations for DessertFest began in January when participants returned from winter break. They have been busy making greeting cards, bookmarks, painting pictures, and painting two custom planters to sell at DessertFest. Each planter had a theme. The first one was music. There is some sort of music at the Gate every day and music plays an important role in our program. The second planter was friendship themed. It said, "Spread Love". Participants got a chance to paint each planter and put their individual touch on each one.

Caregiver Respite Night

The Gate is thankful to have received a grant from TN Department of Disability and Aging that allows us to host Caregiver Respite Nights. This semester we hosted two events. The first event was a Bingo night. Parents and participants chose from a variety of soups before playing Bingo. Everyone was a winner, and each caregiver and participants went home with some fun prizes.

The next event June. Originally, it was going to be in Maryville College Woods with Fit-Green-Happy. They were going to talk with caregivers about healthy living and ways to manage stress while participants played outdoor games. Due to rainy weather and extreme heat, we had a movie night for caregivers to drop off participants while they enjoyed some time alone.

It has been fun for everyone getting to spend extra time with caregivers and participants!



Minis in Motion

In March, Shangri-La Therapeutic Academy of Riding (STAR) brought their Minis-In-Motion horses to visit. Participants were able to pet and brush the horses. One of them even passed a beach ball with participants. They were fun to be around, and they brought a smile to everyone.

Cookability

In May, Allison Stokoe from Second Harvest Food Bank lead participants in making fruit salsa. Courtney enjoyed being involved in making food. Shellie learned how to be precise with measuring ingredients. Ally liked working together and using teamwork. Shawna enjoyed measuring, cutting and mixing. And Elizabeth likes helping in the kitchen and being with friends. Everyone said it was delicious. Each participant went home with a bag with all ingredients and utensils to make the fruit salsa at home.



Springtime in the Smokies

Springtime in the Smokies was on May 10th at the Talley Ho Inn. This is a car show hosted by the Blount British Car Club in Maryville. We were thankful to be invited back to vote on the Gate's favorite car. Gate participants were excited to present a trophy their favorite car. Thank you to Springtime in the Smokies for including us and supporting the Gate!

Aktion Club

Gate participants have been busy all semester serving their community! We are so thankful for Chris Mahler and Holly Scarlett, Alcoa Kiwanis members, for supporting the Aktion Club of the Gate. During Aktion Club month in March, participants made a card for Chris and Holly. Each participant signed their name on one of the hearts.

This semester we had the opportunity to serve the following organizations:

January: Donated blankets to The Promise Outreach.

February: Made lasagnas for Lasagna Love.

April: Made goody bags for kids at Big Creek Missions.

May: Donated water bottles and juice boxes for New Hope Children's Advocacy Center.



Special Olympics Basketball

On February 7th, four Gate basketball teams showcased their hard work! This was the first Special Olympics basketball competition held at Everett Gym, and we had so much fun!

The Gate had three Skills teams: The Lakers, Gate Globetrotters, and Gate Grizzlies. We also had our first 3vs3 team, Shaq Attack.

Shaq Attack and Gate Globetrotters both won the championship for their division! Great job teams! Keep up the good work!



Special Olympics Track and Field



April 9th was Special Olympics Track and Field. It was the perfect day for a day at the track. The day began with Paul giving the Invocation and Shawna running with the torch. All athletes put their best effort into their events and we saw lots of silver, bronze, and gold medals. Cornhole was a new event that was added this year and participants had fun trying out this new sport. When asked what they enjoyed about the day, Elizabeth said, "It brings back memories of playing cornhole with family." Vera said, "It was fun playing this new sport." Great job athletes!

"Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

— Special Olympics Oath

Interview with Grace Neve, ETSU Student Intern

**What college are you attending?**

ESTU- East Tn State University

What is your major in college and when are you graduating?

Public Health Major

May 10, 2025

What will you do after you graduate?

I am going to Occupational Therapy School for 3 years. I plan to work with people with disabilities.

Why did you want to do your internship at the Gate?

In school I was a Special Education Peer Buddy, and I wanted to see my friends from high school and make new friends at the Gate.

What is your favorite activity outside of school?

Working out at the gym and running.

What are some of your favorite things?

Color: Pink or red

Food: Mexican Food

Show: History and True Crime documentaries.

Movie: Any comedy

Candy: Nerd clusters