

June 4, 2010

Dear Hobcaw Marlin Families,

Happy Summer! Can you believe another swim season is upon us and it is gearing up to be a great one!

This year we will be doing a swim-a-thon on Friday, June 25th in conjunction with Supper Club. It is a way for the children to give back to others in our community. You may recall two years ago, the swim team did one for my family. Money was raised for my son, Smith to get his autism service dog through an organization called PAALS (Palmetto Animal Assisted Life Services). Aubrey has been a member of our family for two years and she has been a great addition! Smith and Aubrey are becoming best buddies. You may see them around the pool or out on the boat this summer!

We have chosen to help PAALS again for the 2010 swim-a-thon. There just so happens to be a gentleman, Tate Mikell in our area who has been placed with a service dog named Grace through PAALS. Attached is a letter from Tate explaining his journey to becoming involved with PAALS. I think is it worth mentioning that Tate swims for the Mt. Pleasant Piranhas, a Special Olympic swim team! What a perfect fit for this year's Hobcaw Marlins swim-a-thon.

Here is the schedule for the swim-a-thon:

11-18s swim from 4:30-5:30

9-10s swim from 5:30-6:30

5-8s swim from 6:30-7:15

If you should have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at either 345-4417 or esrmp2@aol.com. The swim-a-thon should be a wonderful evening for family and friends, so let's get out there and raise money for a great cause.

Take care,

Erin Pruitt

P.S. Please make sure checks are made payable to PAALS when collecting money. Also, you may want to make copies of the letter that Tate wrote to explain to others what the swim-a-thon is all about.

May 25, 2010

Dear Hobcaw Yacht Club, Marlins and Friends,

I understand that you have agreed to hold a swim-a-thon to raise money for **Palmetto Animal Assisted Life Services**, or **PAALS**. They are a non-profit group out of Columbia that trains animals to assist people with varying disabilities to live more independent and enriched lives. I am a lucky recipient of Grace, a PAALS trained assistance dog. Why do I need Grace? Let me tell you.

On June 13, 2005 I suffered a ruptured brain aneurysm that left me paralyzed on the left side and minus the front right lobe of my brain. This was devastating for a Citadel graduate and Charleston City Policeman. I was living my life the way I always wanted it to be, but God had a different plan for my life.

At first I was bound to a manual wheelchair, but with lots of therapy I finally was able to walk using a cane. It takes a lot of energy to get around that way and picking up objects that fall can be hazardous to my health - not to mention my brain. Over the past five years I have progressed in my abilities, but there was still a void in my life. Friends slowly drift away once you suffer a disability and life can be very lonely.

While attending various conferences for the brain injured and disabled I met Jenn Rogers with PAALS. Over a two-year period my mother and I talked with her about the assistance dogs and what they could do to help people with disabilities. I finally decided to make an application after finding out that an assistance dog could help open doors for me, pick up items that I drop, turn lights on and off, pull my laundry bag to the laundry room (down four steps) and just be my friend. My family and I went through the process and I was accepted.

Last October my mother and I spent an intensive week in Columbia being trained to have an assistance dog. I was introduced to Grace during the week and we immediately became friends. Grace has blessed my life, she is my BEST FRIEND and we can accomplish anything we set our minds to do.

I am looking forward to challenging the Marlin Swim Team to laps at the swim-a-thon. One of the activities I have become active in is swimming freestyle for the Mt. Pleasant Piranhas, a Special Olympic swim team. On May 1, 2010 I competed in the 50-meter freestyle and came in fourth place with a time of 1:56 - not bad for a one armed freestyler.

With great thanks,


W. Tate Mikell

