

# Faith Based and Community Initiatives



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## **G.I.F.T. The Tracy Jackson Program** The Summer Food Service Program

### **A Story of Success**

There were 55 children under the age of 18 in the complex and the Tracy Jackson Program took on the challenge to make sure these children received meals throughout the summer when school was closed and they weren't able to participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

“My children enjoy coming to the Tracy Jackson Program of G.I.F.T.,” said Ms. Mamie Earlnita Tinch. “They serve good nutritious food through the USDA Summer Food Service Program. Their lunches give me the assurance that they (my kids) are eating healthy food. The program also gives them a chance to meet other children and interact with them like at school,” continued Tinch. “It gives me peace knowing that they were in a Christian environment eating healthy and are able to have their social and educational skills enhanced through the arts and crafts activities.”

Ms. Tanisha Chalmers agreed. “The Tracy Jackson Program means a lot to me and my two children. My oldest daughter woke up every morning ready to go! My daughter said, ‘We had to set up a table and had to have good table manners. We also learned how to get along with each other.’ The Tracy Jackson Program of G.I.F.T. assures that all the needs of the children are met. Her two daughters both participate in the Summer Food Service Program. Chalmers continued, “I hope they have it next year.”

## How the Initiative is Helping.

Through USDA's Faith-based and Community Initiative, in the last two years the program has been able to serve more children through the Summer Food Service Program.

Ms. Edens said they were so glad they decided to take on the summer feeding program two years ago. "The Tracy Jackson Program of G.I.F.T. was a great value to the children and brought an element of pride into the complex," said Edens. It gave the children a chance to have a good lunch and enjoy day camp-type activities shared with their peers at a safe place during that time. It gave them time to be children!"

## The Organization.

G.I.F.T. (General Instruction for Tomorrow) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to improve the quality of life for children in Abbeville County, South Carolina.

"This program served an average of 45 children daily, which was 81 percent of the children at the site."



Rosa Allen, Eleanor Wharton, Mary Jackson, and Allen Anderson prepare and pack lunches in the kitchen at the Tracy Jackson Program of G.I.F.T.

The Tracy Jackson Program of G.I.F.T. is named for a young Abbeville woman "who inspired all those who knew her by her caring spirit and joy of life". Tracy Jackson was a black woman who served as Past City Council Chairwoman and later became a summer site supervisor in the nearby town of Calhoun Falls. Calhoun Falls lost one of its major industries in 2004 raising school meals participation to more than 80percent of the children

receiving free and reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program.

The Tracy Jackson Program of G.I.F.T. was launched in response to a high percentage of youngsters, approximately 60 percent in 2003-2004, who were eligible for school meals during the school year but who may go hungry during the summer when school was out without meals through the Summer Food Service Program.

**The Tracy Jackson Program is a “stand-alone” program and has no large support body like a school or large community center. But its focus is on helping the people in the area, especially the children.**

It has become one of the best summer sponsors in South Carolina – its people continually reaching out to the needs of the people in their community.