

January 2014 Biography of Janie O'Keefe- *Child with Developmental Disability & Family Member with Physical Disability*

Janie is the founding Director of O'Keefe Educational Media (OEM), formerly "Destination & Educational Videos." OEM's first program in 2002 was the production of a film called "Destination: Gulf Coast", promoting tourism & economic development. This film has been used by Gulfport High Travel & Tourism career classes, a University in China, Hancock Tourism, the Carnival Cruise Lines, Mississippi Power, MS Charter Boat Association, and numerous others. Janie has created and directed several educational projects for William Carey College Graphic Students. OEM's second project was the film production to retain the heritages of storytelling and folk art, "Hello, I'm Alice Moseley," As part of the project Janie directed a program that included all of the students at Bay High School & Hancock County High School.

Following the two successful film projects, Janie developed the program, Disability Connection with a mission to "Create a Connected Community: to inform, assist, and participated in collaborations that engage individuals with disabilities, eliminating barriers and fostering cooperation and understanding." OEM has now registered Disability Connection as a DBA (doing business as.) Janie directs all forums, workshops, events and projects. Programs are especially designed to engage those with disabilities and include the annual Arbor Day - 5K-1 Mile Run/Walk/Roll & 1/4 Mile Challenge, the annual Art Ability Fair, the annual Mayor's Disability Awareness Health Fair, the People with Disabilities/Disabled Veterans Job Fair, inclusive Sports Clinics, Performing Friends, Community Forums & Workshops, Disability Network Meetings, and the first totally inclusive playground, the Disability Connection Community Playground. She is the creative force behind The Connection, an internet resource center for people with disabilities, an on-line Community Network called CFriends (Connecting Friends), and a Mississippi Gulf Coast Community Resource Guide. In addition, Janie began the Client Service program to provide emergency needs including home repair; and the Employment Connection to help eliminate barriers to employment, programs to assist primarily seniors, homeless, veterans, and people with disabilities.

Janie has a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas Tech University. She worked in television and radio for 30 years. She is an author, publishing her first book in 2007, "With All My Heart," and co-authored her second book in 2011, "Homeless by God's Design."

Janie has been an active part of the Gulf Coast community since 1981, serving with organizations such as the Make-a-Wish and Committee for Independent Living under the MS Department of Developmental Disabilities. She has been involved with Memorial Hospital Advisory Council, the "Our Turn" Community Partners serving Veterans and their Families in South Mississippi, the Gulfport Coordinated Community Response Team for Domestic Violence, Harrison County Children and Emergencies Working Group, the Gulf Coast Senior Service Network, and Pathways to Possibilities for students. She was past Vice President of Women's Aglow and an officer in women's Gideon International. In Civitan International she was President of the Biloxi Edgewater Civitans, chairing numerous social events for people with disabilities, and the founder of the Long Beach High School Junior Civitan Club. She supports her family's ministry, Itasca Ministries. Janie has developed projects for Biloxi Little Theater, Saenger Theater, and Gulf Coast Symphony. She developed Coast/Cool Coupons (raising nonprofit funds for youth) and the Welcome Real Estate Guide for Waveland (used by the Chamber). As a mother of five children, her oldest being handicapped, she is dedicated to positive, moral growth for her community. She has dedicated thousands of hours toward this goal and serves on numerous committees to improve the lives of those in her community.