Angling for Autism Fishing Tournament

The first annual “Angling for Autism” Bass Fishing Tournament will be held on Saturday, September 20, 2014 at Wind Creek State Park in Alexander City. Entrance fee is $100 per boat. The tournament proceeds will benefit The Learning Tree.

Fishing begins at safe daylight with the weigh in at 3:00 pm. Thousands in prizes will be awarded. $1,500 will be awarded for first place with payouts for 10 places. Other awards include $100 to the highest placing male/female and parent/child teams. There will be also be a $10.00 optional big fish pot with a 70/30 split. For information call Stephanie Weldon at (334) 415-9372 or email sweldon@leaning-tree.org.

1st Annual Autism 5K: Run for HOPE

Over 120 runners from across Calhoun County and surrounding areas participated in the first Autism 5K: Run for HOPE benefitting The Learning Tree residential school in Jacksonville and Little Tree Preschool in Anniston. The morning of April 26th was perfect for a relaxing run through historical Fort McClellan. The run started at 8 a.m. and finished at the McClellan Medical Mall on Town Center Drive. (continued on page 2)
Message from the Executive Director,
Dr. Marc Williams

Late last year, as part of the Alabama Department of Education Special Education Services’ Autism Initiative, we received two new contracts to provide training and consultation services for local education agencies (LEAs). This was an exciting opportunity for The Learning Tree, LEAs, and children in the public school system. By the beginning of the year, we were working with several LEAs. We appreciate the support and cooperation of the Department, LEAs, and the autism spectrum disorder service provider community.

As you peruse this newsletter, you will see many more exciting developments and updates regarding all of our programs. These accomplishments are the results of the dedication, hard work, and sacrifices of many of our employees, volunteers, and board members. Please express your appreciation to them when you have an opportunity to do so.

Finally, I want to welcome two new members to our board of directors, Mr. Samuel W. Junkin and Dr. Jim Siders, both from the Tuscaloosa area. We are honored they have agreed to serve in this capacity in support of children from across the state in our schools and residential programs.

1st Annual Autism 5K: Run for HOPE (continued from cover)

The event was a huge success thanks to our Gold, Silver, and Bronze level sponsors! We appreciate the overwhelming support from our running community and some pretty terrific volunteers. We also thank Awards to Remember for the incredible trophies… and Mrs. Cynthia McCarty, newly elected member of the Alabama State Board of Education from District No. 6, for donating her time.

A very special thanks to our volunteers from Alpha Xi Delta at Jacksonville State University:

Katy Stephens           Kristin Fargason
Sara Beth Minton        Alex Black
Ashley Vandeford        Amber Janke
Madison Bentley         Jordan Shankles
Amy Blount             Lindsey Moloney
Amanda Parker           Sarah Daniel
Caliee Cole             Holly Cova

Thank You 2014 Autism 5K: Run for HOPE Sponsors:

Gold Level
General Dynamics
Regional Medical Center

Silver Level
Aerospace Coatings Intl.
X-treme Auto Spa
Pediatric Dentistry East
Time & Pay
Morris Building Constructors

Bronze Level
ABS Business Systems
Audra’s Flowers
Systems By Design
Dr. Bruce Young
The Frames Family
McCord Communications
The Nunez Family
Warren ACE Hardware

Triple Crown Sponsor Hosts
“A Night at the Races” For Second Year

National Autism Awareness Month kicked off with the 2nd Annual “A Night at the Races” in April at the Ezell House in Mobile. The event raised more than $25,000 for the Learning Tree Mobile programs. Mobile’s Azalea Trail Maids greeted more than 175 guests as they arrived. In the courtyard, guests were entertained by the music of Johnny Hayes, while enjoying filmed horseracing, delicious hors d’oeuvres by Clark’s Kitchen and a huge silent auction. Even a layered Derby cake was designed and donated by Pam Norris and thank you Pollman’s Bakery for additional pastries. In their Derby hats were everywhere this year. Complimentary wine and beer were sponsored by United – Johnson Brothers of Alabama, LLC and Gulf Distributing Company. Magic Memories Photography captured party-goers’ memories with an awesome photo booth. Many thanks to our title sponsor, HPC Specialty Pharmacy and other sponsors, including:

Jenny and Carrie Owens
Judy Johns and Heath Sherrer
Karen Barnett and Dr. Nathan Swangle

Angie Levenson with the Autism Society in Mobile.

Thank you to all of our sponsors and all who supported the event! We are so grateful for your generosity, your enthusiasm, and your commitment to The Learning Tree.

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October BBQ Benefit Sale

The residential school in Talladega is partnering again with Tailgate Partners to sell BBQ, booth bulbs, bristles, ribs and camp stew on Sat., Oct. 11, 2014 at the old gas station beside the police station. For information or to make an early order, call Stephanie Weldon at (334) 415-9372 or email sweldon@leaning-tree.org.

GKN Aerospace funds iPads for Talladale Community

GKN Aerospace donated $1,500 to the residential school in Talladase. The money will be used to buy iPads and cases for the children. iPads are an invaluable tool to help the children with their communication. The child only has to touch a picture to demonstrate expressions or activities. GKN Aerospace is a worldwide company that manufactures airplane and helicopter parts. GKN has always supported the City of Talladase and its citizens.

Junior League of Lee County Promotes Health & Wellness

The Junior League of Lee County donated $1,500 to the Little H.A.P.I.E. Tree Preschool. The money will be used to buy iPad equipment and cases. The Junior League promotes health and wellness to elementary and middle school children of Lee County by providing access to field, nutritional education and physical education activities.

Talladase Athenas Women’s Club Donate Easter Baskets

The Athenas Women delivered Easter baskets for every child at the residential school in Talladase. The baskets were filled with lots of favorite goodies and fun spring activities. Miss Talladase 2014, Katie Lacey joined in to help. This is the second year that the Athenas Women’s Club has provided our students with Easter baskets.

Quintard Mall Hosts Calhoun County Health Expo

The Learning Tree exhibited at the 2014 Health & Wellness Expo for Calhoun County residents at the Quintard Mall in Oxford. More than 50 local providers offered information about local health and wellness related services available in the area to an estimated 500 people. Among the exhibitors were Calhoun County DHR, Bernardi Orthodontics, Quality of Life Services, Children’s Rehabs, 2nd Chance, Bradford Health, the ARC, Calhoun County Health Dept., and the American Red Cross.

2014 APBA Convention in New Orleans

New Orleans hosted the Association of Professional Behavioral Analysts convention this year. Hundred of behavior analysts from across the country participated in three days of professional workshops.

Teen Off for Autism

The first “Teen Off for Autism” golf tournament will be held Thurs., Nov. 6, 2014. Registration is 8:00 am with a shotgun start at 9:00am. Entry fee per team is $300.00 and $80.00 per individual. Prizes for “closest to the pin” and “longest drive” will be awarded. Mulligans will be available and lunch will be served. For information call Stephanie Weldon at (334) 415-9372 or email sweldon@leaning-tree.org.

Learning Tree Kipchirchir Completes Boston Marathon In Top 3%

Samson Kipchirchir, Resident Support Supervisor in Mobile, competed in the 118th Boston Marathon. He finished with an outstanding time of 2.5 hours, 55 minutes and 3 seconds, placing him in the top 3% of the more than 36,000 participants. Samson had been preparing for this run for five years, competing in seven marathons by to earn elite entry into the marathon. Kipchirchir stated; “After making all these attempts, I came to realize that it is not when we are at our best that we do great things. Following the horrible bombing in Boston last year, my friend called concerned that I was in the race. It was then that I knew the timing was right to run this year as a tribute to those affected by last year’s tragedy. I dedicated this race to my former elementary school in my native country, Kenya. I am raising money to build a computer lab in the village as a gesture of hope for hundreds who do not have access to computers for learning.” The Boston Marathon marked Samson’s first marathon since becoming a naturalized citizen of the U.S. in September, 2013. The Learning Tree is extremely proud of Samson Kipchirchir.
MOBILE REGION (CONTINUED)

USA’s Pi Kappa Phi Work Day at Preschool
Pi Kappa Phi’s from the University of South Alabama removed old tires and power washed playground equipment at the Little Tree PreSchool. The group also has future plans to do some painting and a little more projects.

Blues Tavern Hosts First Annual Cook-off
Hurray for Jimmie Blue’s Blues Tavern hosted the 1st Annual Bar-B-Q Cook-off benefiting Brooklyn’s Song School in May. The 74 club was there too helping out with the pulled pork plates. The event day included great food, beverages, prize drawings, and live music. More than $3,000 was raised from the event. You see next year Mr. Randy!

Learning Trees Takes Home Award at Girl Scouts’ Salsa Challenge
Thank you to our friends and supporters.

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SAVE THE DATES!

1st Annual “Angling for Autism”
Fishing Tournament - Alexander City, AL
Saturday, September 20th

5th Annual “Chip in for Autism”
Golf Tournament - Mobile, AL
Saturday, September 27th

1st Annual “Tee off for Autism”
Golf Tournament - Auburn, AL
Thursday, November 6th

2nd Annual “Puzzle Piece Dash”
Mobile, AL - Saturday, November 15th

“A Night at the Races” - Mobile, AL
Thursday, April 2, 2015

Autism Legislative Day in Montgomery, Alabama. Rep. Gaston, took a few moments to visit with Angel Loewn, Paige Norris, Monique and Jaxon Moon.