Honeywell Heroes Give McLain Street Group Home a Facelift

More than 15 volunteers from Honeywell’s Anniston facility and many Learning Tree staff joined forces to provide major repairs, landscaping, and other improvements to the Learning Tree’s McLain Street group home in Gadsden. The group renovated the garage, replacing the roof and siding, repairing the driveway, replacing gutters and bathroom windows, tree removal, and general gardening. Honeywell donated all the materials in addition to the volunteers’ time on the project and all major machinery needed.

“It’s really exciting to see the volunteers from our site give of their time and resources to help our community. Our people are our most important asset, and they truly set the Anniston site apart. I’m proud of the work they accomplish each year and hope their hard work will be a benefit to the community for years to come,” said Nathan Holmes, site leader for the Anniston facility.

The project is part of ongoing Housing & Shelter efforts through Honeywell Hometown Solutions. Since 2003, more than 15,500 Honeywell volunteers and national corporate partner Rebuilding Together have repaired more than 490 homes and non-profit centers in Honeywell communities in the United States, Canada and Mexico, rehabilitating and revitalizing low-income housing, schools, and other community assets. The Learning Tree is proud to be selected for the Honeywell Hometown Solutions project for a second year.

“Our people are our most important asset”
– Nathan Holmes

Boots and Bow Ties Event Set for February

The first annual “Boots and Bow Ties” western style gala will be held on Friday, February 27, 2015 at Lazenby Farms in Auburn. It will be a night of fun, food and music with friends beginning at 6:30 p.m. with heavy hors d’oeuvres, complimentary beverages, and a huge silent auction. We encourage everyone to wear your fabulous boots and bow ties….however any dressy casual wear is acceptable. For even more fun we will have poker, black jack, roulette and more! With each ticket purchased, guests will receive $500 of play money and a raffle ticket to be entered into a grand prize drawing at the end of the evening. Tickets are $50.00/person and all proceeds will benefit The Little HAPIE Tree Preschool in Auburn and the Residential school in Tallassee. To pre-register or for more information call Stephanie Weldon at (334) 415-9372 or email sweldon@learning-tree.org.
Message from the Executive Director,
Dr. Marc Williams:

As another year comes to a close it is likely all of us will spend some time in reflection about the past year. For us, most importantly, we have held fast to our mission by serving more than 400 children from across the state. We have enjoyed many successes this past year and I feel as though we are on the right course for even greater positive growth.

On behalf of the children we serve I want to express my sincere appreciation to our hard working employees who continue to demonstrate their dedication, many times giving beyond our expectations. And, to our board members who serve with integrity, without compensation for their time and service. I also want to thank those donors and funders who continue to invest in our programs, year after year, helping so many children and families.

Moving forward to a New Year we will continue to need your support. I hope that you will renew your commitment to children and the important work of The Learning Tree in 2015.

The Learning Tree Welcomes New Board Members

Two new members were added to The Learning Tree Board of Directors this fall, Dr. Jim Siders of Tuscaloosa and Samuel Junkin of Fayette. Both will serve a two year term.

Dr. Jim Siders is currently Department Head and an Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education and Multiple Abilities. He has also served as Co-Director of the CrossingPoints Program. CrossingPoints is a model transitional program collaboratively serving youth from the local city and county school systems as they complete their programs. Jim has held national office with the Council for Exceptional Children as a member of the Executive Board for a three-year term and also as President of the Teacher Education Division. He has also served on a local school board for 11 years in Mississippi, which led to his appointment to the Mississippi School Boards Board of Directors. Jim has a number of national and state presentations in topics ranging from assessment and intervention to technology integration to better meet the of individuals with a variety of special education rulings. Course offerings focus on family considerations to meet the needs of children and youth with intellectual disabilities, behavior management, and survey of exceptional children required of all teachers in order to obtain certification.

Samuel Junkin graduated from the University of Alabama in 1997 with B.S. in Marketing. Graduated from the University of Alabama School of Law in 2000. He is currently managing Partner of Junkin, Pearson, Harrison, Junkin & Pate, LLC, a general litigation firm. Mr. Junkin is also a licensed local pastor within the United Methodist Church, currently serving under appointment as an Associate Pastor at Fayette First United Methodist Church.
The HPC Specialty Pharmacy 4th Annual “Chip in for Autism” Golf Tournament

The HPC Specialty Pharmacy 4th Annual “Chip in for Autism” Golf Tournament, benefiting Woody’s Song School was held in September, raising $30,000. More than 80 golfers took to the greens at Azalea City Golf Course. This event wouldn’t be possible without the hard work and dedication of Woody’s Song School mom, Cindy Fulford, and all the families that work so tirelessly to make it a success. Dinner was provided by The Hungry Owl restaurant. Many thanks to Title Sponsor HPC Specialty Pharmacy and other sponsors.

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The Sykes Family

Angling for Autism a Huge Success!

The first annual Angling for Autism fishing tournament was a huge success. It was held September 20, 2014 at Wind Creek State Park in Alexander City. Thirty boats registered in hopes to win the top prize of $1,500. Ten places were paid out with an optional big fish pot with a 70/30 split. There was also $100.00 prize for the top parent/child team and a $100.00 prize for the top male/female team. The first place winner was Michael Ward and Brandon Pritchard with the highest weight of 14.97 lbs. They also won the big fish pot which was $210. Second place; Tim Hatcher and Travis Northy with 13.13lbs and second big fish of $90. Third place; Daniel Briggs, Sr. and Daniel Briggs, Jr. They also won the $100 parent/child team. Fourth place: Ken Walters and Ernie Faulkner. Fifth place: Kelly Jaye and Blaine Freeman. Sixth Place: Chris Miller and Elijah Miller. Seventh place: Randall Baker and Dennis Osborne.Eighth place: Mike McCullars and Steve Winslett. Ninth place: Joe Wikoff and Shawn Wikoff. Tenth place: Danny Pollard and Brandon Williams. The prize for top male/female team ($100) went to Ricky and LaShanne Baker. We sincerely appreciate the support of all of the anglers that participated. We also want to thank our sponsors - AES Industries; Winn Dixie Stores, Inc.; Lyon, Fry, Cadden Insurance; PrimeSouth Bank; A.M.P.S.; Trustmark Bank, Tallassee Kiwanis Club, John David Lambert and Tallassee Rotary Club.
Tallassee Tailgate BBQ Benefit

The Learning Tree teamed up with Judge Dale Segrest and the Community Development Corporation again on October 11th for the Tallassee Tailgate BBQ Benefit. The Learning Tree, Little H.A.P.I.E. Tree Preschool staff and kids came out on Saturday and worked to sell camp stew, boston butts, ribs and briskets. Thank you to The Little H.A.P.I.E. Tree Preschool parents and staff. The total sales for the event was $8,000.

A BIG thank you to the Friday night crew that organized the ingredients, prepared all of the meat, and stayed ALL night to cook; Ramona and Randy Norris, Bobby Robinson, Don Heacock, Laurie and Rob Rygjet, Heather Siler, Wes Palfrey, Phillip Whatley, Whitney and Jason Hester, Mark and Margaret Self, Brittney Lockhart and Stephanie Weldon. And the Saturday crew that stirred the stew, prepared the sandwiches, sold the meat and stayed for clean-up and breakdown; Whitney Hester, Traci Faulk, Kristen Davis, Brittney Lockhart, Corinthian Gable, Kerrianne Castleberry, Haily Owen, Gail Sims, Liz Burgess, Tara Rowe, Aix Kelley, Courtney Rhodes, Cody Lacey, and our Learning Tree kids, PJ, TS, LS and DJ.

Elmore County Community Foundation Supports

The Learning Tree

The Elmore County Community Foundation recently awarded a grant to The Learning Tree school in Tallassee. The grant will be used to renovate the existing playground to help kids develop their fine motor skills. The Learning Tree Tallassee campus serves 32 students. The Elmore County Community Foundation is an affiliate of Central Alabama Community Foundation and offers citizens in Elmore County the opportunity to build long-term support for their community.

Kid’s Clothes Connection

The Little HAPIE Tree Preschool partnered with the Kids Clothes Connection in September for the bi-annual consignment sale in the Auburn area. Many thanks to the volunteers that helped sort, clean and tag the merchandise; Jessica Zevac, Alison Hodge, Laura Wildman, Beverly Adams, Jo Cope and April Rapp. The merchandise included gently-used clothing, small household electrics, toys, bicycles, furniture, and baby gear. The sale event received donations from approximately a dozen families and earned $750 for the preschool. Thank you to our donors who brought items to the preschool; The Thompson family, Domingo-Lucas family, DeLa-

A Thanksgiving Feast!

Thank you Dr. and Mrs. Caldwell for a wonderful Thanksgiving feast! For the past two years Dr. John and Marjorie Caldwell have provided a Thanksgiving feast for the staff and children of the Tallassee campus. The Caldwell’s along with their other son Will, provided lunch for around 50 staff and students.

Youth Group makes a difference for Ballplay Group Home

The Cherokee Changers, a group of proactive youth from the Sand Rock Baptist Church in Sand Rock Alabama, volunteered to give the Jacksonville campus’ Ballplay group home some T.L.C. The energetic group of young adults were led by Youth Director, Mr. Terry Kisor and Chaperone, Mr. Greg Oliver. The group arrived at 9 am on Saturday morning - October 4th, with smiling faces. They brought buckets, towels, paint, brushes, ladders and lots of energy to give the group home a fresh coat of paint and a good cleaning. Don Cotney, Operations Administrator, and Pat Murphy, Regional Director of the Jacksonville residential program, attended the event to express their appreciation and join in the work. The volunteers quickly split up into project groups and started working on the home. The results were amazing and greatly appreciated by the three students who call Ballplay home. The staff and students of the Jacksonville campus are very grateful for the hard work and kindness of the Cherokee Changers and Sandrock Baptist Church.
High Hopes for Regional Development Committee
The first Regional Resource Development Committee has formed, sharing a common interest, in increasing community awareness of autism and to help grow fundraising efforts to support The Learning Tree programs in the Anniston-Jacksonville region. Community support is integral to the Learning Tree’s success and we want to express our deepest appreciation to The Committee: Mr. and Mrs. Seth Johnson, Mr. Sam Pritchett, Mr. Sam Whorton, Dr. Jean Pugliese, Ms. Kristie Warren, Mrs. Tammy Wigington, Mrs. Peggy Owens, Mrs. Tanya Sexton, and Mrs. Georgia Johnson. “This “Dream Team” is gearing up to help with the 2015 Aces for Autism Gala and first ever FORE! the Kids benefit golf tournament,” says Lisa Spurling, Resource Development Coordinator.

Anniston Community Education Foundation Award
The Anniston Community Education Foundation (ACEF) is dedicated to helping youth in targeted communities of Anniston. The belief that “every child can and will learn with the proper educational resources” is echoed throughout the Foundation’s work. The Learning Tree is a recent recipient of the ACEF’s Small Grant for $10,000 in support of the Love to Learn project for the Little Tree Preschool program in Anniston. The Love to Learn project is a comprehensive reading program designed to help children who struggle with autism improve their literacy skills. We appreciate the help and support of Mr. Kerwin Allen - Executive Director, Ms. Nicole Guyton, and the entire ACEF Board of Directors – Mrs. Cynthia Calix, Mr. Leon Garrett, Ms. Shirley Carter, Dr. Barbara Boyd, Mr. David Baker, Ms. Carol Kirk, Ms. Alma Turner, Mr. Ernest Washington, and Attorney Edward Still.

WalMart Community Giving
WalMart donated a $1,000 community grant awarded to the Learning Tree residential school to support the educational program. Pumpkins were also donated for the Halloween celebration. We appreciate the support of Manager, Sherri Nichols, and the entire Jacksonville Wal-mart team!

Leadership Calhoun County Supports Local Non-Profit Service Providers
The Learning Tree participated in the Leadership Calhoun County Community Service Session in October at the Anniston Chamber of Commerce led by the United Way of East Central Alabama. The LCC’s goal is to expose it’s members to the health and human service agencies in Calhoun County and to inspire its members to increase their volunteer support and financial giving. Mr. Shannon Jenkins, Executive Director of UWEGA, and Mr. Tommy Goggans of the Goggans Group in Anniston, Alabama led a panel of local service providers in a question and answer panel to help increase awareness of the work of local non-profit service providers. The group also toured several area non-profits before returning to the chamber for an in-depth group discussion.

Pleasant Valley High School Homecoming to Remember
Jacksonville residential school student, Mr. Chris H., became the first Learning Tree student to be nominated for the 2014 Pleasant Valley Homecoming court on October 6th, 2014. Chris is a member of the PVHS choir; he enjoys playing basketball and leads the football team out at pep rallies. Chris won the PVHS Talent Show and was voted class favorite. His mother, Christina, escorted Chris on to the field at the Homecoming game. The Learning Tree would like to congratulate Chris and express our deepest appreciation to the staff and student body of Pleasant Valley High School for making his senior year a memorable experience.

First Annual Holiday Helping Hearts Program
The first annual Holiday Helping Hearts program was a huge success. More than ever before, 20 students from the Jacksonville campus found themselves in need of a holiday sponsor. The call for help was initially posted on The Learning Tree facebook page. It took only 14 days for area businesses and local families to come together to be sure that each student would have a wonderful time at the annual campus holiday program. The Learning Tree would like to thank the following sponsors for helping to make the holidays a joyful experience: Anniston Emergency Services, Mr. and Mrs. Gary Wigington, Northside Baptist Church, Ms. Kristie Warren, Sandrock Baptist Church, Piedmont Rescue, The Wolf Pack, Mr. and Mrs. Seth Johnson, Clara’s Cause, Mr. David Gilmore, Mr. Chuck Bath, Mr. and Mrs. Victor Nunez, Mrs. Peggy Owen and Friends, Ms. Paige Morrison, The Woodard Family.

A New Driveway: A Wonderful Gift
The Learning Tree residential school is enjoying a new rear driveway thanks to Mr. David Haynes, McCarty Construction, Minton Grading, and Webb Concrete. McCarty Construction generously donated the gravel and materials needed. Webb Concrete agreed to haul the materials to campus and our friends at Minton Grading came in with heavy equipment to grade and lay the new driveway. Mr. Haynes, a former employee, coordinated the project.
Mobile ARC Awards
At the annual ARC meeting and awards banquet Woody’s Song School parent, Kerrie Benson, was recognized as Volunteer of the Year. She was selected for her work developing a special needs Sunday School class at Cottage Hill Baptist Church and a dance class for special needs children, Dance Without Limits, at Broadway South Dance Studio.

Colors For A Cause Fashion Show Recognizes Woody’s Song School
Woody’s Song School was selected by Exalte Magazine to represent autism in the First Annual Colors for a Cause Fashion Show in August. Publisher Kymberly Soule selected agencies to represent 11 different causes in the Mobile area. The guests were treated to educational seminars, a luncheon and fashion show. Each cause was represented by a different color. Woody’s Song School’s own Director, Jules Starr, rocked the runway in puzzle piece makeup to represent autism.

UMS Service Day at Preschool
On October 16th the 11th grade class of UMS-Wright Preparatory School, participated in a Service Day. A fourth of the class spent the morning at Little Tree Preschool cleaning out and planting flower beds, cleaning and organizing classrooms, and assembling cabinets. The rest of the class spent the morning at three residential homes. There they cleaned the yard, power washed the houses, deep cleaned inside the homes and even did a little decorating for Halloween with decorated pumpkins. The students did an AMAZING job!

Learning Tree Adults Give Back to the Community
A.S., J.A. and B.P. spent the month of October working in the Pumpkin Patch at Christ United Methodist Church. They were responsible for making sure that the pumpkins stayed off the ground and throwing the older pumpkins into the woods. B.P.’s favorite job was throwing the pumpkins! The proceeds of the Pumpkin Patch went to the Children’s Ministry at the church.

Junior League of Mobile Sponsors “Let’s Get Growing” Program
Little Tree Preschool and Woody’s Song School were selected by the Junior League of Mobile to participate in their Community Impact initiative to promote good nutrition to school age children. The “Let’s Get Growing” program offers the children the opportunity to learn to maintain a garden while taking part in an educational program on healthy eating and nutrition. As fruits and vegetables are cultivated from the garden, the children will take part in helping to prepare a healthy dish.

Puzzle Piece Dash held in November
The Puzzle Piece Dash was held on Saturday, November 15th at the Little Tree Preschool, with proceeds benefiting The Learning Tree and The Autism Society of Alabama. It was a chilly morning with a great showing of support, close to 50 more runner/walkers than the previous year. The festivities included the Shriner’s clowns, a dj, popcorn, and face painting. More than $10,000 was raised!

The Charity Chase 5K Race
The Charity Chase is a 5k race that allows you to compete on behalf of your favorite nonprofit organization. If you select The Learning Tree upon registration, we will automatically receive a portion of your registration fee and we will be able to win even more money based on your performance.

What: 5K Race benefitting Mobile’s non-profit organizations
When: Saturday, January 31st 2015 @ 8 am
Where: University of South Alabama Intramural Fields
Who: Many of Mobile’s non-profit organizations are participating in the event, but the more participants who choose to compete on The Learning Tree’s behalf, the greater the donation we will receive!

Register online here: http://www.thecharitychase.com/
Registration forms also at these locations:
- McCoy Outdoor (Mobile)
- Run-N-Tri (Mobile)
- Running Wild (Fairhope)
Welcome To Our New Staff!

Juanita Williams began her work in November as the Regional Director in Mobile relocating from Atlanta, Georgia. She has a B.S. in Sociology from the University of Missouri, and a M.S. in Educational Counseling ABA from Cal-State, Los Angeles. She is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and has worked in the field for approximately nine years. “We are fortunate to have Ms. Williams joining us,” said Dr. Marc Williams, Executive Director. As a BCBA, she worked with children with Autism (and other Developmental Disabilities) as a direct care therapist, a supervisor, a Clinical Director, and a Regional Director in the home, community, and school settings. Additionally, she taught several college level courses in the field of ABA. Prior to the field of ABA, she worked with the Los Angeles County Probation (as a Deputy Probation Officer I, II, and Supervising Deputy Probation Officer) for almost 20 years.

Ms. April Rapp joined The Learning Tree this year as the Program Director for the Little HAPIE Tree Preschool. Ms. Rapp earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Florida in 2002 and a Master of Arts in Psychology from the University of Houston-Clear Lake in 2004. Her education and career experiences have focused on behavior analytic interventions to help children, adolescents, and adults with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and behavior disorders. Ms. Rapp became a Board Certified Behavior Analyst in 2005 and has delivered services in home-based programs, center-based programs and public schools.