New United Way Support for Learning Tree Programs

New United Way financial support will benefit Learning Tree programs in Anniston and Mobile. The United Way of East Central Alabama approved The Little Tree Preschool in Anniston as a partner agency for 2015 and awarded $17,000 for the school. The Mobile region was also approved as a partner agency by the United Way of Southwest Alabama. 2016 funding will be provided for the Little Tree Preschool and Woody’s Song School through UWSWA’s Community Impact Building Block funding for $40,000 for the programs. The 2016 campaign will kick off this fall. Please support your workplace campaign if you are not already!

The Learning Tree has provided services for children in Alabama for more than 30 years.

Tallassee School Celebrates 10 Years

Tallassee’s The Learning Tree School on South Dubois Street will celebrate 10 years of service to the community with an open house from 5 to 7 p.m. July 30. The program is one of the city’s top five employers. The School serves 35 students who have significant educational, medical and behavioral challenges. “These are students who can’t be served in their local school systems or at home because of their behavioral challenges or the level of their educational challenges, so we offer an educational program with special training to meet their needs.” The key, Williams noted, is applied behavior analysis, a discipline of psychology that involves changing behaviors by arranging an environment that is conducive to channeling good behaviors.

“We hope this event will provide the community an awareness of the services we provide,” said executive director, Dr. Marc Williams.

SAVE THE DATE! On Saturday, October 24, the Learning Tree will host the 2nd annual Angling for Autism to benefit the residential school in Tallassee and the Little HAPIE Tree Preschool in Auburn. The tournament is $100 per boat and will be held at Wind Creek State Park in Alexander City. Early registrations are welcomed! Thousands in prizes are awarded! For sponsorship information contact Stephanie Weldon at (334) 415-9372 or sweldon@learning-tree.org.
Message from the Executive Director, Dr. Marc Williams

Exciting new program developments and growth continue! Our Consultation and Outreach Department now provides professional training for more than 50 school systems, and serves approximately 180 children across the state. These services significantly increased our statewide impact to serving over 600 children and families.

Additionally this year, we piloted a new community inclusion program in Mobile designed to create work experiences for our older children. The students develop their work skills while fulfilling volunteer activities in cooperation with other community organizations. Please be sure to note the article and photographs in this newsletter for more of this heartwarming success story.

We are also excited about the new training curriculum and format we are starting for our employees. Though I think we have some of the best, and best trained, employees in this field; this effort will make them even better. Of course, this translates to an even more significant impact on the children we serve.

Our efforts toward a unified Information Technology system for all of our programs are about to start the implementation phase. This will take the efficiency and effectiveness of sharing ideas and news to a point that was almost unimaginable a few years ago. This project will also aid in establishing a consistency of care across our programs that was unachievable prior to this effort.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Marcia Rossi as the new president of our board of directors. Dr. Rossi is a Professor in the Department of Psychology at Alabama State University in Montgomery. I appreciate her leadership and look forward to working with her and the remaining board members this year.

In closing, once again I want to thank all of our parents, employees, and community volunteers for all that you do to support our programs to help children learn and grow. We appreciate the yard sales, bake sales, runs, golf tournaments, galas and many more events. Also, please note the articles about the special efforts by Samson Kipchirchir in the Boston Marathon and Jerre Briner in the 2,500 Mile Ride. Thank you and have a great summer! •

Foundations Awards Exceed $100,000

Local foundation support is critical to the success of The Learning Tree programs. Thus far in 2015, more than $100,000 has been awarded. Their support has provided iPads and other technology, therapeutic services, and numerous upgrades to our facilities. We appreciate the support of the following foundations:

- A.S. Mitchell Foundation
- Cigna Foundation
- The Daniel Foundation
- Jo Ann and Cortez Fowler Family Foundation
- Jewish Endowment Foundation
- Ben May Foundation
- Gannett Foundation
- C.D., Helen & Jeff Glaze Foundation
- GKN Foundation
- Altec-Styslinger Foundation
- Anniston Community Education Foundation
- The Busfield Foundation
- The Hudson Foundation
- Alabama Power Foundation

Our Kids Give Back to the Community!

The Community Inclusion program in Mobile began in November allowing older students the opportunity to take part in work-related volunteer activities at various sites in the city. The students are developing their job skills while giving back to the community. The jobs range from helping churches prepare for their services, sorting recyclables, to training for maintenance in a beauty shop. The students are developing good job skills and learning to interact with the public. The Community Inclusion partners are:

- Christ United Methodist Church
- Environmental Studies Center
- Goodwill Easter Seals Recycling Center
- Mt. Hebron Church Ministries
- Sai’s Hair Studio

Sai, a student at her beauty shop and said, “I’ve been very pleased with her work. She has progressed very well in the time she has been here. She’s a big help!” There are currently thirteen residential students and four students from Woody’s Song School participating. •

Pictured are students sorting plastic and preparing to work at Goodwill Easter Seals Recycling Center and folding foil at Sai’s Hair Studio.
The first annual “Boots and Bow Ties” was a huge success for the Tallassee/Auburn region. The event was held at Lazenby Farms in Auburn on February 27th. The evening was filled with lots of good food, music, and friends. Martha’s Trouble provided the entertainment donating their time and musical talents for the night. There were more than 120 guests in attendance to enjoy the silent auction and gaming tables. Board members Dr. Marcia Rossi and Dr. John Caldwell were spotted enjoying the evening, along with distinguished guests, Tallassee Mayor and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Payne, State Representative Mark Tuggle, and Senator Tom Whitley. Jody Fuller was there as the master of ceremonies and kept the evening running smoothly. A big thank you to parent, Mrs. Jennifer Wheeler, for her touching testimony about her daughter and the preschool. The event raised over $14,000.

Many thanks to our sponsors:

**Magnolia Sponsor**
The Hudson Foundation
Cotton Blossom Sponsors
Alabama Power Foundation
Max Credit Union
Walmart - Tallassee
AES Industries

**Bow Tie Sponsors**
AmeriFirst Bank
Auburn Bank
Ben Akerson Motors
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Country Financial
Donald H. Allen Development
East Alabama Medical Center
East Alabama Pediatric Dentistry
Franklin Tire and Auto
Jeffcoat-Train Funeral Home
Keystone Bank
Machen, McChesney & Chastain, LLC
Mike’s Merchandise
Neptune Technology Group
Pimmsouth Bank
Tallassee Rotary Club
The UPS Store
Walmart Distribution Center

A special thanks to Southern Hospitality Catering for the delicious food; design work by Ania Sears, Dawn Lazebny of Lazenby Farms; April Rapp; Paige Norris; Pi Beta Phi Sorority; Brittney Lockhart; Natalie Milner and Emily Baker for helping organize the event.

Resource Development Committee Organizes for Tallassee and Auburn
The Tallassee and Auburn region hosted their second resource development committee meeting in May. The members are very excited about their participation and have planned lots of exciting things to bring awareness and new funding to the programs. The members of the committee are: Ben Akerson with Ben Akerson Motors in Tallassee; Julie Brown, parent; Prisciilla Hammonds, retired nurse Tallassee; Merideth Henderson, Production Assistant at Country Financial in Auburn; Dr. Doris Hill, Assistant Research Professor at the Center for Disability Research and Service in Auburn; Brad Linsville, Linville Memorial Funeral Home and Elmore County Coroner in Tallassee; Laura Leigh Peters, Marketing and Community Relations at Community Home Care and Hospice in Tallassee; Judge Patrick Pinkston, Elmore County District Judge in Tallassee; Laurie Rygell, HR Management Solutions inTallassee; Trey Taylor, Elmore County Commissioner in Tallassee; Turia Williams, parent of a former preschool student in Auburn. The group will meet quarterly to plan and support the goals of the group. A big “Thank You” to each of the members for taking time out of their busy schedules to support our programs.

Drug Education Luncheon

Kids Clothes Connection
The Little HAPIE Tree Preschool coordinated another fundraiser with Kids Clothes Connection in February/March. The Kids Clothes Connection is a bi-annual consignment sale in the Auburn area. The merchandise they accept includes gently-used clothing (infant – juniors/young men), small household electrics, toys, bicycles, furniture, and baby gear. For the spring sale, the preschool received donations from approximately a dozen families and raised $638 for the preschool. A big thank you to our donors who brought items to the preschool. The Adamson family, Cornelius family, Deshpande family, Doh family, Ko family, Brown family, Rainer family, Ward family, Carlson family, Quevedo family, and Bruner family. Also a big thank you to the volunteers: Jessica Zvez, Alston Hodge, Laura Wildman, Beverly Adams, Chalbera Gurry, Jinghua Bian, Tina Ledbetter, and Stacy Wilson.

Junior League Supports The Little HAPIE Tree Preschool
The Junior League of Lee County recently awarded a grant to The Little HAPIE Tree Preschool in Auburn for a health and wellness program. “Let’s Get Growing!” is a gardening program that will allow the preschool students to grow their own vegetables and learn about the importance of eating healthy. The Little HAPIE Tree Preschool serves 80 preschoolers ages 3-5. The Junior League promotes health and wellness to elementary and middle school children of Lee County by providing and assisting with access to food, nutritional education and physical education.

Drug Education Luncheon

Junior League Supports The Little HAPIE Tree Preschool

Kids Clothes Connection

Premier Jewelry Fundraiser
Donna Higgins, a Premier Jeweler, recently donated 100% of the proceeds from a jewelry party to The Learning Tree programs in our region.

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2,500 Miles Down the Mississippi River

Jerre Brimer of Oxford, Alabama and co-founder of The Learning Tree, Inc. began a 2,500 mile bicycle ride on June 9, 2015 down the Mississippi River to increase awareness and raise $25,000 in funding for The Little Tree Preschool in Anniston, Alabama. The bike ride venture was completed in approximately 35 days, ending on about July 14th. He began the ride in Lake Itasca, Minnesota, pedaling through Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, and ended in Venice, Louisiana. Jerre Brimer on his 2,500 mile bicycle ride down the Mississippi River.

New Resource Development Coordinator

Mrs. Erica Brown joined The Learning Tree in June as Resource Development Coordinator for the Anniston/Jacksonville region. She replaces Lisa Ann Spurling who transitioned to work with United Cerebral Palsy. She worked for The Learning Tree in June as Resource Development Coordinator. Ms. Brown’s fundraising experiences while working at the Cherokee Country Club will be extremely helpful to her as she begins her work with us,” said Sheila Sears, Director of Resource Development. Mrs. Brown’s husband is Shannon and they have a five year old daughter, Clara. Beth. They live in Centre, Alabama.

Aces for Autism benefit Gala

The 4th annual Aces for Autism benefit Gala was held at Classic Resort and Spa in Florida, and lots more. The Learning Tree relies on special event fundraisers to continue important services for children. Thank you to everyone who helped make the Gala a success. We hope to see you again next year!

Erica Brown

The main tournament kicked off at 10:00 am, with a shot gun start. Sarah Bright, grandparent of one of The Little Tree’s students, provided the BBQ lunch. Players were delivered lunch, drinks, and snacks during play by volunteers. A silent auction was also available in the ballroom that included children’s art, jewelry, a stay at the PGA Resort and Spa in Florida, and lots more.

At 2:00 pm, the winners were awarded their cash prizes.

First Place:

Gary Evans, David Morrow, Joe Sapp, and Kevin Bullard

Second Place:

Will Bedwell, Trevor McCarley, Nick Sawyer, and JR Young

Third Place:

Kevin Bedwell, Jeremy Braizer, Scotty Mccry, Phillip Hicks

Junior Long Drive Competition Sponsors:

Callaway Golf
Warren Hardware
Clara’s Cause
Andy Lowe
Berry Animal Clinic

Tournament Sponsors:

Southern Dade Utility Power Inc.
United Steel Workers Local Union 14530
Foothills Timber Co.
State Farm
Shannon and Erica Brown
Magic Travels LLC
Extreme Auto
ABS Business Systems
Noble Bank
Clanton Animal Hospital
Magic Travels LLC

2015 FORE! the Kids Golf Tournament

The First Annual FORE! the Kids Golf Tournament was held on May 16, 2015 at Cherokee County Country Club. Despite the thunderstorms and rain clouds, the participants poured in to enjoy the day’s activities. Starting at 7:30 am, the junior players on the local high school teams participated in a Junior Long Drive Competition. As their families and friends watched in amazement, the juniors drove their golf balls off of Hole 18 backwards toward the Club’s lake. Each competitor received 6 Neon Orange Tournament Balls from the tournament leader, Erica Brown, to ensure each competitor was equal. One at a time, each junior took to the starting point, and gave it their all. The winners were Nick Sawyer (first place at 310 yards), JR Young (second place at 298 yards), and Trevor McCarley (third place at 290 yards). Trophies were awarded to first through third place. Each participant also received a Nike Towel and Ball Marker Set for competing.

At 9:00 am, Kevin ‘The Bull’ Bullard donated a Long Drive Presentation. Kevin is currently 8th in the world standings in the Long Drive Competition. He averages well over 400 yards in each drive. His presentation included driving golf balls from his knees, off of a child’s tee ball stand, and driving a ball over 200 miles per hour through a ½” plywood plank. Thanks to Kevin, our golf tournament really stood out above the rest.

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The Learning Tree relies on special event fundraisers to continue important services for children. Thank you to everyone who helped make the Gala a success. We hope to see you again next year!
MOBILE REGION

HPC Pharmacy’s Derby Event a Winning Finish for The Learning Tree
The month of April kicked off with the 3rd Annual “A Night at the Races” event sponsored by HPC Specialty Pharmacy, raising more than $25,000 for the Learning Tree programs in Mobile. More than 150 guests attended with the ladies wearing beautiful derby type hats. Most appropriately the event was held under the blue lights of the RSA Tower highlighting National Autism Awareness Month. Fifteen members of the Chi Omega sorority also came to help out and welcomed guests as they arrived.

Dale Drinkard, Jr. provided the music for the evening in the beautiful courtyard of the Ezell House in downtown Mobile while guests enjoyed delicious oyster, shrimp and other hors d’oeuvres prepared by Clark’s Kitchen. The highlight of the evening was the fun filled betting on ten filmed horse races that sparked a lot of spirited cheering for the favored horse. Chip Herrington sounded the bugle at the beginning of each race! The beverages for the evening were sponsored by United-Johnson Brothers of Alabama, LLC and Gulf Distributing and desserts were donated by Pam Norris of Poffman’s Bakery.

Juanita Williams, Regional Director for Mobile, was there to welcome guests and thank the sponsors. Mr. Ron Cieutat, CEO of HPC Specialty Pharmacy, shared his heartwarming comments about his son and his family’s successes with Woody’s Song School. Other Regional Directors, Whitney Hester and Pat Murphy were also there joining in the fun.

Judy Sykes and her group of helpers organized a huge silent auction with more than 100 items, including some very special artwork by the children. Everyone had tons of fun in the photo booth and took home a complimentary photo provided by Magic Memories Photography. A big thank you to our title and other sponsors, including:

Triple Crown Sponsor
HPC Specialty Pharmacy

Derby Sponsors
The Jones Family
Mobile Premier Pediatric Dentistry
The Strickland Family
The Sykes Family
WS Foundation

Preakness Sponsors
The Harty Carpenter Group of Merrill Lynch
Jones Trawl Board & Marine Supply Co., Inc.
Lyon, Fry, Cadden
Menyes, Systers
Mobile Metabolism & Wellness
The Orthopaedic Group
Saad Development Corporation

Belmont Sponsors
Autism Society of Alabama
Diamond Back Group
The Karavokiros Family

“101 Dalmations”, complete with Cruella Deville, aka Miss Tijuanna. Mr. Heath, Miss Christy and the kids made the cutest puppies! The Woody’s Song School kids chose their favorite superhero, Spiderman, as the theme for their float. A big thank you goes out to Woody’s Song School dad, Jeb Fulford, for building and driving the float.

MOBILE REGION (cont.)
Kilburn's Kids recently took part in the Girl Scouts' cookie sale. They were so excited to learn about handling money, making change and closing the deal. They were dressed as their favorite cookie. They received toys, clothes, bedding, furniture and electronics. They make sure that each child receives several gifts to open on Christmas morning. One of the most valuable gifts that the company has provided each year is a limited resources to purchase items on their own. The gifts provided by Gulf Distributing have made a world of difference to them. They have received toys, clothes, bedding, furniture and electronics. They can never express just how much we appreciate the generosity and dedication of Gulf Distributing, says Juanita Williams, Regional Director – Mobile. “The children light up when they see the toys but the staff knows exactly what an impact these gifts will make to each child.”

Students attend Spring Dance

Students attended a Spring Dance at Mary G. Montgomery High School in April. The boys had a great time getting dressed up and showing off their dance moves with their classmates.
Former President of the Board of Directors, Mike Marion, receives a plaque for his service from Marc Williams, executive Director, joined by members of the board (left) Mrs. Allison Kendall, Mr. Nathan Handmacher, (right) Dr. Marcia Rossi (incoming President), and Dr. Sam Perna.

**SAVE THE DATES!**

**October 31, 2015**
Chip in for Autism Golf Tournament
Mobile, AL

**November 14, 2015**
Puzzle Piece Dash
Mobile, AL

**October 24, 2015**
Angling for Autism Fishing Tournament on Lake Martin
Alexander City, AL

**October - December 2015**
Holiday Helping Hearts
All Regions