

2025 II

# IMPACT

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND SUPPORTERS OF THE LEARNING TREE

THE IMPACT OF  
**OPPORTUNITY**



THE LEARNING TREE  
**LEARNING-TREE.ORG**

Established in 1983, The Learning Tree, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to children and adolescents with significant educational, medical, and behavioral challenges; helping them develop and maintain a quality of life expected by non-disabled members of their family and community. The Learning Tree, Inc. and its programs admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin. The Learning Tree is governed by a volunteer board of directors, representative of the primary service areas in the State of Alabama.

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## **From the Executive Director**

### **The Impact of Opportunity**

I always appreciate this moment of intentional reflection. So many great things are happening across The Learning Tree. We are thrilled to welcome Melanie Clark as the new Regional Director for our Birmingham/Pelham campus. She comes to us with many years of valuable experience, and I am excited to see how she puts that experience to work in her new role. Our headquarters in Tallahassee has moved to a new location downtown offering opportunities for continued growth. Our staff is working diligently to make updates and upgrades within our training department and so much more.

Opportunity is a chance. That is what The Learning Tree exists for, to provide opportunities, a chance for success. The success of students who participate in our programs. The success of the families who rely on the services provided to their loved ones. The success of staff who pour their hearts into their work. This year I celebrate my twentieth year with The Learning Tree, an opportunity for which I am eternally grateful.

With Sincerest Appreciation,  
Marc

This newsletter is published by The Learning Tree, Resource Development Department compiled and distributed by coordinating offices located in these Alabama cities: Albertville, Anniston, Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Birmingham, Pelham, Mobile, and Montgomery.



## Pelham Campus Welcomes New Regional Director



Melanie Clark comes to The Learning Tree with many years of experience in education. She served the Shelby County School District for 27 years before retiring in 2022. She was first hired at Montevallo High School to teach students with severe behaviors, which is where she discovered her passion for students with behavior challenges. After six years of teaching, she left to become the Assistant Principal at the Shelby County Alternative School. While there, she also served as the school administrator for the Alabama Youth Home Program, where she worked with students in the custody of both DHR and DYS. Melanie later served at the District level as a Special Education Program Area Specialist and then At-Risk Program Developer before transitioning into retirement. After retiring, she became an adjunct professor at the University of Montevallo where she taught both undergraduate and graduate level courses in special education.

She lives in Pelham with her husband Jack and their cocker spaniel, Jeb. She has triplet boys named Peyton, Dalton and Braxton who are in their sophomore year in college. She considers her boys to be her greatest accomplishment.

## The Learning Tree Community Scholarship



Caroline Helms - Vestavia Hills High School  
Presented by Stephanie Remington



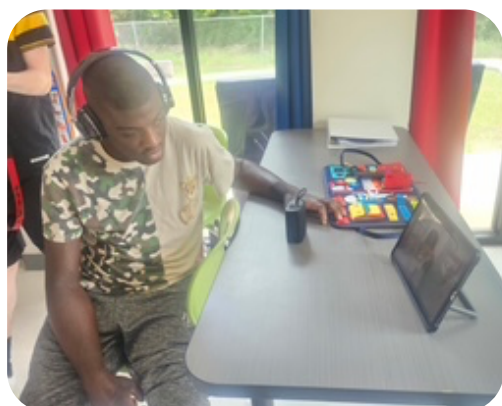
Abigail Cole - Stanhope Elmore High School  
Presented by Linda Ross



Olivia Booker - Benjamin Russell High School  
Presented by Heather Fulford

This year The Learning Tree established a community scholarship, in partnership with Central Alabama Community Foundation, to benefit graduating high school seniors residing in our service areas throughout Alabama. Eligible applicants expressed plans to major in education, healthcare administration, language pathology, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, or social work. This year, scholarships were awarded to Caroline Helms - Vestavia Hills High School, Abigail Cole - Stanhope Elmore High School, and Olivia Booker - Benjamin Russell High School.

## JL Bedsole Foundation Offers New Opportunities



Thanks to the generous support of the JL Bedsole Foundation, The Learning Tree was able to purchase iPads, headphones, and specialized software to support communication and engagement for our nonverbal students. One remarkable outcome of this grant is the transformation we've seen in Duke, a student who typically struggles to stay focused or show interest in traditional activities. Since receiving his iPad, Duke has been actively engaged, sitting for extended periods, learning new concepts, and interacting in ways he hadn't before. For a child who rarely sits still or responds to standard learning tools, this is a milestone worth celebrating. This technology is doing more than teaching—it's opening up a world of connection, expression, and growth. We are so grateful to the JL Bedsole Foundation for making this possible.





# Roping for a Cause

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CORA WILLIAMSON PHOTOGRAPHY

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Learning Tree Charity Classic was held on Saturday and Sunday, May 3 and 4, 2025, in Piedmont, Alabama, at the newly established Dugger Mountain Arena, and was produced by Allen's Roping Productions with over 225 head of cattle provided by Tyler Boatwright.

Dugger Mountain Performance Horses and Arena was the perfect location for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Learning Tree Charity Classic event, close to the Jacksonville region and residential program. Their large parking area, two arenas, 36 stalls, and 400' of covered tie-out area accommodated all ropers and guests. Weather conditions confined ropers to the indoor arena, but it allowed the roping to continue despite the mud and water. Food trucks lined the front of the arena, providing delicious breakfast, lunch, and dinner for all ropers and spectators.





Despite the unfavorable weather, the first 10.5 Handicap Truck Roping event in Alabama started on schedule at 9:00 am, featuring 709 competing teams of ropers from across 12 states. The weekend events continued through Sunday afternoon, featuring additional prize roping divisions, including a 13-slide, 10-Stretch Dummy slide, and an 8.5 saddle roping.

The prize list included a new 2024 Dodge RAM 3500 dually 4x4 truck, courtesy of McSweeney Auto Group in Pell City, Alabama, awarded to the top high-point champion roper of the Saturday truck roping event. Other winners' prizes featured custom rope saddles from Dale McAdams, custom Bourne Buckles, Stretch Roping Dummies G.O.A.T., custom breast collars from Dale McAdams, Redmond Equine Minerals, Fast Back Ropes gift certificates, Smart Earth Camelina oil, and more! Cash awards were given to 1st through 15th place in the truck roping, with points awarded through 20<sup>th</sup> place.

Event sponsors play a significant role in the fundraising efforts of this event. We express great appreciation to each of our sponsors for the 2025 Charity Classic Truck Roping. All proceeds from this event will support The Learning Tree's residential program.

Thank you to our sponsors: McSweeney Auto Group, Dugger Mountain Arena, Allen's Roping Productions, Stretch Roping Dummies, Dale McAdams Saddlery, Bourne Buckles and Awards, Smart Earth Camelina Oil, Redmond Equine, Jay Jenkins Architecture, Trent Thrasher Construction, Climate Flow, Walmart, Lindale Ace Hardware, Jacksonville Home Center Ace Hardware, CORE Waste Solutions, PowerQuip Kubota, W-D Arena, Tucker Milling Feeds, Easterseals, UniFirst Corporation, A&L Trucking, LLC, AmFirst Credit Union, S&H Waterproofing and Construction, LLC, Chicks in the Sticks, Emblem Credit Union, Building, Systems and Supply, Bedwell Excavating, LLC, VFW Tallassee 125, Dr. and Mrs. Bruce Hill, Sunbelt Rentals, Coca Cola, and Cherokee Electric Cooperative.





## Employee Appreciation Days



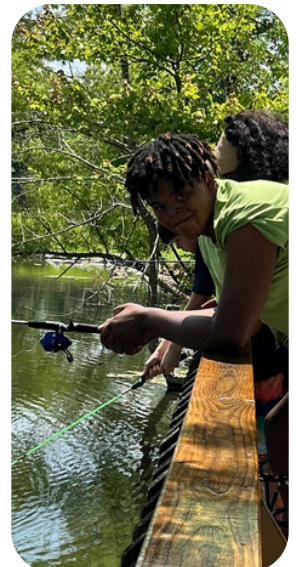
Mobile

Jacksonville



Employee Appreciation Days are always fun at The Learning Tree. Our Spring Showers theme was a hit. Events are even more special to be joined by members of the community. The police, fire chief, and some crew stopped by in Jacksonville for a scoop of ice cream! We're so grateful for our dedicated team who give their all every day. A little rain didn't stop us from showing how much we appreciate everything they do!

## Fish on the Table



The Learning Tree Fishing Club kicked off its annual Fishing Day at the Jacksonville region pond with lots of food, friends, and fun. This was a successful day with lots of fish on the table!



## Employee and Supervisor of the Year

Congratulations to The Learning Tree's Supervisor of the Year, Shelley Civitello and Employee of the Year, Rachel Logan.

Shelley has been with The Learning Tree 25 years and is currently the Financial Manager for the Anniston/Jacksonville campus. She loves getting to know the kids, helping employees, making lifelong friendships, and getting to be a mother figure. Shelley's greatest joy at work is getting to see students and staff succeed.

Rachel has been with The Learning Tree 10 years and currently serves as a Medical Assistant for the Mobile campus. She views her job as an honor and does it each day for the kids. Rachel enjoys working with her team and hopes to see big things happen for The Learning Tree in the future.



Shelley Civitello



Rachel Logan

Thank you both for your ongoing commitment to serving children and families each day. Your work has made an IMPACT!

## Let's Have A Celebration



Thanks to the generous support of Vince Kilborn, for Kilborn's Kids, The Learning Tree hosted an unforgettable Prom and Mardi Gras Ball for our Mobile students. These celebrations were special moments our kids will remember for years to come.

## Autism Walk Events Throughout Alabama



Albertville



Mobile



The Learning Tree proudly celebrated Autism Awareness Month with Autism Support of Alabama at Autism Walks in Boaz, Mobile, and Montgomery. It was a fun filled way to honor our students, raise awareness, and bring our communities together in support of acceptance and inclusion.





THE LEARNING TREE

Resource Development Office  
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# Join Our Team

## Hiring Across Alabama



### **Positions Available In**

Outpatient Clinics, Residential Programs, Education Programs



### **Who We Hire**

Direct Care Professionals, Teachers, Nurses and Other Medical Professionals, Management Staff, Board Certified Behavioral Analysts, Therapists, Administrative Professionals And More.....



### **Benefits Include**

Competitive salary, generous personal leave time, health insurance with supplemental coverage options, matched retirement plan, paid conference and professional development attendance, paid required certifications and licenses, education reimbursement.

[learning-tree.org/careers](http://learning-tree.org/careers)

Albertville, Anniston, Jacksonville, Mobile, Montgomery, Pelham, and Tallassee