



GHAzette

WINTER 2013

BALLEN DELIVERS INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGE AT WILMINGTON FUNDRAISING EVENT

Award winning broadcast journalist Dwayne Ballen shared his poignant story about his family's journey with autism at the first ever Speaking From the Heart fundraising luncheon on October 23rd at the Cape Fear Country Club in Wilmington. Over 150 guests enjoyed lunch while Mr. Ballen enlightened and inspired all in attendance. Ballen's new book, *Journey with Julian*, strikes a chord with parents who are just receiving the diagnosis of autism for their child, as well as those further down the path. At the conclusion of the event, attendees were asked to consider a donation to GHA Autism Supports and nearly \$14,000 was raised to support the continued expansion efforts in the Cape Fear area. Special thanks to CrossFit Carolina Beach, Wayland & Elaine Denton, Jim & Lesley Hively, Carole Morrison, PPD and Janet Wilson who served as sponsors and Melonia Anderson, Anlyan&Hively, Michael & Deborah Bluestein, Linda Luxenberg, Carolyn McKinney, Kathleen Meyerson, Debbie Mitchell, Mount Tabor Baptist Church in Cerro Gordo, NC, Richard Poole and Tracy Wilkes who served as table captains. In addition, we appreciate Emcee Dr. Rob Morrell, Planning Committee members Jim & Lesley Hively, Carole Morrison, Richard Poole and event coordinator Ginger Longino.



WILMINGTON OPERATIONS PARTICIPATE IN "GIVING TUESDAY"

GHA Autism Supports and the individuals we serve have continued to be active in the communities in which we operate by volunteering through a number of different non-profits. The individuals receiving supports through the Wilmington operations volunteer regularly at the Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC. On Tuesday, December 6th, non-profits across the nation participated in "Giving Tuesday", a marketing effort to give consumers a chance to spend money and time on those in need instead of holiday shopping. The Wilmington Branch of the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina was bustling with activity on Giving Tuesday as GHA volunteers assisted in packing trucks full of food to send off to food banks around the Wilmington area. Local news station WECT was on hand for coverage of the event.



GHA ATTENDS ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

Individuals supported by GHA attended a workshop in Winston-Salem in September sponsored by the NC Consumer Advocacy Network and Support Organization. The workshop offered advice on gaining the attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary for effective self-advocacy and systems advocacy. Headlining the presentations from the 2-day event was Susan Rogers who serves as the director of the national group. Rogers has been active in the consumer movement since 1984 through her writing, presenting and resource work. Her writing achievements include co-authorship of a brief accepted by the US Supreme Court in the landmark Olmstead disability rights case. Over 50 individuals gathered in Winston-Salem from across the State and all received a certificate of attendance. Plans are underway for the creation of an advocacy group that will meet monthly for fellowship and special events.



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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

As we celebrate our 35th year at GHA Autism Supports and close out 2013, it is a time to reflect. Through organizational efforts led by the late Marie G. Smith, our organization was founded in 1978 with the opening of the first residence, which was home to five children. It was named "Marie G. Smith Children's Home" and was operated by "The Group Home for the Autistic" which had a staff of 5 and operated on a budget of \$78,000. Thirty-five years later, GHA Autism Supports serves over 90 individuals with autism and employs over 250 staff with a budget of 9.5 million dollars! Although the provision of residential supports is the primary service offered through our organization, we have expanded over the years to provide vocational, educational, community and in-home services under the auspices of every managed care organization (MCO) in the State of North Carolina. We are filled with BIG ideas for enhancing our existing programs and we are constantly looking for our "next step" to enrich the lives of people with autism. Without a doubt, the efforts of all of our stakeholders have brought us such a great distance since 1978. While we are all consumed at times by the day to day operations, we know without doubt that we are creating environments where people of all ages with autism are understood, valued and given opportunities to grow individually, as well as contribute to their community. Happy holidays and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2014!



Dawn H. Allen

Carolina Farms Participates in Cooking Camp

The staff at Carolina Farms were excited to host a visit from a group of children that were participating in a cooking camp sponsored by First Presbyterian Church of Albemarle in late August. The camp consisted of information related to healthy eating habits and basic cooking skills. During one day of the camp, the camp participants gathered vegetables and herbs at Carolina Farms that they used to prepare homemade lasagna to take home. Camp Director Jane Snyder felt the visit to Carolina Farms gave many children the valuable importance of the "farm to table" philosophy.


**LOCAL ARTIST
FEATURED AT FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

Beginning September 8th and running through the month of October, the creative work of local artist Robbie Stevenson was featured at the First

Presbyterian Church gallery in downtown Albemarle. A collection of cross stitch, needlepoint, crewel embroidery, origami and Kirigami were all on display. Many GHA staff and art enthusiasts thoroughly enjoyed visiting the exhibit to see many of Robbie's incredible works of art! Special thanks to First Presbyterian Church for sharing the talents of this young man to members of our community.


**CAROLINA MEADOWS
DONATES GOLF CART**

GHA Autism Supports was recently pleased to accept the

donation of a gently used golf cart from Carolina Meadows. Located in Chapel Hill, Carolina Meadows is one of the nation's foremost continuing-care retirement communities.

The residents, nearly 70 strong, take an active role in the governance of the retirement community and proudly support many charitable, cultural and community organizations through grants and charitable



(Left to Right) Carolina Meadows resident Don Stedman, Vice President of Sales and Marketing Melissa Kass, Director of Outreach and Social Accountability Amy Gorely and Greenskeeper Marc Whittemore (far right) present the retired transporter to Director of Carolina Farms John Fields (middle).

gifts. After years of carrying Carolina Meadows residents to view their new homes, the retiring transporter will now carry residents and visitors to Carolina Farms to the outlying gardens, barns and other designated work areas.

**IBM FOUNDATION SUPPORTS
TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE**

GHA Autism Supports was recently awarded a \$3,000 grant from the IBM Foundation towards the development of a new IT infrastructure that is essential to effectively advancing and managing our mission. Like many health and human service providers, GHA is taking the proactive approach in implementing a sound IT infrastructure to not only meet the legal electronic medical records requirements set forth by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, but to increase efficiencies in our accounting, clinical and human resource operations by limiting the duplication of efforts that currently exist. In addition, new hardware will be placed at all residential and program sites operated by GHA Autism Supports.



GHA Receives Speedway Children's Charities Grant

GHA recently received a grant in late November in the amount of \$4,000 from the Lowe's Motor Speedway Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities in Concord. The funds will be used to equip the Marie G. Smith Children's Home with state-of-the-art monitoring equipment to create a safer living environment and allow them to live more independently.

The mission of Speedway Children's Charities (SCC) is "to care for children in educational, financial, social and medical need to help them lead productive lives." The SCC was founded in 1982 by Bruton Smith, who serves as the Chairman of Speedway Motorsports and Sonic Automotive, as a memorial and legacy to his son, Bruton Cameron Smith, who passed away at a very young age. Given Mr. Smith's personal experience, one of his focuses became assisting children in need in the communities surrounding the speedways owned and operated by Speedway Motorsports.

The mission of Speedway Children's Charities remains true to the ideals it was founded upon in 1982: To care for children in educational, financial, social and medical need in order to help them lead productive lives.



American Red Cross

BLOOD DRIVE A SUCCESS!

We were pleased to host a community blood drive this fall to benefit the American Red Cross where we collected 18 life-saving units of blood!

"COASTAL ENDEAVORS" SLATED TO OPEN IN WILMINGTON

GHA Autism Supports is pleased to announce the opening of "Coastal Endeavors", an adult day services program in Wilmington. Slated to open in early 2014,

"Coastal Endeavors" represents the continued expansion of services in the Cape Fear area. Several of our individuals that currently reside with GHA will receive vocational supports at the new program. As "Coastal Endeavors" expands, plans are to serve other individuals from the community.

GHA was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from PPD to assist in the start-up expenses for the program. PPD is a leading global contract research organization providing drug discovery, development and lifecycle management services. Special thanks to PPD for their continued support of GHA's new initiatives and for being such a strong corporate citizen!



Albemarle Rotary Grant Received for New Vocational Initiative

GHA Autism Supports was recently awarded a \$2,000 grant from the Albemarle Rotary Club towards the development of a new vocational initiative that gives our individuals the opportunity to create one-of-a-kind works of art including glass pieces and pottery. Made up of the business, professional and community leaders of Stanly County, the Albemarle Rotary Club boasts over 150 members, including GHA Autism Supports CEO Dawn Allen. Each year, the Albemarle Rotary Club engages in humanitarian efforts locally and abroad and awards a number of grants to worthy non-profits in our community. The new vocational program has also received support in the form of grants from the Stanly County Community Foundation, Wal-Mart in Albemarle and Wal-Mart in Locust. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to provide meaningful employment opportunities for the individuals that we serve.





Thanks to the coordinated efforts of many, the “End of Summer Camp” was a huge success! Camp activities began on Wednesday, September 25th with archery, bocce, mountain climbing, trail hiking and navigating through the obstacle course at Rock Creek Park. Thursday’s events took place at the Stanly County Family YMCA where participants enjoyed health and fitness instruction, arts and crafts and swimming. The fun and fellowship continued on Friday at City Lake Park with a pizza lunch celebration followed by fishing, canoeing, disc golf and corn hole. Special thanks to Camp Coordinator John Fields, all GHA managers and clinical coordinators, City of Albemarle Parks and Recreation Department, Stanly County Family YMCA and interns from both Pfeiffer University and Gray Stone Day School.

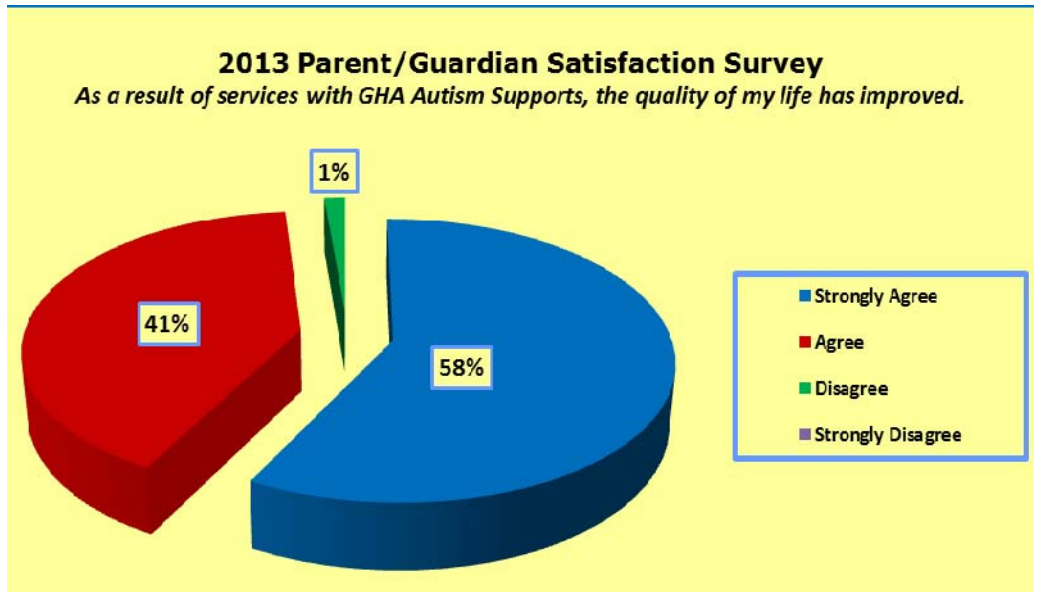


FOCUSING ON STAFF AT APPRECIATION EVENTS

During the month of October, all GHA staffers were honored at appreciation events in both Albemarle and Wilmington. On October 3rd, staff were invited to lunch at Market Station in downtown Albemarle. GHA was honored recently as the recipient of a \$1,000 prize from being a statewide top performer in the **Get Fit! 60 Day Challenge** sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina. The prize winnings from the program were used to provide a number of preventive health screenings including blood pressure and cholesterol checks and stroke screenings at the Albemarle staff appreciation events. Staff from the Wilmington programs were honored at an event on October 23rd where they enjoyed food and an array of prizes.

The 2013 Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey The Results Are In!

In July 2013, we mailed our annual Parent/Guardian Satisfaction survey to 90 parents and guardians. Our survey return rate was 78%. We appreciate the positive comments many of you shared and are addressing any concerns you expressed. One key question focused on your overall satisfaction: *As a result of services with GHA Autism Supports, the quality of my life has improved.* Seventy of 71 participants selected *strongly agree* or *agree* while one respondent selected *disagree*. None of the parents or guardians answering the question chose *strongly disagree*. The pie chart summarizes our results:



Dates to Remember

- March 27**—5pm-7pm—Family Network Regional Meeting in Wilmington
- April 5**—GHA Family Network Yard Sale in Albemarle
- May 17**—Rubber Duck Derby in Albemarle
- June 8**—1pm-3pm—Family Network Regional Meeting in Raleigh

- March 29**—4th Annual Coastal Run/Walk for Autism in Wilmington
- April 6**—1pm—3pm Family Network Regional Meeting in Albemarle
- May 19**—Golf Fore Autism in Wilmington