Maximizing Future Outcomes for Children with Autism

By Bonnie Lawhorn, Director of Marketing and Communications

According to CDC estimates, 1 in 88 children is currently identified with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). What is autism? The NIH defines autism as “a complex developmental disability that causes problems with social interaction and communication. Symptoms usually start before age three and can cause delays or problems in many different skills that develop from infancy to adulthood.”

The need for evaluation, therapeutic intervention, education, and employment options for children and adults with ASD has never been more critical.

TLC offers a range of services for children with ASD to address deficits in sensory processing, social interaction, communication skills, and language development. The first step is evaluation. TLC designed a comprehensive autism evaluation to thoroughly assess the presence of symptoms seen in children with ASD, as well as examine processing strengths and weaknesses. After the evaluation, TLC can provide families with recommendations based on the child’s profile.

TLC “Celebrates Our Story” at Fall Luncheon

More than 100 guests gathered on October 16th at the Gaithersburg Marriott for our Fall Luncheon to “Celebrate Our Story.” Fox 5’s Laura Evans served as Master of Ceremonies and shared her connection to TLC through her friend’s son Michael who attends TLC’s Katherine Thomas School.

Honored guests included Montgomery County Executive Isaiah Leggett, Charles L. Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive; Ken Reichard, Assistant to Senator Ben Cardin; and Jay Kenney, Chief of Aging and Disabilities at Montgomery County’s Department of Health and Human Services.

The emotional highlights of the day came from our families who shared their stories of perseverance, hope and trust. Jennifer Polkes shared her journey raising her son Hunter, who has a complex combination of developmental, neurological and medical issues including autism. Hunter has received speech and occupational therapy, as well as psychological counseling from TLC for the past 6 years.

Feeding Program at TLC

By Brigid Baker, OTR/L, Director of Outpatient Occupational Therapy, and Debra Piccirillo, M.S., CCC-SLP/L, Director, Outpatient Speech-Language Pathology

Within our local community, there is a definite need for resources and services for families with children who have mealtime challenges or feeding issues.

Do you know a child who…

- Is a picky eater?
- Does not have pleasurable mealtime experiences?
- Has a history of reflux or food allergies?
- Is struggling with food textures?
- Does not self feed?
- Has difficulty chewing?
- Has a pediatrician or parent concerned about weight gain?
- Drinks more than eats?
- Takes a long time to eat a meal?
- Is not interested in eating or avoids mealtimes?

Committee Member Debra Lindsay, Emcee Laura Evans, and Jeannie Lindsay enjoy the festivities

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The TLC Story — TLC has all the traditional elements of a great story. Our setting is the community that we have served since 1950, growing and changing to meet their needs. The theme is our mission to improve lives and expand possibilities for individuals with special needs. The plot is our daily work as we identify challenges and help others meet and overcome them. The characters are many — our families, staff, volunteers and referral sources. The problem is identifying and meeting the special needs of each individual we serve. The solution is our family of therapeutic, educational and employment services.

Our October “Celebrating our Stories” luncheon was inspirational as we heard the stories of Ephraim, Michael, Hunter and Sabrina. Each day TLC creates stories of understanding, hope and overcoming challenges.

We are so grateful for all the individuals who are a part of TLC’s stories. May your holiday story be filled with family, friends and celebrations.

Patricia A. Ritter, Ph.D., Executive Director

New Faces at TLC

TLC Welcomes Geoffrey S. Platnick to Board of Trustees

Geoffrey S. Platnick, shareholder with the Family Law practice group of the Potomac firm Shulman, Rogers, Gandal, Pordy & Ecker, PA, has been practicing law in the DC area for over ten years. Mr. Platnick is recognized as a rising star Maryland attorney by Super Lawyers magazine and has been named a Montgomery County Bar Leader for 2012. A graduate of the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo Law School, he is licensed to practice law in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and the United States District Court of Maryland. Mr. Platnick was formerly Assistant Attorney General for the District of Columbia, where he worked in the area of child support establishment and enforcement.

“Dedicated members of the community, like Geoff, are a tremendous resource to keep the organization moving towards our mission to expand possibilities for individuals with special needs. We are happy to have Geoff on the Board,” said Executive Director Pat Ritter.

Feeding Program > continued from page 1

TLC’s speech-language and occupational therapy departments have developed a leading edge, interdisciplinary program that can meet this need. Together with families, our team will determine a therapeutic plan and make recommendations specific to their meal-time needs. Evaluations and treatment are conducted by licensed occupational therapists and/or speech-language pathologists. Sessions are child-friendly and family-focused to build trust within mealtime experiences and explorations. A play-based therapy model will be used to address a child’s sensory needs. Individual and/or group treatments are available.
**Children with Autism... continued from page 1**

therapeutic and education options help address each child’s needs all the way into adulthood, including individual and group therapies for children, The Katherine Thomas School (KTS) for students preschool–grade 12, and adult programs through the Outcomes Service.

TLC’s speech-language and occupational therapists and tutors have specialized expertise in working with students with autism. For young children, TLC provides therapies as well as Therapeutic Interaction Groups and a Visual Spatial Group. Our Interaction Groups focus on emotional engagement, improving skills through language, gestures and movement, and utilize the DIR®/Floortime™ Model for early intervention. Visual Spatial Group addresses visual-spatial challenges in pre-school aged children with a range of developmental and regulatory difficulties. KTS addresses the complex needs of students with autism, preschool–grade 12 through a multi-sensory, developmental, language-intensive curriculum.

TLC’s Outcomes Service provides a range of programs for adults with autism including job development and coaching, academic support, assistance with accessing community resources, travel training and case management.

Tommy’s parents share a story of progress for their son with autism in TLC’s Interaction Group, “Before he came to TLC, I worried he would never grow to love either me or my wife. Now, we think he does love us. And we never really saw him sleep so well or laugh or enjoy being with us as when he began the Interaction Group . . . I hope you can appreciate my feelings of loss and how the therapists at TLC have recovered for me some part of my son which I thought would never be there.”

Please contact Julie Bobrow for more information about any of TLC’s programs at 301.424.5200 x147 or JBobrow@ttlc.org.

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**Transition Advocacy Program**

Jeremy came to Outcomes’ Transition Advocacy Program for job development. The goal of Transition Advocacy is to support adults with disabilities seeking a more independent lifestyle through greater success in employment, education and community integration. Support is based solely on individual needs and goals and is intended for individuals who are not eligible for other public funding sources, but still need support after graduation.

Since the spring, Jeremy has been working with Sarah Bretz, Intake Coordinator, toward his goal of finding paid long-term employment in his field. Jeremy, who is diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome, holds a Master’s Degree in Library Science from University of Maryland.

“The services and personnel of TLC Outcomes have been a major asset to me in my pursuit for a career. They’ve helped me rewrite and update my resume and cover letter to look better to prospective employers, trained me in proper interview techniques, and helped me search for jobs suitable to my personal skills. Thanks to TLC, I have a fulfilling paying job and look forward to more in the future,” Jeremy stated. Jeremy currently works at a paid internship in Washington, DC.

To learn more about the Transition Advocacy Program, contact Sarah Bretz at 240.813.6903 or SBretz@ttlc.org.

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**Rockville Rewards Card**

TLC’s newest community partnership is with The Rockville Chamber of Commerce. A benefit of membership is the Rockville Rewards Card. Simply purchase the card for $25 at the Gaither Road or Medical Center Drive front desk and immediately you will receive special discounts while supporting participating Rockville businesses and raising money for TLC’s Caring Neighbor Fund.

Discounts are good through August 31, 2012. One hundred percent of the proceeds from your purchase of the Rockville Rewards Card go directly to TLC’s Caring Neighbor Fund, supporting families in our community who can’t afford the treatment and services they need. Credit card, cash or check payable to “TLC” accepted. Thank you!

Learn more about Rockville Rewards Card — www.rockvillerewards.com

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**TLC Staff Recognized**

Thanks to our families for recognizing our extraordinary staff! Six TLC therapists have been chosen by Washington Parent readers as “Favorite Docs of 2012.” We know that all of our professionals are fantastic and are especially pleased that families took the time to submit nominations for their favorites — Lisa Lenhart for Learning Assessments; Stacey Thompson for Speech and Language Therapy; Brigid Baker, Erica Bruscke, Megan Coate, and Shirley Wietlisbach for Occupational Therapy. Our families also took the time to nominate our Tutoring staff as “Best for Families” in Washington Family Magazine.
Norwood “Gym Buddies”
Celebrating 10 Years at KTS

Eighth graders from Norwood school love Monday mornings! For the past 10 years KTS has been hosting “Gym Buddies,” a community service program in partnership with Bethesda based Norwood School. Norwood is a coeducational independent school (K–grade 8). Students visit KTS six times throughout their school year. Norwood students assist Wendy Epstein, Physical Education Teacher, with PE classes and also help with pragmatics classes. Special events are often planned on Monday mornings to take advantage of these exceptional helpers. Last year’s special events included Silly Olympics and scavenger hunts. Gym Buddies provides a 1:1 ratio of students to volunteers/staff and facilitates opportunities for our students to play safely in larger group games as well as role modeling for sportsmanship.

Creative Players Hit the Stage

We are pleased to present Creative Players, a new after school program for middle and high school students with disabilities in partnership with ArtStream, a local nonprofit that provides artistic opportunities to individuals in communities traditionally under-served by the arts. This program is supported by a Montgomery County Council Grant administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Drama groups are directed by trained theater professionals with the help of additional staff and volunteers, including student volunteers of the same ages. This program held at KTS is open to students attending other schools throughout Montgomery County. Some scholarships are available. An original script is developed during the rehearsal process through improvisation techniques. A play is scripted and then blocked, memorized by actors and performed for families, friends and the public. The final production is designed to showcase each actor’s unique talents.

Session two registration will open in January for the spring. To learn more about Creative Players, contact Lisa Torvik at 301.424.5200 x6923 or Ltorvik@ttlc.org.
Kind, Thinking Scholars at KTS

Students gathered in Matt Vadney’s class at KTS their first week of school to take a closer and renewing look at behavior expectations, which they helped write on cards last year as part of the KTS PBIS initiative. “PBIS” is short for Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, an approach for schools to assist with evidence-based behavioral interventions. These expectations represent how students hope to perform in class and interact with their classmates. Students talked about what it means to be Kind, Thinking, Scholars (“KTS”). Being Kind, Thinking, Scholars includes listening actively, coming to class prepared, getting involved in lessons and asking questions. These good habits accompany students in the classroom, in the lunchroom and at recess, as well as during special events and in their electives. Of course, they earn their pay in KTS bucks and dragon dollars, to be spent on fun, social activities.

To wrap up the week, students focused on setting their own personal expectations. Students gathered around the flagpole and discussed how to make this a year of learning and success. Then they buried their personal expectations and goals’ cards for the new school year in the flowerbed. At the end of the year, students will return to the same spot and ask themselves important questions: Did we have the kind of year we hoped for? Did we meet our expectations? How did our efforts bloom like spring flowers?

Calvin plants a time capsule.

New Girl Scout Troop at KTS!

In July, KTS hosted the first ever Camp Starfish for middle and high school girls with special needs in partnership with the Girl Scout Council of the Nation’s Capital. Twenty-five girls enjoyed a fun-filled week of activities that focused on self-discovery and empowerment.

Lisa Davie, parent of KTS 8th grade Sarah and former Girl Scout recognized the need to continue offering Girl Scout opportunities at KTS.

“My daughter Sarah struggled in a general education troop and I really like the Girl Scout experience for Sarah. Starting an inclusive troop seemed like the perfect way to enable Sarah to continue with Scouts and offer Girl Scouts to many new girls who haven’t had an opportunity to participate.” KTS directors Rhona Schwartz and Cathy Burgess are active supporters of the program.

As a first time troop leader, Lisa was pleased to welcome Sara Sankey a veteran leader from a local inclusive troop as an assistant leader for KTS Troop 5027. Sara’s troop graduated with many receiving their Gold Award, the highest honors for a Scout. The KTS troop is open to middle and high school girls at KTS and will meet two to three times per month throughout the school year. Activities will be Scout driven and focused on leadership, planning, gaining new experiences and most of all, fun. Look out for s’mores and Girls Scout cookies this year at KTS!

Ms. Hartley’s students share their thank you cards

On November 11, when local Veterans receive thank you cards from Ms. Hartley’s students, they will experience the benefit of a three way community partnership. GEICO employee and American Legion member Beverly has been a long-time friend to TLC. TLC benefits from GEICO’s generosity in many ways. Every year, Beverly’s American Legion unit, Francis Scott Key Unit #11, takes on a project to thank area Veterans for their service. At Beverly’s request, GEICO provided the cards and TLC’s Katherine Thomas School provided the artists. Students throughout KTS are learning about Veteran’s Day and making cards to thank our veterans. Mrs. Hartley’s class read, Don’t Forget, God Bless Our Troops, by Jill Biden, to understand the perspective of a young child missing a parent who is off with his military unit for a year and what it is like for soldiers to be separated from their families. KTS students brightened the day for our Veterans and raised their awareness of what it means to serve your country.

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TLC Welcomes the Gecko to Our Lobbies

For more than 20 years, GEICO has been one of TLC’s strongest supporters. We are enormously grateful for their support both financially as well as through their representation on our Board of Trustees. Bill Roberts, Executive Vice President, served on TLC’s Board of Trustees from 1997–2003 and is a Past President. Bill McDonald, Controller, has served on TLC’s Board of Trustees since 2003.

Most recently, GEICO made an extraordinary commitment to TLC by donating $25,000. Their most generous gift has been recognized by naming our lobbies at Gaither Road and at KTS in GEICO’s name. So the next time you see the GEICO gecko in our lobby and around town, remember how grateful we are for their longstanding partnership with TLC and commitment to the families we serve!

Jennifer revealed, “For the hour he is with his therapists, he says ‘I am the luckiest kid in the world.’ There was a time when the whole world was scary for Hunter. We couldn’t get him to leave the house except to come to TLC.”

Christine Giraudo and her daughter Sabrina, a 12th grade student at KTS, reflected on their experiences at KTS. “What a wealth of learning Sabrina has enjoyed at KTS. …we as a family are enormously grateful for the wealth and depth of Sabrina’s learning at KTS,” stated Christine.

Ephraim Close has been a longtime recipient of supported employment services at TLC, following a car accident on his last day of high school that left him with a traumatic brain injury. After four years in rehabilitation hospitals, Ephraim came to TLC and renewed his commitment to being an artist. Ephraim generously donated an original work of his art, which was auctioned off at the luncheon. Watch the remarks made by all of our speakers on our website at www.ttlc.org/support-tlc/fall-luncheon/.

This event would not have been possible without the leadership of our Event Planning Committee: Betty Anne Aschenbach, Karen Beveridge, Debra Lindsay, Melissa Pappas, Mary Rill, and Peggy Strang.

Who Was Crowned King of the Road?

More than 500 participants enjoyed a great day of running on Nov. 18th. Find out who won our 8th Annual King of the Road 5K Run at www.ttlc.org/support-tlc/king-of-the-road-5k/. Thanks to our runners and generous sponsors, we reached our goal of raising more than $30,000! We thank our generous sponsors for their outstanding support of this year’s race:

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  - Enterprise Rent-a-Car
  - Giant Food
  - Shady Grove Orthopaedic Associates

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- **VISIONARY SPONSORS**
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  - Peggy Strang

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  - Karen & Peter Beveridge
  - Shulman Rogers
  - KTS Alumni Association

Thank you to our most generous sponsors!
You Can Help Others Hear!

That’s what we do every day at TLC’s Family Hearing Center. But a few years ago, those words took on new meaning.

We created the Help Others Hear program in 2008, and since then, we have raised over $80,000 to help more than 50 children and adults with hearing loss get hearing aids despite their inability to afford them.

But the need continues, as families struggle during these challenging economic times. A single hearing aid costs at least $2,000, which can be unaffordable for many people in our community. Perhaps you know that Medicare does not cover the cost of hearing aids and that private insurance companies provide minimal, if any, reimbursement for hearing aids.

Today, YOU have the chance to change someone’s life. You can Help Others Hear with a generous tax-deductible donation. You can help people like Queenie, who lost her job as a result of the economy and eventually became homeless. She accidentally lost her two hearing aids, making it impossible to get a job because her hearing loss is so significant. Queenie’s new hearing aids have enabled her to get two part-time jobs and restored her dignity as she strives to find permanent housing.

During this season of giving, please consider the gift of hearing for someone in our community and know that 100% of your donation will be used to purchase hearing aids and provide related follow up care.

We see the joy of learning in the faces of students who did not think they were capable of learning...the friendships forming between students who did not know how to make friends or who had been bullied in other school settings...and the pride on parents’ faces who always knew that their children could be successful if they could just find the right school.

GO KTS! — Giving Our Kids Tools For Success — is our annual campaign to provide the latest curriculum materials, assistive technology and staff training to ensure the best possible outcomes for our students. KTS is an exceptional school for exceptional students. Please support GO KTS today so that KTS can continue to make a difference in the lives of our students and their families.

Caring Neighbor Campaign

“You have helped and changed my daughter’s life and the lives of other children.”

“My son’s performance in school and behavior at home has improved, and for that, I am thankful.”

“We are very grateful to TLC for helping us communicate with our son.”

These words were written by parents whose children have received therapeutic services at TLC for a wide range of special needs including autism spectrum disorders, speech-language development, motor skill delays, sensory integration, social skill deficits, and learning disabilities. Despite varying challenges, these children have one thing in common. They all come from families who cannot afford the help their children need.

Today, you have the power to change a child’s life with your most generous donation to TLC’s Caring Neighbor Campaign. 100% of your donation will be used to provide direct services to a child with special needs regardless of their family’s ability to pay.
TLC is proud to have been chosen as one of the charitable beneficiaries for the 17th Annual Winter Lights Festival at Seneca Creek State Park.

This wonderful Montgomery County holiday tradition features more than 360 illuminated vignettes and 65 animated displays in a 3.5 mile drive through beautiful Seneca Creek State Park — which is about 10 minutes from all TLC locations. The Winter Lights Festival begins at the end of November and runs through December 31st.

Visit www.gaithersburgmd.gov/winterlights for complete details.

Enjoy this holiday experience with your friends and family and help support TLC at the same time!