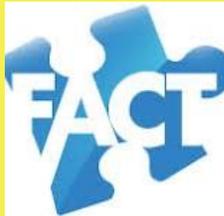


MAY 2020



NEWS YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO
... and that's a FACT!

Your monthly news & updates from Families of Autistic Children of Tidewater



Congratulations
Dawson on 1st place!
You win two day
passes to
Ocean Breeze!



Congratulations
Connor on 2nd place!
You win two day
passes to
Surge Adventure Park
at Lynnhaven Mall!



Congratulations
Haley on 3rd place!
You win two day
passes to
Laser Quest

Congratulations to all our Autism Awareness Month Coloring Contest winners. Thank you to all the talented artists who participated and our great community partners at Ocean Breeze Water park, Surge Adventure Park, and Laser Quest for donating our prizes.



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

"I went to camp and I'm gonnawannagoagin" is the first line of the camp song that conjures happy memories for hundreds of campers with autism and student volunteers. Now, more than ever, we're gonnawannagoagin'; to camp, to school, to work, to...anywhere! Camp will most likely need to be modified this summer; smaller groups, fewer volunteers, and fewer field trips. What will never change is the spirit of inclusion and fun that define the program.

Summer Camp registration will open this Friday, May 1 at 8:00 pm through the **Active Registration Site** for campers and volunteers. No payment will be taken at this time. Until we have a better understanding of what precautions will need to be in place to keep all

participants safe throughout the summer, no finite plans can be made. Just know that if it's at all possible, we will continue our twenty-three year tradition of bringing summer fun to our autism community.

Donors and Grantors

The FACT fundraising committee is hopeful that our annual Party Under the Stars will be rescheduled for this Fall. In the mean time, the event's postponement leaves a \$200,000 deficit in the budget. Thankfully, many of our generous beneFACTors have stepped up and donated in the absence of the event. Thank you to these generous, staunch advocates: the DeCroix family, Dave Jester, Rick Quigg, Ron and Terri McIntosh, Janet and Stanley Meyers, and Mike and Pam Levinson. If you would like to donate, please visit our website's [secure link](#) or a downloadable form to mail in.



Visit our Website

Movers and Shakers

This portion of the newsletter is usually reserved for a community member who has gone above and beyond to help our organization. This month I would like to recognize some of our staff members who are keeping us connected to our students during this period of social isolation. I am proud to work along side all of my program staff. They are teachers, therapists, and college students with a talent for motivating special needs children and an undeniable passion for their work. But only a few are leaders.

Much beloved educators Jessie Pitts, Allyson and Justin Hartung and Sheri Bragg are doing what they can to lead us all through this difficult time. Sheri is our program director and she and her colleagues are reaching out via Zoom and Facebook live every weekday. Justin's leading exercise and games, Aly's doing arts and crafts, Jessie's hosting dance parties and Sheri's doing Science Friday.

I encourage all of you to check the calendar on the home page of our website www.camp4autism.com or our [Facebook Page](#) to participate or just witness the joy brought to us courtesy of this month's "movers and shakers", Jessie, Justin, Aly, and Sheri. Great job guys!

Gotta Love this Kid

In March, FACT was proud to promote keynote speaker, Haley Moss, at Zeiders American Dream Theater. Haley is a lawyer and author with autism that spoke to us about the importance of neurodiversity, inclusion and self-advocacy. She encouraged us to let people with autism tell their own stories whenever possible.



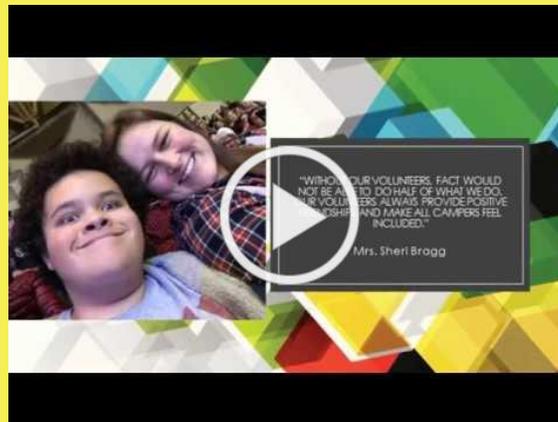
Lindsey (left) and Victoria at their dress fitting at All the Rage before they hit the runway at FACT's Next Top Model.

Our friend Lindsey Rasmussen was a volunteer greeter and usher at that event, and I knew right then that I wanted Lindsey to tell her own story.

When I first met Lindsey many years ago, she was wearing a t-shirt with alternative rocker, Beck, on the front. Obviously, this was not your average teen. Lindsey is a bright, friendly young woman who is proud of her Queens, New York roots. She loves attending FACT social club, seeing her friends, and going to cool places with them. During this time of social isolation, Lindsey told me she is trying to eat healthier and get more exercise.

Before the "shut down" I had the chance to substitute teach a FACT art classes. Before class Lindsey approached the mother of one of her non-verbal classmates and told her how "smart and thoughtful" she thought her son was. She said she could tell by his facial expressions. She told me that she wishes people understood that "people with autism are smart and special and there are many ways to communicate besides speech." Lindsey reminds us all to listen with our eyes and hearts as well as our ears. She embraces her autism and advocates for her peers. That's why she's a "kid you gotta love."

Volunteer Appreciation Month



As we plan for a modified summer camp, we must consider the possibility of not including peer volunteers. Nearly 200 students ages 10-17 volunteer at Camp Gonnawannagoagin' each summer. They are behavior models, caregivers, and friends. They offer the acceptance and inclusion that too many individuals with autism rarely experience. We truly appreciate our volunteers for the hours they dedicate to others and the smiles they bring.

