



## INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

### February Update

Dear Families and Friends of TCA:

The old adage, *there's no time like the present*, comes to mind as we juggle all the plans we have in mind for TCA at one time – the present. I have never felt such a sense of abundance; there is so much opportunity on the horizon and just beyond if we plan today for tomorrow. Here are some of the projects we are currently working on, and with these, I will let you know who is helping and how you can pitch in:

#### 2010-2011 Enrollment:

Joyous and amazing is the fact that we have five interested/committed families ready to enroll at TCA next school year. These students will be in the upcoming Kindergarten class, and I am so excited to have them and their families joining us. Because of this planned growth, you will see our staff grow. We recently welcomed certified paraprofessional and ABA experienced Abbe Hoffman, who brings 8 years of working with young students with Autism to our program. I know she is an addition we are lucky to have on our staff. We have all seen such a positive impact on learning time for all of our primary level students because Abbe is here to share the load. I am also currently seeking another behavioral based primary level teacher. In the coming weeks you may see another addition to our staff. You will note that we have new marketing materials, so feel free to grab some brochures and cards, and spread the word about TCA to your friends.

#### Academy Growth:

I would like to see TCA grow across the County to the Westside, and have even been building hunting. Though I have not found anything suitable yet, I feel having two campuses, one on each side of the County, is a better way to meet the needs of our families. We also have an opportunity to add or switch to another local site that is better suited to our expansion. As enrollment grows, we will be better able to gauge what kind of building situation we will need. As we know, so will you.

#### March CARD Workshop:

For those of you who are not aware, Lora Brewer was formally the head of the parent organization B-FocASD which held an annual workshop for parents and professionals. Since the organization is no longer active in our County, and we have the pleasure of Lora's company, TCA has become the hosts of this event! Scheduled for Saturday, March 13th, this event plays host to a myriad of service providers who will speak on the various programs they offer for children with Autism. Registration sheets will be made available as you must pre-register for the afternoon breakout sessions. CARD is our partner, securing the UCF building in Daytona, and providing us with our Keynote speaker. It is a day of networking, learning and fun. It is free to everyone, so please spread the word and plan to join us for this event. If you would like to help out by manning our table/booth (the last of the brownies will be there), or being a liaison to the various speakers, please let Lora know of your availability.

#### APRIL – Autism Awareness Month: Chase Your Dreams!

We celebrate Autism Awareness month with our **Chase Your Dreams! Family Day Expo**. This is the third year we have planned this event, but the first year we are holding it on the east side of the County. The event is a huge celebration and provides much needed funds for student scholarships. You might not realize this, but this school year alone, TCA gave out over \$15,000 in student scholarships!

Unfortunately, these scholarships were not funds we had, but rather money we did without! This year, I would like to have community support supply our scholarship fund with some actual cash!!!

Here is how this event works: **Tentatively Scheduled for SATURDAY ~ APRIL 24, 2010**

**Live Entertainment:**

Our live entertainment is a mixture of local celebrities, up and coming musical acts, professional artists and school dance, choir and band programs. In the past, we have had Miss Volusia County Fair and her court, The Heartbeat Boys, Bre Morgan, Latisha White, Sara Sellers and Disney radio VJ Ashley Truelove. We also had Southwestern Middle School dance team VOGUE and the Deltona High Dance Team perform. The more children's-based performers we bring in, the more families attend our event!

**Outdoor Children's Carnival:**

Local high school clubs provide carnival style booths for young children to play. There are bounce houses, a puppet maker, a clown and a story teller. Face painting and food booths are also available. We are also inviting the local police's DARE officer, a fire truck and safety workshop. The clubs charge minimally for participation and then donate their proceeds to the academy.

**Family Expo:**

Held inside the great hall is a standard Expo designed to provide families with options for kids' services. There will be private schools, summer camps, athletic programs, therapies, learning centers, karate clubs, museums, theater and dance groups, orthodontics, chiropractics and even financial service providers. This part of the event is designed to raise funds via vendor booths, and multi-level sponsorships.

Community awareness and contact is VITAL! This IS where the parents come in. John's grandmother, Arlene, has agreed to head up the Parent Advisory Committee and help coordinate this part of the event. Please GET INVOLVED with this committee and help TCA. Arlene will be contacting each of you with materials and tracking sheets to coordinate the contacting of your network of companies, providers and friends, to help build our Expo services. We have vendor booth and sponsorship details coming soon!

**Summer Camps:**

The Expo is our kick-off as well for early enrollment and for our summer camp programs. Right now we are planning an elementary level program at the school for students with ASD to attend half or full days on a weekly basis. We have also coordinated with a local therapist in DeLand to host an 8-week Teen Workshop for kids with Asperger's to address anxiety, socialization and self-esteem. These program flyers will be at our booth during the Expo.

**Reading and Technology GRANTS:**

Believe it or not, we have two grant opportunities to provide a new reading program and technology (computers, internet, and networking) for the upcoming school year. Both grants are due March 1st and our grant team is working frantically to get these put together for us.

As you can see we are growing fast, and it seems as though nothing will wait until later – it must be done now! This is the joy and the pain of the successes we have realized this year. I have never worked harder, and it has never been so rewarding. Please step forward and do what you can to help share this load. Your expertise, contacts, leg work and presence are much appreciated!!

Mimi Lundell  
Executive Director