



Autism Society
of NORTH CAROLINA



CAMP AWESOME CHRONICLE

SUMMER 2019

Table of Contents

Letter from the Director	3
Newport: Camp Awesome	4
Wilmington: Camp Awesome	6
Winterville: Camp Awesome	8
Brunswick: Camp Awesome	10
Onslow: Camp Awesome	12
Partner Spotlights	14
Year-Round Programs	16
Wish List	18
You Can Help	19

The **Camp Awesome Chronicle** is published by the Autism Society of North Carolina for campers, parents, supporters, and the counselors and professionals who work with Camp Awesome.

Editor: **Amy Seeley**
Graphic Designer: **Erika Chapman**

For more information, contact:
Amanda Rissmeyer | Social Recreation Services Director
P 525-917-5987 | F 525-565-0159
www.autismsociety-nc.org/socialrecreation



Supporting Eastern NC Social Recreation Programs



5121 Kingdom Way, Suite 100 • Raleigh, NC 27607
919-743-0204 • 800-442-2762 • Fax: 919-743-0208
www.autismsociety-nc.org





Letter from the Director

Hello there, amazing Campers, Families, and Friends!

I am beyond thrilled to share with you the 2019 Camp Awesome Chronicle! After four years of pure “awesome” in Eastern North Carolina, our Social Recreation programs have reached more families, impacted more lives of individuals in the autism community, and expanded more opportunities than we ever dreamt possible!

This summer alone, we served 213 campers ages 4-22 across our five day camps! Our campers explored their local communities on fun and exciting field trips, participated in enriching activities, and made meaningful friendships that will last a lifetime. Simply put: Memories were made, victories were celebrated, and joy was simply contagious!

Some of our campers joined us for the very first time, like David (page 12), who became more independent during his time with Camp Awesome. For many of our campers – like Parker (page 10) -- it wasn’t their first time, but they tried new things and achieved new goals. Jeremiah (page 4) and Preston (page 8) each began verbally expressing their needs, and Preston also learned to use a PECS book made just for him by Camp Awesome staff. All of the campers had tons of fun and made new friends as they were loved and celebrated for who they are by Camp Awesome staff. As camper Jaden’s mom said (page 6), “Truly, these counselors are marvelous in every way.” You can read more about a few of them in the following pages, but we think every single one of them deserve our gratitude!

Without the support of Trillium Health Resources, none of this magic would have been possible. We are deeply grateful for the original investment by our local LME/MCO to make these programs a reality, and for Trillium’s continued support. It takes a village to make these programs come to life; therefore, we would also like to thank the following community partners for their support: AquaVenture and Emerge Art Gallery at our Winterville center, the Sports Center of Morehead and the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores at our Newport center, and Robert Strange Pool and the NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher at our Wilmington center. (More on some of these partners on pages 14-15.)

Through donations of time, talent, resources, and financial support, our Social Recreation programs have thrived in ways that allowed for more meaningful experiences for all participants. We are astonished by the selfless acts of our families, community advocates, and local businesses. Our campers and programming are forever shaped by this compassion and generosity. If you, a local group, or organization are looking for a way to get involved, please reach out to me! We need your support to provide these life-changing services in our local communities across Eastern North Carolina – and truthfully, there is nothing like knowing you had a part in making Camp Awesome come to life!

As we celebrate the extraordinary growth and relish the memories made this summer in the pages ahead, please remember that the magic doesn’t have to end here! To learn more about the year-round programs at our three Social Recreation Centers, check out page 16. Hope to see you all again very soon.

With love and gratitude,

Amanda Rissmeyer

ASNC Social Recreation Services Director



CAMP AWESOME: NEWPORT

By McKenzie Boutté, Assistant Program Director

This summer at Newport's Camp Awesome was truly exceptional. Every camper arrived with immense enthusiasm and eagerness for the fun that was in store. The eight-week camp consisted of activities that sparked imagination and helped with skills such as cooperative play and sharing. Structured activities, including music and motion, arts and crafts, outside activities, and swimming, were modified for each individual's needs. Visual structures supported communication and advocacy, and engagement made every camper feel accepted for who they are.

Our 44 campers grew from new experiences and were celebrated for their uniqueness. The connections that are made at Camp Awesome prove that despite our differences, everyone has a common desire: acceptance. Some challenged themselves with new goals such as passing the swim test, participating in new activities, working on self-care through stressful situations, and forming new friendships that they, at first, thought would be unlikely. Campers and counselors formed strong bonds and learned from each other through their time at camp.

Many parents shared how Camp Awesome changed their children and themselves in so many ways. One parent said, "I can finally breathe and know that when I drop my son off, he is in good hands." The positivity that radiates through our staff makes parents feel like their children are accepted, celebrated, and understood!

Camper Highlight: Jeremiah Brinson

Jeremiah, who is 6, loves to swing, eat plenty of snacks, play patty cake, and sing "baby shark" until his little heart is content. This was Jeremiah's second summer at Camp Awesome, and he grew so much.

With the support of his counselor, Janessa Henry, and the leadership team, Jeremiah started verbally expressing his needs, asking for help when he needed it, becoming more connected and social with his peers, and using supports to help with positive behaviors. At home, Jeremiah's mother has implemented the same token board that we used at camp, and she praised his understanding of how to earn preferred items.

Through the support of other campers and counselors, Jeremiah was able to express his unconditional love and feel consistent support. "Jeremiah has definitely brought my spark and joy of why I walk through those doors and do my job as a counselor every day," Janessa said.

Camp Awesome definitely loves Jer-bear and enjoyed the sunshine that radiated through his smile when he arrived at camp every morning.





Staff Highlight: Mary Mascaro

Mary loves connecting with children who have a different way of communicating, and it shows.

She is always reliable and follows through on every task that she is given, no matter how challenging. Mary started working with Newport Social Rec during the Afterschool Program, and she really shone this summer as a counselor.

“My favorite part of working at camp is watching the campers learn every day in a super fun setting,” Mary said. “They are introduced to new objects and get to explore their unique skills or interests at their own pace, so they learn so quickly and keep wanting to try new things!”

This summer, Mary was paired with a first-time camper who needed one-on-one attention. She and the camper became inseparable as Mary helped her develop many skills. Mary’s camper did not communicate verbally, but Mary used visuals to help her communicate. She also implemented the structure of timers to ease transitions. Through visual supports and routines, her camper can now effectively follow a schedule.

“I’ve always wanted to help others in a fun and interactive setting. I love making connections with kids who have a different way of communicating or interacting,” Mary said. “Watching their growth through communicative breakthroughs is my inspiration!”

Mary graduated from Florida State University with a bachelor’s in psychology and would like to go back to school with a focus on behaviors of autism. We know she will soar in her future endeavors!

Program Highlight: Teen Scene

Teen Scene began last year when one of our teen campers expressed a desire to discuss and learn about situations adolescents and teens face. He wanted time and space for older campers. The group was so popular that it is now a year-round program.

Every morning at camp, the teens gather while younger campers go sing and dance at sunny circle. An Activity Director comes up with a discussion topic, such as self-advocacy, their goals and dreams, community safety, and skills to deal with the “big” world outside of our doors.

“We talk more about things that teens like to talk about,” said camper Jacob Lessey. “We learn about things. We learn how to be responsible.”

“I like how our conversations are about real school experiences,” said another camper. “Nobody is judged for asking questions”

Teen Scene also welcomed several community presenters, including the Newport Police Department and the Craven County Rape Crisis Center.

“I really like to learn skills that help me become a better person,” said Tyrek Duke. “I really like this camp and I am proud to be on ASNC’s team.”

Teen Scene will continue to provide a place for our teens to feel safe and understand better as they near adulthood.





CAMP AWESOME: WILMINGTON

Wilmington Summer Day Camp is always filled with high fives, hugs, and laughter! Each day, our campers are greeted out front by our full time and part-time staff. Our campers and counselors enjoyed and participated in tons of engaging activities.

Each week, the Activity Directors led the groups in activities surrounding a theme such as ocean life, superheroes, animals, outer space, Independence Day, Christmas in July, A Bug's Life, and Medieval Times.

Each day at camp included routine activities like arts and crafts, music, drama, fitness fun, social games, sensory experiences with water/sand, touch, sight, and sound fun. Each day the crew also went swimming at a community pool and on field trips to a local park. Great bonds were formed this summer. We look forward to more amazing adventures next year!

Camper Spotlight: Jaden Garbenis

Jaden, who is 13 years old, is beloved for his upbeat personality and great smile. He loves to give nicknames, and he always makes people laugh.

"He is excited each and every day to go to camp," said his mother, Deb. "Indeed, he hops out of the car and runs to get in line, chatting with everyone he meets along the way."

About three years ago, his family was new to the area. "Jaden was really struggling in a new school and trying to make new friends," Deb said. He first attended Camp Awesome last summer, and he had a blast.

"I can't think of one particular aspect of camp Jay enjoys the most, because he enjoys every single part of it!" Deb said. "I can tell you what we parents enjoy the most about the ASNC summer camp. It is the fact that we have a safe place to bring our child where he will feel valued, championed, and appreciated for who he is. No one is trying to change him, to make him conform to what others want him to be. Rather, he is respected and regarded simply for being himself. It is this very atmosphere that has transformed our son."

At camp, Jaden learned to maintain personal space and verbally requests more frequently before leaving a space.

His mom said it is the staff who make Camp Awesome special. When she asked Jaden what he liked most about his counselor, he replied "his face." "As literal as our ASD kids can be, I think he means that Mr. Shane is always smiling. He is a caring and compassionate young man, full of enthusiasm and fun!"



"Truly, these counselors are marvelous in every way," she said. "I've never seen one without a smile and a kind word for every child they come in contact with. Our kids feel LOVED."



Staff Spotlight: Brittany Chavez

Brittany Chavez was a first-year counselor whose dedication and compassion shone through. No matter which camper she was working with, she intuitively understood how to engage them.

"I wanted to work as a counselor this summer because I like helping people," Brittany said. "The Autism Society of North Carolina seemed like a great opportunity to learn and grow while helping kids with unique needs."

Brittany was always calm, even when unexpected challenges arose, said Program Director Melissa Mills. "Brittany is willing to go the extra mile with a smile."

Brittany's favorite part of being a counselor was interacting with the kids. "I loved playing with the kids seeing them enjoy different activities," she said. "I also loved learning how to communicate in new ways for those kids with different communication systems."

In the last week of camp, some of the older campers took a swim test at the pool to be allowed to go into the deep end. "It was really cool seeing them try and pass the test and seeing the counselors cheer them on," Brittany said of her favorite memory.

Brittany is a transfer student who will begin studying social work at UNCW in the fall. "I had never considered a career in the field of working with people with autism, but after this summer, I am going to look into different opportunities in the field."





CAMP AWESOME: WINTERVILLE

By Austyn Suits, Program Coordinator, and
Adrienne Sutton, Senior Level Activity Director

Ready, set, GO! Like Lightning McQueen from the Disney movie Cars, we had our engines revved up and ready to go for our fourth summer camp here in Winterville. Each day, campers would walk in bright and early with wide eyes and big smiles as they checked the “Who’s My Counselor” board before starting a full day of activities.

The eight weeks of Camp Awesome includes plenty of visual structure, enthusiasm, and routine schedule checks after each transition. Whether it’s an intense game of rolling dodgeball in the gym, grooving to Just Dance and sing-alongs with friends during Music and Motion, gliding on the slip-and slide for Water Play Fridays, or going to AquaVenture to splash in the pool, campers looked forward to coming back to camp each and every day.

In addition to our amazing campers, we are very fortunate to have a team that is excited to come to work every day to create Winterville Magic. From the beginning of the summer, our staff came in eager to learn about autism so that they could support our campers, become advocates in the community, and gain skills to become better professionals in their fields.

Since 2016, Camp Awesome has been and will continue to be a safe space for our campers to build meaningful relationships with staff and peers, develop important life skills through activities and play, and be themselves in a loving and safe environment. “I love camp because it’s a place where the kids and counselors are free to be themselves,” said Jasmine Ayala, a first-year counselor. Brianna Witherspoon, one of our Activity Directors, agreed and said, “Seeing our kids build relationships with their counselors and seeing the growth they have made since the first day has been my favorite thing about camp this summer.”

Camper Highlight: Preston Justafort

We were so excited to have Preston back for a second year of camp! Preston is an energetic 8-year-old who enjoys water play, dancing to music in the Activity Room, and playing rolling dodgeball with the “big kids.”

When we first met Preston in 2017, he struggled to communicate. Being in a new environment with minimal communication strategies made it challenging for Preston to understand his camp schedule, requests things such as break or snack, and transition away from preferred activities.

To help Preston communicate with staff and peers, Program Coordinator Austyn Suits collaborated with the full-time Activity Directors and his counselors to create a PEC book specifically for him. Each page represented a different room at camp. The pages also included photos, or PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) to allow Preston



to communicate his choices and for his counselor to aid him in transitions.

Lena Nazzal, Preston's counselor, said his PEC book helped him find his voice at camp. "With each new day, we have introduced new toys and experiences for him that have led us to add more PECS into his book," Lena said. "I've seen his page grow from one to two PECS to times where we need to make a whole new page due to how many there now are for him to choose." Having this newfound voice gave Preston so much joy. He loved to carry his book himself to use throughout the day.

Preston has also increased his social skills, learning to interact with others and share with friends. Preston loved showing other campers toys he was using and would initiate play with others.

Jennifer, Preston's mother, said he is a different child since camp. "Prior to starting camp, Preston could only sign 'more' and would point to what he wanted, sometimes. But now he will verbally make known his requests, which is huge! Camp has helped Preston in every way!"

Preston is an amazing camper whose smile lights up the building every time he walks through our doors. We can't wait to see the things he will accomplish in the years to come.

Counselor Highlight: Morgan Hudler



This summer, Morgan Hudler has shown dedication, love, and drive as a staff member and recreational therapy intern. She has worked with the program since summer 2018 and has shown true commitment to the mission of Social Recreation.

Morgan, who is 22 and graduating from East Carolina University with a B.S. in Recreational Therapy, has a true passion for helping individuals with

disabilities. Before summer camp, she took it upon herself to completely revamp the program's sensory room. Based on her knowledge of campers' preferred activities and sensory needs, she added a crash pad, a marble tube board, an obstacle course, and sensory bins. Because of her hard work, our campers had an even better sensory room this summer!

Morgan said the bonds she created with her campers and co-workers were what she loved most about camp. "I also love that camp is a no-judgement zone, and that everyone feels comfortable to be themselves."

"Camp has taught me that giving someone a person they can trust and become friends with will impact them in so many ways," Morgan said. "I have seen so many amazing kids at camp grow so much this summer, just because their counselor took the time to really get to know them and become their friend."

One of her fondest memories from this summer involved her bond with one of her campers, Zamir. "He trusted me enough to go underwater with me in the pool for the first time ever this summer," Morgan said. "I was so proud of him and he was so proud of himself as well, and it has really boosted his confidence."

Morgan wants to take the skills that she is learning at camp, such as the use of structure and visuals, and apply them to other populations that could also benefit.





CAMP AWESOME: BRUNSWICK

Camp Awesome staff and campers had a fantastic summer in the unique spaces of the Brunswick Community College classrooms and aquatics center.

Each day, our campers and counselors enjoyed recreational activities such as arts and crafts, music, fitness fun, social games, sensory play, and choice time. The campers also enjoyed movie time during rest. This year, the campers and counselors bonded over camp songs and dancing to GoNoodle videos.



Camper Highlight: Parker Winston

Parker, 10, returned for his second summer at Camp Awesome this year, ready to enjoy camp songs, arts and crafts, and swimming.

"Camp gives him a chance to participate in activities that he doesn't always normally get to," said Debra, Parker's mother. "It takes him out from behind an iPad or movie screen and gets him interacting with other kids and his staff."

Parker said he made "four best friends" this summer and "learned to be nice to my friends."

During free choice time, Parker and his friends enjoyed using their imaginations and making up their own games, said his counselor, Brad Bennett, who is attending Emory University in Atlanta. "Parker is the sweetest kid and he truly cares about all the other kids at camp. I liked to hear him tell his stories and hear his imagination run wild."

Debra said she appreciated how Camp Awesome staff help the campers work through different social situations. "Parker has a heart of gold and hates when someone's feelings are hurt. He can get frustrated easily if things are difficult and if he feels like someone is mad at him."

She said she had definitely seen growth in Parker since he attended camp, not only in his social circle but in his willingness to try new things.

"Parker had an amazing summer, and it was so cool to watch him truly enjoy every activity at camp!" Brad said.



Staff Highlight: Wendys Cruz

Wendys Cruz was a crucial part of the Brunswick staff this summer. "She had a way of connecting with every child she worked with this summer, and she was willing to do anything that was asked of her," said Ragan Whitesell, Program Leader.

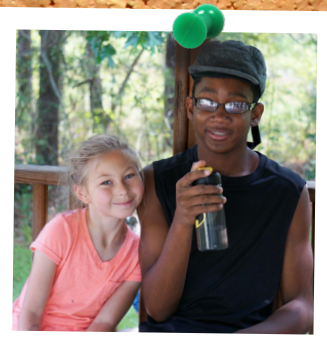
"She is such a light to everyone she meets and she will be a phenomenal teacher one day."

As an aspiring teacher, Wendys was eager to work with children with autism. "As a teacher I know I will encounter children with a variety of needs," she said. Wendys is majoring in Elementary Education with a concentration in Spanish at UNC-Pembroke.

Wendys said she loved the whole summer at Camp Awesome, but especially enjoyed getting to know all of the children. The campers and staff all became like family, she said.



"Wendys was such a delight to have on my staff," Ragan said. "She is such a light to everyone she meets and she will be a phenomenal teacher one day."





CAMP AWESOME: ON SLOW

By Melinda Dunham, *Program Leader*

Camp Awesome has found a strong community of support in Richlands since opening in summer 2017 at the Boy Scout Hut. Word spread quickly about the wonderful opportunity that Trillium Health Resources and the Autism Society of NC were providing for Onslow County, and we soon needed a bigger space to serve our growing population of campers.

This year, we were fortunate to be given the opportunity to serve our campers at First Baptist Church of Richlands. With two Sunday school wings and a large Family Life Center/Gymnasium, the church was the perfect setup for our growing camp family. Youth Pastor Jason Dunham said families that had children on the Autism Spectrum had previously attended the church and staff would love to serve more families with special needs. The church graciously allowed us to use its van to transport children to and from the park every day. We also used the church bus and volunteer bus drivers for field trips. On the last day of camp, church volunteers served hot dogs and hamburgers to parents, staff, and campers.

Camp Awesome also received support from the town of Richlands, which has opened its public swimming pool to us for the past three summers. Campers and staff have had the pool to ourselves from 9 to 10 every morning! Other community businesses that offered exciting field trip opportunities included the Richlands Fire Department, the Jacksonville Police Department, and Zimm Zumm Children's Museum in Jacksonville. All of these partners enabled us to provide a rich experience for our campers as they developed new skills, made new friends, and were loved and appreciated for who they are. We are deeply grateful for all of the community support!



Camper Highlight: David Kennedy

David, age 6, attended Camp Awesome for the first time this summer. His mother shared that he cried every day at school when she left him. His parents hoped that Camp Awesome would teach him how to trust other adults and make new friends.

David's parents shared that he thrives with a consistent schedule and uses a picture schedule at school. Any changes in his routine such as or unexpected transitions could increase his anxiety and upset him.

David's counselor, Catherine Malloy, bonded with him by engaging him in conversations and doing activities he enjoyed such as playing Duck, Duck, Goose. She used a visual picture schedule and kept her tone of voice inviting and soft. "I noticed him bloom, becoming more open and social with myself and other peers," Catherine said.

As David became more comfortable, Catherine encouraged him to become more independent and to participate in more group activities. "The most noticeable change I saw in David was his more positive outlook. He was more willing to be separated from his parents, grew in independence, and increased socializing with other children."

David's increased independence was evident at the swimming pool. In the beginning of camp, he would only get into the shallow end of the pool with his counselor, but by the end of camp, he was swimming in the deep end! He also taught his friends about pool safety rules and helped them practice. He and his friends loved playing pool games, including basketball and Monkey in the Middle.

By the end of camp, David was telling his mom and dad as they dropped him off, "Bye! See you later!" or "Bye, Mom! Love you!"

Counselor Highlight: Michelle Sardinas



Michelle Sardinas is an Exceptional Children's Teacher with Onslow County Schools. She graduated from UNC Wilmington with a concentration in Behavior in 2017 and this year will be working as a Resource Teacher. She wanted more experience with children with special needs and was eager to work at Camp Awesome.

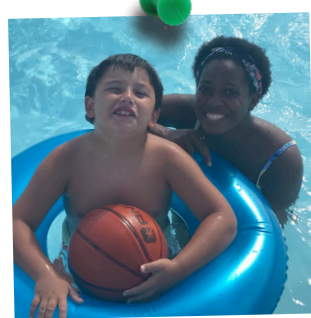
Michelle requested to work with campers who were learning to manage their emotions and to communicate with their words rather than their actions. She connected with her

campers by engaging them in play whether it was on the playground, in the pool, or doing arts and crafts.

One camper that she worked with, age 4, attended pre-school for only two hours each day because he struggled to follow schedules and school routines. But because of Michelle's patience and consistency, he was able to attend camp for four hours a day! He learned pool safety and enjoyed swimming like a fish in both the shallow end and deep ends. He also enjoyed the activity room, where he could choose to play with games such as MouseTrap, ride on a scooter board, or jump on a trampoline.

Another of Michelle's campers struggled with transitions, especially to the restroom. Michelle used her training in evidence-based practices to support the camper. They had a strong bond, and the camper looked forward to hugging her every morning. The camper especially loved walking with Michelle and her friends to the park.

Michelle cared for her campers like they were her own children. She said that the training she received this summer has allowed her to better understand the challenges that her students face in and out of the classroom. She feels better equipped to help her students this coming school year with new resources in her "toolbox" and an even deeper desire to advocate for their academic, social, and physical needs.





PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS:

Trillium Health Resources

Our array of Social Recreation programs in Newport, Winterville, Wilmington, and Brunswick and Onslow counties are made possible by support from Trillium Health Resources.

Trillium Health Resources is a Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO) responsible for publicly funded mental health, substance use, and intellectual/developmental disability services and supports for people living in Eastern North Carolina.

In 2016, Trillium directed their reinvestment dollars go to provide supports in a variety of ways in Eastern NC. Trillium and ASNC partnered on an initiative to support children and adults with autism through programs in underserved areas of the state, helping them to improve their social and communication skills, peer networks, and physical well-being.

Since then, the three Social Recreation Centers have increased programming to include summer day camps, afterschool programs, adult programs, and group respite.

“None of this would have happened without the support and ongoing use of reinvestment dollars back into these communities,” said Kerri Erb, Chief Program Officer of ASNC. “Many of these children are accessing services for the first time through these programs. We applaud Trillium for investing and creating these exciting opportunities.”

Trillium is also supporting the Autism Society of North Carolina’s new adult transition support programs in Wilmington and Greenville. The programs for teens and young adults on the spectrum focus on job readiness and placement, while incorporating skill development in other areas necessary for a successful transition to adulthood. To learn more or apply, go to www.autismsociety-nc.org/transition-to-adulthood.



Emerge Art Program in Winterville

Since January, the Emerge Art Program in Uptown Greenville has given Winterville Social Rec participants the opportunity to visit their wonderful studio to create masterpieces. Emerge provides an accepting and accommodating environment so everyone our participants can show off their incredible creativity.

“I believe [our program] is beneficial to all campers because it is an inclusive classroom,” said Paula Rountree, Emerge’s Program

Director. “We want everyone to feel welcome and like they are an artist!”

The staff truly embrace each individual’s creativity and provide many choices and opportunities to our participants. “We love to try to cater to what the artist wants to learn, whether it is the potter’s wheel, painting, textiles, or any other medium,” Paula said.

Since working with Emerge, our participants have newfound confidence to not only go to art shows at the studio, but also to the many restaurants and parks that Uptown Greenville has to offer. Paula said Emerge loves their partnership with ASNC and hopes to see it grow in the future.

One plan is for Emerge to include many of our participants’ art pieces in one of their shows during a local festival. We cannot wait to see the wonderful art pieces that our participants will continue to make!



The Single Marine Program in Newport

Members of the Single Marine Program at Cherry Point Base dedicated their time to set up for summer camp at the Newport Social Recreation Center in the spring. They cleaned the facility, moved furniture, and helped with installments to make sure that we were able to use our freshly renovated building.



The Single Marine Program offers opportunities for recreation, community involvement, and quality of life for single and unaccompanied Marines and Sailors.

In August, members returned for some beautification projects at the center after camp. We appreciate their dedication and service!

Landfall Foundation in Wilmington

The Landfall Foundation gave a generous grant of \$3,000 to the Wilmington Social Recreation program this year. The funding allowed us to purchase craft supplies, a shade structure for the playground, therapy putty, new trampoline springs, and healthy snacks.

Campers also benefited from new sensory supplies, including gel floor tiles to encourage sensory stimulation, visual processing, and gross motor skills, and a 16-arm Octaband, which has colorful resistance-band “arms” to provide engaging opportunities for upper-extremity exercise, socialization, and cooperative group effort. We also purchased timers that provide an audible and visual cue so campers know when an activity is complete.

The Autism Society of North Carolina is extremely grateful for the contribution from the Landfall Foundation. Because of this grant, children with autism in New Hanover County have tried new activities, developed meaningful friendships, and increased their self-confidence.



Year-Round PROGRAMS



Social Rec Centers stay busy all year

Camp Awesome has ended for this year, but we still have plenty going on at our Social Recreation Centers in Winterville, Newport, and Wilmington. Check out our upcoming programs below – we hope to see you soon!

Our **Afterschool Programs** run each school year in our Winterville, Newport, and Wilmington centers. (No programs in Onslow or Brunswick counties.) We focus on person-centered programming and engage school-age children on the autism spectrum in a variety of recreational and leisure activities with highly qualified staff at a 1:1 ratio or in small groups.

In our unique **Adult Programs**, participants are able to focus on building meaningful relationships with their same-age peers, explore both independent and group leisure, and become more active members in their local communities. The programs are carefully designed and shaped around the interests, passions, and needs of their adult participants. In Wilmington and Greenville, we offer new adult transition support programs for teens and young adults. The programs focus on job readiness and placement, while incorporating skill development in other areas necessary for a successful transition to adulthood.



Group respite opportunities offer not only fun and engaging activities, but also learning and community involvement. Events are held on weekends, evenings, teacher workdays, holidays, and during parent Chapter events. Group respite events are so much more than just an opportunity for families to tend to responsibilities; they are a chance for caregivers to rest their hearts and minds while their children are being supported and cared for deeply.

All of our centers also hold **holiday parties** in December; we hope to see you there!

For more information or to sign up for a program, please go online to www.autismsociety-nc.org/social-recreation/eastern-nc or contact the director for your area:

- **Newport:** SRP_Newport@autismsociety-nc.org
- **Wilmington:** SRP_Wilmington@autismsociety-nc.org
- **Winterville:** SRP_Winterville@autismsociety-nc.org

Please also contact us if you are interested in providing an opportunity for our campers or have a group that wants to come volunteer. We welcome community involvement!







If you want to support our Social Recreation programs through material donations, we would be grateful to receive the following items:

Arts and crafts supplies

- Play-Doh
- Bubbles
- Sidewalk chalk
- Shaving cream
- Markers of all types
- Craft paint
- Glue
- Glitter
- Buttons
- Beads
- Googly eyes
- Cardstock
- Paper clips

Toys and sports equipment

- LEGOs
- Gym balls
- Outdoor toys: wagons, etc.
- Jump ropes
- Current TV character toys
- Word search books
- Crossword puzzle books
- Trains and tracks
- Board games
- Puzzles
- Baby dolls
- Fisher Price toys
- Pool goggles
- Kinetic sand

Home goods

- Beanbag chairs
- Blankets
- Yoga mats
- Fun throw pillows
- 50-gallon, clear plastic tote bins
- Kitchen pots and pans
- Painter's tape
- Command strips
- Gorilla tape
- Holiday string lights

Paper goods and cleaning supplies

- Dixie cups
- Baby wipes
- Paper plates
- Clorox wipes
- Lysol
- Hand sanitizer

Snacks and medical supplies

- Band-Aids
- Spray Neosporin
- Individually packaged snacks
- Juice boxes

Volunteer Opportunities

Our Social Recreation Centers in Newport, Wilmington, and Winterville also offer a variety of volunteer opportunities, including landscaping and facility maintenance, working with campers and families, and fundraising.

We welcome community involvement! Contact us to learn more or sign up at www.autismsociety-nc.org/volunteer.

A brown wooden sign with a white border and a small arrow pointing right at the bottom. The text "CAMP AWESOME: Wish List" is written in white, with "CAMP AWESOME:" in a smaller font above "Wish List".

CAMP AWESOME:
Wish List

A brown wooden sign with a white border and a small arrow pointing right at the bottom. The text "CAMP AWESOME: You Can Help" is written in white, with "CAMP AWESOME:" in a smaller font above "You Can Help".

CAMP AWESOME:
You Can Help



How Does Camp Awesome Change Lives?

Camp Awesome provides opportunities for exploration, making friends, trying new and exciting activities, and a time for personal growth in independence and confidence. As a result, campers return home with skills once thought unattainable by their families and the ability to make a friend and be a friend.

What Are Camp Awesome's Needs?

Financial Support: Providing enriching experiences tailored to our campers with autism, as well as specialized staff, is costly. Fundraising for our Social Recreation programs is a year-round focus. Our Run/Walk for Autism events in Greenville, Beaufort, and Wilmington each spring are one way we raise funds. We need your help with the races; you can volunteer, donate, sponsor, and fundraise.

Program/Facility Donations: Providing program supplies and maintaining our three facilities is expensive. In-kind and financial donations help offset these costs. Please see our wish list page for some of our current needs.

Planning for Our Future: As we look to the future and the growing number of children and families who depend on our services, we must expand our funding sources. We need partners like you to get involved to help us grow opportunities for the future.

How Can You Help?

More than 89 cents of every dollar we raise is used for services that directly affect people with autism, and every dollar raised stays within North Carolina, helping people who live and work in our local communities. Contact Kristy White to discuss partnership opportunities that include individual gifts, named scholarships, planned giving, connections to corporations or foundations, and other opportunities to get involved.

"I can't think of one particular aspect of camp Jay enjoys the most, because he enjoys every single part of it!" one camper's mother wrote. "I can tell you what we parents enjoy the most about the ASNC summer camp. It is the fact that we have a safe place to bring our child where he will feel valued, championed, and appreciated for who he is."

We are excited about what is happening today as a result of our efforts. We're even more excited about what can happen with your help. ■

Contact Information

Kristy White
Chief Development Officer
5121 Kingdom Way, Suite 100
Raleigh, NC 27607
919-865-5086
kwhite@autismsociety-nc.org



