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FEATURED

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE: Community makes a difference for Autism support group

By Claire Dees Apr 2, 2018



Claire Dees

Community matters. It matters to me. It matters to most all of us. But it especially matters for nonprofits like Spectrum Autism Support Group.

I personally love giving my business to a local company who gives back to the community. Restaurants who do charity give-back days like those provided us by Scholtzsky's, Burger 21, and Culver's make a big difference for a small organization like Spectrum. We have an opportunity to

create more awareness about autism and how we help families, while the business sees increased turnout to their establishment, while giving back.

Burger 21 does a charity give back on the 21st of each month and has chosen Spectrum for April 21 in honor of Autism Awareness month. The Johns Creek, Mall of Georgia and Snellville locations will all give back a percentage of sales for the day. Local businesses and organizations such as MassMutual Special Care (Pam Hoppe), Chandler Speech Services, City of Norcross, Studio Movie Grill, Cox Automotive Group, KidStuff and TherapyWorks PC have recently partnered with Spectrum for our 20th year to sponsor meaningful activities for families. Family events are very meaningful for families impacted by autism, offering free fun for the entire family, in a judgment-free environment, where families can connect with others living with autism and feel less alone.

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Local Girl Scout troops, businesses, church small groups or neighborhood/community civic groups ask how they can help. Can they volunteer? Yes. Can they do a toy drive or other drive for needed camp materials? Absolutely! The community matters to us and we think we matter to our community.

Including families with children with differences like autism is important for all of us. We are a better, more enriched community when we can accept diversity of all kinds. Gwinnett is showing many other communities how to do it, and, do it well! That is why I love living in Gwinnett so much. Where community really does matter! Regardless of differences, we are all able to live, work and play in our community – together. During April, Autism Awareness month, I think about how it really is more about autism acceptance in our community and not so much awareness any longer.

Spectrum Autism Support Group started in 1998 in efforts to provide support for individuals and families impacted by autism in our community. Spectrum now serves well over 1,500 families per year seeking support, education and resources. Support group meetings for parents of children with autism (of any age), dads, grandparents, siblings, as well as social skills programs to meet the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum are offered monthly.

Groups are offered the first Thursday of each month at the First Baptist Church of Duluth. A summer camp program offers seven weeks of day camp at the Lawrenceville Church of God and a weeklong overnight camp, Camp Journey, at Camp Twin Lakes in Winder. Spectrum also offers respite, community training and family events throughout the year.

Know that each of you in Gwinnett matters to Spectrum and we welcome ways to partner with you to make a difference for those impacted by autism! To register for summer camps, learn more about Spectrum, register for family events, to sponsor or volunteer go to www.atl-spectrum.com

Claire Dees is Executive Director of Spectrum Autism Support Group.

People Helping People is a publication of the Gwinnett Coalition for Health & Human Services. For more information contact Ellen Gerstein at ellen@gwinnettcoalition.org or at 770-995-3339.



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