

children's relief fund 2022 news



31 years of helping

from ROSE:

Well things seem to be getting back to normal finally! As I reflect over the past few years, I realize that everything and everyone has a purpose. The Children's Relief Fund has continued to grow steadily since we started in 1991. We have continued to be a beacon of light in our community with a steadfast purpose to improve the lives of our special needs children and families in the Hilton Head / Bluffton area. The generosity of this community continues to inspire me, always willing to reach out and help others in need. Once again I send a huge thank you to my family, friends and supporters who give selflessly of their time and resources to keep Gregory's legacy alive! He continues to guide me with the help of God to keep moving forward! On behalf of all the families we serve, I thank you

Straight from my heart,
Rose Fotia
Founder,
The Children's Relief Fund



family notes

Over the last several years we have had the honor and pleasure to plan and host the Children's Relief Fund Fundraiser at our location, Venue 1223. Since Rose and Frank are our family, we have always attended the CRF event in the previous years. We knew how much work that Rose and her team of volunteers put into this function and knew how exhausting it was year after year. We weren't sure at the time of our suggestion to move the event to our location that it would be as successful as it was financially for the foundation, but we knew we could take

majority of the planning, design and labor off of Rose and her team's plate. We are thrilled to know that the event is just as financially rewarding for the fund as it is enjoyable for the foundation, the volunteers and supporters!

This event is the one function our catering team is most excited to work because they understand the impact the Children's Relief Fund has on our local children with special needs. They enjoy hearing Rose speak and they love the camaraderie this event brings between the guests. Ryan and I love to have the ability to make this event memorable from the design elements, to the food and wine! Food is love



Save the Date!

Straight from the Heart Wine Dinner & Auction

Celebrate with us at an intimate gathering to support the Children's Relief Fund

Saturday, February 11th, 2023

Venue 1223

1223 May River Road, Bluffton

*Tickets can be purchased on our website at thechildrensrelieffund.org
or call Rose Fotia at 843-681-7668*



to our family and it resonates to each guest through every course we serve. The wines are carefully paired with the dishes each year and the guests love tasting new brands they may not have tried before. We believe that the intimacy of the space combined with the highest quality ingredients and flavors of the food, elevates this event to the top event in our county!

God gave Ryan and me our spiritual gifts of hospitality and service, so it is a blessing and honor to pour into the CRF community in this way which, in turn, is a blessing to the most special children in our area.

The upcoming event will be February 11th, 2023.

— special olympics reflection —

We are finally getting back to normal after 2 years of Covid!! So many exciting things have been happening. Tennis practice and competitions for both school aged children and adults, bocce, bowling and kayaking have all been going on.

For Track and Field, each school had their own competition as we did last year which worked out great. We are back to the Special Olympics North American tennis competition at Van Der Meer Tennis Center this October.

We had 5 athletes in our area competing in the 2022 USA Games in Orlando in June in tennis, horseback riding and bowling. We are also very excited to start new programs at the local schools called "Young Athletes" which gives children ages 4-7 the skills they need to participate in Special Olympics when they are older. Project Unify is also going strong in the schools. This program pairs a special needs athlete



with a typical person to not only participate in sports, but to become friends. As always, these opportunities for our athletes have been made possible by the financial support of Children's Relief Fund. We thank you STRAIGHT FROM OUR HEARTS!!

Cherie Taylor and Kathy Cramer



our 2022 scholarship recipients

Dr. Robert Bokak Scholarship Jennifer Richardson

Jennifer is a graduate of Bluffton High School and is now attending the University of Alabama Honors College majoring in pediatric nursing. Jennifer has been active in community service as a volunteer for Best Buddies, for the children's ministry at her Church, and as a peer mentor. She also served as a Town of Bluffton Youth Council Representative and still found time for varsity golf. Recently, the Women's Association of Hilton Head Island awarded Jennifer \$1,000 for her outstanding community service. Jennifer stated in her application that she is passionate about serving others and values integrity, commitment, and compassion. Her dream is to become a medical missionary.

Gregory Fotia Scholarship Abigail White

Abigail is a graduate of May River High School and is now attending Charleston Southern University majoring in nursing with a goal of becoming an emergency room professional. Abigail was a Special Olympics volunteer and is active in Teens for Healthy Youth. She has also been the recipient of the Bluffton Mayor's Annual Service Award. In addition, she was Captain of the varsity soccer team. In her personal statement on her application, Abigail stated that she is very serious about her education to ensure confidence in her ability to care for her patients at the highest level.

challenge camp & SOAR 2022

Island Recreation Center



The Island Recreation Center would like to thank you for the tremendous support that we have received in the years past from The Children's Relief Fund for the Challenge Camp and SOAR Program. The programs this year was quite a success. The programs ran for 8 weeks and had 20 children in the Challenge Camp Program and 10 in the SOAR program on a daily basis from the low country area. There were many great things that occurred over the summer providing evidence into why this program is so important and that its mission can be completed. Each year we face the challenge that the individuals with disabilities will form negative concepts or have low expectations. The campers participate with other campers in playing ball, swimming, field trips and various other activities. With each passing year, children of all disabilities who participate in the challenge program are learning to share

and accept other kids who do not have disabilities. Throughout the school year, these children develop their cognitive, social and motor skills and are able to continue learning and growing during the summer. Camp gives them the confidence to interact at school as they have classes with regular kids. The program continually receives strong support from the special education staff and principals of the Hilton Head Island and Bluffton schools.

This was all made possible by the generous support of The Bargain Box. Overall the summer was a great success and we are looking forward Challenge Camp 2023.

Thank You,
Leah Arnold
*Island Recreation Association
Deputy Parks and Recreation Executive
Director*

pockets Full of sunshine



The 'Rays' from Pockets Full of Sunshine having a great time swimming at The Island Recreation Center! Thanks to our collaboration with The Childrens Relief Fund, Pockets is able to provide memberships to the adults we serve so that they can take advantage of all the great things the IRC has to offer!

Laurin Rivers
Co-Founder
Pockets Full of Sunshine

Indigo Run Holiday card campaign

One of Rose Fotia's angels must have been perched on the back of the golf cart the morning that Bobbie Fetter, Carol Bartholomew's mother, and I were riding to the golf course. Bobbie mentioned that one of the reasons she moved to Hilton Head was to be near her granddaughter, a child with special needs. In the same breath she told me about the Children's Relief Fund and its founder, Rose Fotia, our neighbor in Indigo Run.

As the grandmother of two children with special needs, I was haunted by our conversation. Over and over I asked myself what we as a community could do to raise money for this worthwhile cause. And then it came to me. Why not design a community Holiday Card! Instead of sending individual cards to friends and neighbors in Indigo Run, we could ask the residents to write a check to the Children's Relief Fund for an amount they would spend on cards and postage. In return, a copy of one card with the names of all donors would be boxed to every home in Indigo Run. I contacted some of my Women's Club friends, who graciously agreed to form a committee. We were on our way!

The first year our neighbors donated \$4,600 to the CRF, and last year the amount collected was over \$15,000. And all of our printing expenses have been paid for through the generosity of Richard MacDonald and Drew Butler of Charter I North Realty & Marketing, Betty & Neal Hambleton of Alliance Group Realty, and The Golf and The Golden Bear Golf Clubs. Now in its twenty-third year, the card campaign has become a treasured community tradition.

If you would like to know more about the project, please call me at 843-681-3331. Our dream is to see this tradition spill over into all the neighborhoods in the Hilton Head area.



CRF provides options

My name is Heidi and I am the mother of an 18 year old son with a rare genetic disorder that causes severe intellectual delays to include being nonverbal, moderate hearing loss, having seizures, and needing assistance with all his daily living skills.

Due to the generous funding of the Children's Relief Fund, my son has been able to participate in numerous local activities that traditional children do and that greatly improve his quality of life. He has been able to participate in Heroes on Horseback and this has allowed him to have an outside of school recreational activity. His participation in Heroes on Horseback has given him confidence in completing some tasks independently both while on the horse and in his daily living skills. Since he was 5 years old, Trenton has also been able to enjoy an annual summer day camp with the Island Rec Center's Challenge Camp. Being able to join a program that provides the one-to-one assistance he needs but also allows him to connect with both his disabled and non-disabled peers for summer activities, to include swimming and weekly field trips, is such a blessing. As a working mother, his attendance in this camp has been a crucial part for me being able to maintain and complete my job during the summer months. When COVID 19 overhauled our daily lives, several care options for my son became unavailable. A local care facility continued to provide care, but due to the smaller teacher to student ratio that is required with special needs, the cost to those participating was over three times the cost of traditional childcare. When this stretched out for over 6 months, the financial strain of this care started to set in for me and my family. CRF was able to contribute to partially alleviate some of the cost associated with this care. I will forever be grateful for their assistance during such a unique time. CRF has provided so many wonderful options for my family and for the special needs community and I am so thankful for all the hard work and dedication that is provided to make it happen.

Heidi Tessmer

Speech Therapy for Autism



What it has done for our child

Speech therapy has made a big impact on our son over the course of 5 and half years.

Our son, had trouble saying simple one to two syllable words such as ball, bubble, mommy, daddy, etc... when he was 1 and a half. At the time, he was thought to have sensory processing disorder (SPD) and so we were told to get him started immediately with Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy.

Our son, is currently 7 years old and was officially diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) which also required him to have all speech, OT, PT and ABA. He has been working very hard every day with therapists, tutors and exposing him to everything possible.

He has progressed enough to only have speech therapy 3 times a week and a part time "shadow" at a private school.

Since meeting speech therapist Becky Tracy back in 2018, he has completely changed with his ability to communicate. Before this, he would have massive meltdowns and we couldn't figure out why - it was because he was wanting to tell us something and we couldn't understand what he wanted. It was extremely frustrating for him and very exhausting for us. It almost prevented us from taking him places because we never knew when or what would set him off with the meltdowns. We just kept working and pushing through. Becky has been a huge part of his recovery and not just with speech, she was able to understand that she had to create an environment that he related to in order to get words out of him. She created small stations throughout her office space that would have 5 mins of swinging and in order to swing he had to say certain words, then off to round colored mats that he had to jump on and say the color before he could jump into a ball pit, then off to 5 mins of reading small books or games at a table before he could jump on a trampoline.

We look back at videos when he was 3 years old as he was working with Becky and he struggled to coordinate his tongue

to say yellow or jump and see how far he has come.

Speech therapy among other things has really helped to get him to where he is today. Does

he still struggle with sentence structure and communication skills with new or familiar faces? Yes, he does, but he is working hard every day. With therapy we are constantly helping him with pronunciation, organization of words to express his thoughts. Feelings, understanding how and what he is feeling is some times a hard concept to grasp as he struggles with this. If something hurts, like his head or stomach, he won't tell us and so I don't really know this unless he shows outward signs and then I will ask him. All of this and more, Becky will help us with getting him to the next level.



If you know of someone who has any developmental delays in speech please get them help immediately. It doesn't just get better with time, it takes work and a lot of focus to get them where they need to be. The longer one waits the longer the process will be. I know how hard it is to accept that your child isn't like the other children or that you notice that he isn't where he needs to be but it won't get better unless you get them help.

Families need support not just financial but emotional as well. All of it can take a toll and any help that one can provide will go along way in helping families. We have had a long journey and sometimes it can feel very lonely and judgmental by others. I always say to parents who have children that are seeking or just got diagnosed - "Things WILL get better and stay as positive as possible for your child or children, they are the one's who are really suffering, not us".

Lori Tyson

DONATIONS

If anyone would like to honor someone they love during the holiday season by making a charitable donation to CRF, please call Rose at 843-681-7668.

We are happy to send an acknowledgment to the recipient with your good wishes. All donations are tax deductible.

The Children's Relief Fund is proud to be 100% volunteer driven. To volunteer to help or to request assistance please call Rose Fotia at 843-681-7668.



children's relief fund

www.thechildrensrelieffund.org
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