

children's relief fund 2025 news

34 years of helping



Letter from Rose

In the past 34 years, I often reflect on what The Children's Relief Fund has accomplished and how many families we have helped. I get calls from parents who are desperate to find help for their child. Whether it's for therapy, equipment or one of the major programs we support, we are truly making a difference in the lives of these families. Life is challenging for them and the assistance we provide helps to make life a little easier. All of this is possible through the continual support of our faithful followers. Thank you for helping us continue this amazing work.

**Straight from my heart,
Rose Fotia,**

Founder
The Children's
Relief Fund



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 14 th, 2026

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*

challenge camp 2025

Challenge Camp is an adaptive summer camp program through the Hilton Head Island Recreation Association. This camp serves children with intellectual and developmental disabilities aged 5-21 and runs inclusively with the rec center's other summer camp.

Each child is given one on one support to help navigate through the camp setting. By making camp more accessible these kids get to participate in activities that may not always be available to them. The best part about camp is the inclusivity, each child is placed within their age group and participates in all activities with the help of the staff and those around them. Challenge Camp provides opportunities of not only inclusion but awareness of the many different kinds of people that live in this world.

Thanks to the Children's Relief Fund, we are able to serve a wide variety of needs and make summer camp more accessible for ALL. "This program is one of the best things that has happened to Carson and our family. We can't thank island rec enough for this program and the doors Olivia and her staff have unlocked for Carson. The confidence and social skills Carson has gained in this program is ever lasting. There is not one thing we would change, and we look forward to next year!"

Written by: Olivia Richardson | Adaptive Recreation Director





soar & special olympics

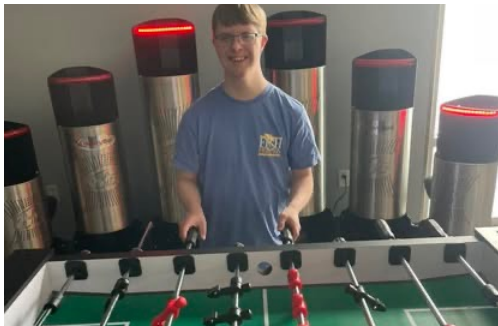


Special Olympics

"The Children's Relief Fund has been a cornerstone supporter of the Special Olympics for thirty years, empowering athletes across Beaufort County to realize their dreams. Thanks to this generous funding, athletes like Kayana Simmons have numerous sports on their calendar every day of the week, including tennis, golf, pickleball, swimming, the Spring Games, and basketball. We even started a under 21 soccer team. Kayana, who has been involved in the Special Olympics since she was 11, has been practicing tennis and is now set to compete in the USA Games next summer. This will be her first time flying on an airplane, marking a monumental moment in her life. Such support ensures opportunities for athletes to shine and participate in a range of activities, making a real difference in their lives.



pockets full of sunshine



The Rays have been on the move in more ways than one this year! We moved into our new Sunshine House at 64 Arrow Road in the spring and have wasted no time making ourselves at home! We completed a big remodel and are adding new opportunities to our inclusive, meaningful daily programming every week! Offering health and fitness opportunities to the Rays continues to be a priority and they have had a lot of fun using the new Dill Dinkers Pickleball Facility and trying new creative ways to move their bodies and increase their skills and confidence. Activities at the Island Recreation Center continue to be favorites as well; swimming, adaptive yoga and exercise classes! We are grateful for our partnership with the IRC and to the Children's Relief Fund for making this worthwhile program possible!

Thank you! *Laurin*





Heroes on Horseback and the Children's Relief Fund: A Legacy of Impact Celebrating 25 Years of Service Through Equine-Assisted Therapy.

Heroes on Horseback (HOH) marks its 25th year of dedicated service to special needs children in our community, offering equine-assisted therapies that have transformed countless lives. HOH's mission is to provide these valuable services to all children, regardless of their families' ability to pay. Throughout its history, HOH has never refused a child due to financial hardship. Impressively, 90% of program operating costs are covered by contributions, ensuring that financial barriers do not hinder access to therapy.

The Enduring Collaboration with Children's Relief Fund: The partnership between Children's Relief Fund and HOH stands as one of the longest and most significant in HOH's 25-year history. For nearly a quarter of a century, this collaboration has enabled tens of thousands of children to benefit from a unique therapy that addresses a spectrum of physical, emotional, and mental challenges. These include learning disabilities, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, ADD and ADHD, and muscular dystrophy.

Goals and Outcomes of HOH's Equine Therapy: The objectives of HOH's equine therapy can be grouped into two main categories: physical enrichment and emotional and mental progress. Physical enrichment focuses on the recovery of physical abilities, enhanced balance and coordination, improved strength and muscle control, and increased range of motion. On the emotional and mental side, the therapy aims to boost confidence and self-esteem, as well as language, cognitive, and social skills.

Financial Accessibility and Program Support: HOH's commitment to never turning anyone away for financial reasons is made possible by the generosity of contributors, with 90% of expenses covered by donated funds. The support from Children's Relief Fund is instrumental in funding therapy horses and certified instructors who lead the sessions. In the past year, the Children's Relief Fund also helped HOH acquire a new therapy horse, fittingly named "Angel."

Transformative Results and Lasting Impact Over the years, many children and young adults have achieved remarkable success thanks to the equine therapy funded by Children's Relief Fund. Numerous participants have experienced the excitement of winning medals and ribbons at state, national, and world games organized by Special Olympics. These achievements play a critical role in the development of special needs individuals, going far beyond the competition itself.

The generosity of the Children's Relief Fund has been vital in improving the lives of our special needs community. The more than two decades of partnership between Heroes on Horseback and Children's Relief Fund have consistently demonstrated that, regardless of the challenges they face, special needs children can learn, grow, and reach their fullest potential.





In the lowcountry, there are very few opportunities to have children suspected of having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosed. Currently, parents have two choices when suspecting their child has ASD, wait for an opening at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) which has an 18-24 month waiting list and only sees children under the age of 5, or DDSN, which also has about a 12 month waiting list. The other option is to pay a private provider between \$3,500-\$8,000 for the assessment. Without a diagnosis, many families can't access the care and services they need. The Lowcountry Autism Foundation saw the frustration in our families and parents and created the ADOS program in 2023, which has no wait time and sees individuals ages 10 and under. It also erases a financial barrier that may be stopping a family from accessing the care they need and deserve. Since receiving the Children's Relief Fund grant in May of 2025, our in-house developmental pediatrician has been able to diagnose 13 children and get them and their families connected with the appropriate resources. By April 2026, we will be able to diagnose 25 children thanks to the funds from Children's Relief. According to the latest research, children that are diagnosed before 2.5 years of age were three times more likely to exhibit considerable improvements in autism spectrum disorder symptoms in comparison with children diagnosed at later ages. Later diagnosis is associated with increased parental stress and instability in home life. With an early diagnosis children and families experience less stress, better mental health, a reduction in Autism symptoms, stability at home, and an overall higher quality of life.



OUR 2025-2026 Scholarship Recipient

DR. ROBERT BOKAT SCHOLARSHIP

AVERY ANN HALLORAN

Hilton Head High School
pursuing a degree as a PA



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
P.O. Box 22574, Hilton Head Island, SC 29925