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## Autism Treatment Center

# Building Futures

## Boy Meets World

Wyatt is an All-American guy you'd love to have for a best friend. He is very outgoing with good looks, a wonderful personality, and enough charisma and charm for anyone. Wyatt is also a 21 year old adult with autism.



In 1998, Wyatt enrolled in the Educational and Residential programs at ATC and started receiving therapy services, as well. Wyatt has grown from a small child to a young adult before our very eyes. We have seen his struggles, but we have been there to share his successes and joys, as well. After all, ATC has been his family for over 15 years.

Wyatt has worked hard to increase his social skills. He has overcome any shyness he had and is now very outgoing and eager to make new friends. When he is not in

school, Wyatt is busy pursuing his many interests. From equine therapy to cooking in the kitchen with ATC's culinary program, the Tiger Café, Wyatt is doing exactly what every teenager does – finding his interests and passions. Since he was a child, one of them has been music.

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ISSUE NO. 1

SPRING

2016

## Free Autism Screening in Dallas

Early intervention is key to starting life-changing services. If your toddler or a toddler you know exhibits sensory differences, unexplained behavior (decreased communication, social skills, or makes limited eye contact), this free screening might be the right match.

On Saturday, May 14, the Autism Treatment Center in Dallas will conduct a free community screening for families with toddlers aged 18 months to 3 years old from 10am to 2pm.

A screening is an initial observation and interview to identify markers for autism. During the screening, parents will be asked questions about their child's social, sensory, and behavioral characteristics. A deficit in any of these areas could be an indication that a formal evaluation for Autism Spectrum Disorder is needed.

The screening is free with pre-registration at [www.atcoftexas.org/autismscreening](http://www.atcoftexas.org/autismscreening) or by calling Michelle at 972-644-2076 x 106. Special thanks for this screening goes to the Imagine Beyond Foundation, whose motto is "Good deeds for beautiful minds."

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*Anna Hundley*  
Executive Director

## From the Director

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Building Futures*, a community newsletter about ATC and the individuals we serve. From group outings to individual success stories, I hope this newsletter keeps you informed of all ATC is doing to Change Lives and Build Futures of children and adults with autism.

This year, ATC is celebrating its 40th year of providing services to families touched by autism in our communities. Because the symptoms of autism vary from individual to individual, our approach to treat those symptoms must also be individualized. From speech therapy for an hour each day to around-the-clock intensive support, we are committed to providing effective services to build the independence of individuals enrolled in our many programs.

I invite you read the stories we have to share. Many of these stories are made possible by the kind donors who support our mission to assist people with autism throughout their lives as they learn, play, work, and live in the community.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Your generous funds help ensure the children and adults we serve have the resources they need for a lifetime of success. Here's to another 40 years!



## Hope for Jackson

*Written by Jordan Benners (Jackson's mother)*

When we first started ABA services at ATC, our family/home life was miserable. We couldn't go to a restaurant, even a fast food place, without having to deal with Jackson ending up in a

random fit in the middle of the room, screaming and flailing his arms, even just walking in the entrance. We could never predict when or what would set him off, so we felt trapped as though we couldn't go beyond the walls of our own home. We missed out on a lot of family and community functions because our son couldn't handle them.

It took some time and work, but the ATC staff was very encouraging for us as a family, and graciously showed us how to work through every behavior. Every day they would tell me what he did well, and what we could work on at home. Slowly but surely, Jackson started to engage with his surroundings and

people. He went from having 8-10 words, to being able to engage with others. He can now walk into a fast food restaurant and play on their playground, he runs up to friends and initiates play, he says "hi" to everyone he sees in the hallways at ATC, and he even sings! Instead of screaming and panicking on our family vacations (which resulted in me spending a lot of "alone" time with him in calming rooms, etc), he was able to laugh, play, and engage with his cousins and grandparents and even play in the sand.

Two years ago our son was non-responsive, sitting alone in a corner, self-rocking and running his eyes back and forth along a toy car for long periods of time. ATC helped bring our sweet Jackson back into this world in which he now engages happily. There are still challenges, still hard moments...but he is HAPPY. Without the incredible staff at the ATC, our family wouldn't have the smiles that we do or the laughter we share with our son. It's a priceless gift that we are forever grateful for.

ABA changes lives. The staff at the ATC changes lives. They have changed Jackson's life for the better, and we have incredible hope for him for a bright future.

# ATC Fiesta Royalty in San Antonio



*Fiesta Especial Duke Enrick Settles on stage during his coronation with Liz Commins from ATC San Antonio.*

Enrick Settles will soon be getting the royal treatment around San Antonio. On February 17th, Enrick was inducted onto the 2016 Fiesta Especial® Royal Court as a Duke during a coronation ceremony on the Texas A&M San Antonio campus.

Enrick earned his place on the Royal Court by raising \$1,213 for the Autism Treatment Center and Fiesta Especial®, an official Fiesta® San Antonio experience for people with special needs. As members of the Royal Court, Enrick and nine other young men and women with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities will develop important leadership and life skills while serving the community throughout the coming year.

For a 15-year-old with autism, Enrick is exceptionally comfortable being in the public eye. He and his father are members of a Stars Wars community, the Knights of the Alamo, and frequently make appearances at charity fundraisers, parades and conventions. Enrick also loves movies and makes creative short films on his iPad that he uploads to YouTube including "The Two Enricks" and "The Crazy Dancer".

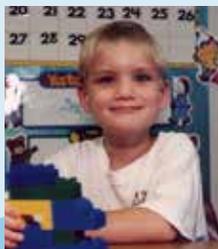
When asked why he wants to participate in the Fiesta Especial Royal Court, Enrick replied, "Because I think it would be fun. I like parades, I like people and I would like to help." Everyone at the Autism Treatment Center is proud of Enrick and grateful for the funds he raised to help other people with autism.

*continued from page 1*

## Boy Meets World continued Music or math, Wyatt is ready for it all.

Wyatt stands at 6"1', though he is thin as a rail. That's because he loves to dance. At ATC's Spring Prom or Fall Dance, you can always find Wyatt on the dance floor gliding to the latest hip hop song, dancing in perfect rhythm. When he is not dancing, Wyatt is working on basic living skills and becoming more independent.

In 2010, Wyatt enrolled in a Dallas-area public school where he learned to read on a first grade level and write very basic sentences. While Wyatt is on track for his educational goals, he still has a long way to go to achieve full independence. In June, Wyatt will graduate from high



school. He is looking forward to walking across the stage to receive the diploma he has worked so hard to obtain.

Wyatt recently talked about his upcoming graduation. "I've been in school for a long time. I am ready to get out and get a job", he said.

Asked about his career aspirations, Wyatt responded, "I like music. I want to be a singer." Wyatt is well on his way to a music career. Wyatt sang with the choir at school and has participated in making rap videos



with his friends at ATC. And just in case his music career doesn't work out, Wyatt has a back-up plan – math. "I like math a lot", Wyatt added.

*To find out ways you can help ATC improve the lives of people with autism in your community, please contact Neil Massey at 972-644-2076 or Cynthia Hamilton at 210-538-0905 or visit our website at*

[www.atcoftexas.org](http://www.atcoftexas.org)

In Dallas and San Antonio, adults with autism give back to the community by consistently volunteering with other nonprofits like Meals on Wheels and World Vision. Collectively, our adults give over 1,500 hours of their time volunteering each month. These activities allow the adults in our program to gain job experience, build self-esteem, and make new friends.

## ATC Gives Back

### MEALS ON WHEELS



Adults in San Antonio (left) and Dallas (right) enjoy spending the day delivering food with Meals on Wheels.

### WORLD VISION



Bobby and Jay spend the day at World Vision helping with sorting and stocking donated items.

# April is Autism Awareness Month

Autism affects 1 in 68 children in the U.S. Chances are, you or someone you know is affected by this developmental disorder. Join us in helping to create awareness of the needs of children, adults, and families affected by autism. Share these stories, participate in an event, make a donation, host a fundraiser – there are many ways to join the movement and help ensure ATC can continue to provide life-changing therapy and programs for people with autism. Visit [www.atcoftexas.org](http://www.atcoftexas.org) for more information and get involved today!

Learn more about these events at  
[www.atcoftexas.org/events.html](http://www.atcoftexas.org/events.html)

Follow us on:



## UPCOMING 2016 EVENTS

- Building Futures Educational Series (San Antonio) – March 22
- World Autism Awareness Day – April 2
- Engineering Brighter Futures for Autism (Dallas) – April 2
- Cable for a Cause (Dallas) – April 2
- Dallas Symphony Orchestra Special Needs Concert – April 10
- Roundup for Autism Fashion Show (Dallas) – April 27
- San Antonio Big Give – May 5
- Free Autism Screening (Dallas) – May 14
- Arts e Platters (San Antonio) – May 19



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