



HOWARD COUNTY AUTISM SOCIETY

HCAS President's Report - 2014

2014 was an extremely busy year for the Howard County Autism Society. Our success can be directly contributed to the hard work of our staff, volunteers and Board, and to the unwavering support of our membership and community partners. A few of our notable accomplishments and 'firsts' for 2014 included:

- Successfully holding our 1st annual Transition Symposium. This conference was extremely well received, leading us to planning our 2nd symposium for February 2015.
- Developing a separate Housing Sub-committee of our Transition and Adults committee to begin exploring potential housing options in Howard County for those on the spectrum. A grant was received and a housing consultant was hired to help the committee get started.
- Formalizing our long-standing partnership with HCPSS in a ceremony at HCAS in June.
- Partnering with SECAC to hold four separate 'listening posts', covering Early Intervention, Middle School, High School and Elementary School where the community was invited in to share their successes and concerns related to their experiences with HCPSS. The feedback from these meetings was summarized, and key findings were shared in separate meetings with the Department of Special Education (DSESS).
- The establishment of our first social skills group. This pilot group targeted the 16+ age range, with the first session just completing. In 2015, depending on the success/feedback from the pilot groups, this opportunity may continue and expand to other age ranges as appropriate.
- The development of a new-look website that increases our ability to dynamically provide you with the most up-to-date information related to HCAS and our community. Combined with the continuation of our Special Education News Center, HCAS now has a significant online presence that provides benefits to those well beyond Howard County.

From a financial aspect, we look to be on track to end the year with a balanced statement, keeping our equity in a strong position. Our November financial statements detailing our current position are available for review for those interested. From a governance aspect, our Board size remained unchanged at 17 members, five of which were new for the 2014 year. Our office also saw a transition at the Resource Center and Events Coordinator position, with Shana Wienecke being welcomed to the team.

Our financial stability and the hard work of the staff, Board and volunteers also allowed our committees to continue many successful programs, events and partnerships to serve the community beyond those listed above. These activities, and many others completed behind the scenes at HCAS are key to the continued support of our loved ones on the spectrum as well as their extended families. I have included a sampling of these to demonstrate the breadth and depth of the work done at HCAS in 2014. Feel free to reach out to us if you have questions on any of these items, or have other ideas you would like HCAS to consider pursuing.

As always, we hope to see you out at our many events. With your participation in and support of our committee activities, HCAS will continue to be a strong voice within the community for our friends, family members, and loved ones.

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President – HCAS Board of Directors
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providing support • promoting awareness • advocating for change
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Partial List of HCAS 2014 Activities

Social Events held in 2014:

- Trip to Great Wolf Lodge
- Multiple Restaurant fundraising nights
- Dad's Night Out events
- Mom's Night Out events
- Happy Hour events
- Skyzone Outing
- Bi-weekly yoga classes for 10-18 yr olds on the spectrum.
- Four Fitness First events
- Semi-annual pool parties
- Sensory-friendly movie events
- Sensory-friendly Easter Bunny and Santa events

General HCAS Activities from 2014:

- Held our 9th annual Pieces of the Puzzle Gala
- Held our 8th annual One Step Closer ... Autism Walk and 5K Run
- Held our 1st annual Transition Symposium
- Held monthly meetings of the Asperger's Group
- Held monthly meetings of the Transition and Adults Group
- Held monthly meetings of the Housing Subcommittee
- Held monthly general meetings as support groups or with guest speakers
- Formalized our partnership with HCPSS and the Department of Special Education and Student Services (DSESS)
- Continued execution of our Family Advocacy and Parent Education (FAPE) Grant, offering assistance to those with questions and issues surrounding the school system
- Held FAPE conference co-sponsored by HCPSS and RISE for Autism
- Held four Brown Bag Series workshops in partnership with Pathfinders for Autism
- Partnered with SECAC to hold four 'listening posts' to hear concerns from the community.
- Strengthened partnerships with the ARC of Howard County, Pathfinders for Autism and other service organizations in and around Howard County with similar goals.
- Held periodic meetings with DSESS leadership to continue to work on strengthening and improving the services for those on the spectrum.
- In partnership with the ARC of Howard County, began meeting with incoming elected officials and Board of Education members to introduce them to our mission.
- Introduced our revamped HCAS general website.
- Continued updating our Special Education News Center as part of the FAPE grant.
- Established our first social skills group. This pilot group targeted the 16-24 years age range. HCAS is considering expanding this opportunity to other age ranges in 2015.
- Partnered with HCPSS, the ARC of Howard County, and the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) as part of the Project SEARCH to help transition interns with disabilities to the workplace.