

“Angling for Autism” to Benefit The Learning Tree



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By Carmen Rodgers

The fifth annual “Angling for Autism” Bass Fishing Tournament to benefit the Learning Tree in Tallassee, the Little H.A.P.I.E Tree Preschool in Auburn, and the new autism clinic, Growing Independence Behavioral Services, in Montgomery, is planned for Sept. 29. The tournament will take place at Cooter’s Pond on the Alabama River in Prattville.

“This directly benefits the Learning Tree, the Little H.A.P.I.E Tree Preschool and our new autism clinic Growing Independence Behavioral Services,” said Stephanie Weldon, Resource Development Coordinator at the Learning Tree.

Angling for Autism is opened to everyone and coordinators encourage anglers of all skill levels to take part in this tournament.

“This is for anyone who likes to fish,” Weldon said.

Blastoff for the tournament is at safe daylight with weigh-in at 2 p.m. Entry fee is \$120 per boat. First place will win \$1,500 and ten places will be awarded cash prizes. \$100 will be awarded to the top parent/child team and the top male/female team. There will be a \$10 optional “big fish” pot with a 70/30 split in the proceeds. All proceeds benefit the Learning Tree schools to help children with developmental disabilities, including autism, learn and grow.

Because the Learning Tree is a nonprofit organization, it relies heavily on fundraisers such as this to maintain the services offered there. The Learning Tree does receive government grant funding, but as most often is the case, it is not enough to cover all the expenses incurred by the organization. There are also several sponsorships opportunities available for this event.

Founded in 1983, the Learning Tree is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing educational and residential services for children and adolescents with developmental disabilities, including autism. Today more than 600 children and families are served each year from more than 30 counties across Alabama. The majority of the children, ages 2 ½ -21, have significant language and communication difficulties as well as challenging behaviors.

Currently, one in every 68 children is diagnosed with a form of autism. Autism is a complex developmental disability typically appearing during the first three years of a child’s life, as the result of a neurological disorder affecting the normal functioning of the brain. The need for services has grown rapidly with the increased prevalence of autism.

For tournament registration information or sponsorship opportunities contact Stephanie Weldon, Resource Development Coordinator, at 334-415-9372 or sweldon@learning-tree.org (<mailto:sweldon@learning-tree.org>) or visit the Learning Tree website, www.learning-tree.org. There will also be registration the day of the tournament.



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