

'Angling for Autism' bass fishing tournament to benefit The Learning Tree



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The fourth annual "Angling for Autism" bass fishing tournament to benefit The Learning Tree in Tallassee and the Little HAPIE Tree in Auburn is planned for Saturday, Nov. 18.

The tournament will take place at Wind Creek State Park in Alexander City with blastoff, Alabama at safe daylight and the weigh-in at 2 p.m.

Entry fee is \$100 per boat. First place will win \$1,500 and 10 places will be awarded cash prizes. The top parent/child team and the top male/female team will each be awarded \$100. 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.

"This directly benefits The Learning Tree and The Little HAPIE Tree Preschool," said Stephanie Weldon, resource development coordinator at The Learning Tree.

Angling for Autism is open 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.

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 governmental grant funding, but as is most often the case, it is not enough to cover all the expenses incurred by the organization.

"We have to maintain 10 group homes," Weldon said. "We do get grant funding but that grant funding just doesn't cover everything."

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, The Learning Tree serves more than 600 children and families each year from more than 30 counties across Alabama. The majority of the children, ages 2 ½ to 21, have significant language and communication difficulties as well as challenging behaviors.

In 2014, one in every 68 children is diagnosed with a form of autism, according to the Centers for Disease Control. 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 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 Weldon at 334-415-9372 or sweldon@learning-tree.org. You may also register on The Learning Tree website, www.learning-tree.org. There will also be registration the day of the tournament.

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