

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **AUTISM SOCIETY OF ALABAMA honors advocates during annual Gala for efforts in autism insurance reform**

**Birmingham**—The Autism Society of Alabama is hosting the AUTISM SHINES GALA on Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup> 2017 from 6 p.m.—10 p.m. at the Grand Bohemian Hotel in Mountain Brook.

The Autism Shines Gala is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and promises to be an evening of fun and excitement with proceeds benefiting the many programs offered by the Society. Leading up to this night, parents, advocates and countless supporters dedicated hours of their time during the legislative session to see insurance for autism become a law. "Over 7+ years we have worked to get insurance coverage in Alabama and until now those efforts were unsuccessful. We're enthusiastic that families can join us in celebrating the passage of HB284 especially for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Gala." said Program Director Bama Hager.

Building on the new autism insurance reform in Alabama, ASA will recognize 2 community leaders during the event with its newest distinction, the "Mike Tumlin Award." Mike Tumlin was an autism dad and advocate who united many families in Alabama affected by autism and encouraged them throughout their journey. Todd Tomerlin expressed his gratitude toward Mike, "Tumlin passed away in 2016 and left behind a legacy for parents, dads especially, to be the voice for their child who might not have a way to do so independently and we believe recognizing those individuals allows them see their hard work doesn't go unnoticed."

Melanie Jones, executive director, is grateful for the community's shift in making autism awareness an important topic of conversation within the last year. "Our organization has reached many new families across the state who are eager to access the programs and services offered by ASA. Without this event, our mission to educate and advocate for those children and adults recently diagnosed with ASD wouldn't be possible."

Some of the programs offered by the Autism Society of Alabama include Respite stipends, First Responder Trainings, Autism Friendly Alabama, Camp FROG, sensory friendly movies and activities and the SAFE campaign which provides devices to help with elopement. For a complete list with descriptions of the Society's programs, please visit [www.autism-alabama.org](http://www.autism-alabama.org).

The event welcomes residents of Birmingham and surrounding areas for a night to celebrate children and adults on the autism spectrum. JOX Roundtable personalities Lance Taylor, Jim Dunaway and Ryan Brown will emcee the event and call the auction which includes a Caribbean beach getaway, a Jones Is Thirsty Wine dinner and a shopping spree to Bloomingdales in Chicago. A seated dinner, music, and a silent and live auction at \$85 per person make for a nice night out while benefiting a great cause.

Members of the Gala committee include Peggy Stevens - Chair, Christy Boyles, Ayesha Bryant, Ben Carlisle, Rod Harbin, Fran Heisner, Jenny Morris, Travis Grantham, Matt Moore and Ashlie Walker.

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About the Autism Society of Alabama

The Autism Society of Alabama is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving services for as many as 50,000 individuals affected by Autism in Alabama through education and advocacy. For more information about the Autism Society of Alabama and Autism Spectrum Disorders, please call (877) 4-AUTISM or visit [www.autism-alabama.org](http://www.autism-alabama.org).