

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**AUTISM SOCIETY OF ALABAMA RAISES OVER \$100,000 AT THE 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AUTISM SHINES GALA**

**Birmingham** - The Autism Society of Alabama, a non-profit that provides education and advocacy for the 1 in 68 families affected by autism spectrum disorder, recently raised over \$100,000 at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Autism Shines Gala. The event held on August 20<sup>th</sup> at the Birmingham Marriott united the community around autism awareness and its ongoing #AutismMatters campaign.

"We are so grateful to our donors, sponsors and supporters whose generosity allows us to keep impacting lives," beamed executive director Melanie Jones.

JOX Roundtable emcees Ryan Brown and Jim Dunaway welcomed over 300 guests as they sipped complimentary beer and wine provided by Alabama Beverage and United Johnson Brothers and bid on 150 unique silent auction items donated by area retailers and other local businesses. Among the featured items were a Lake Tahoe Getaway, Pursell Farm Stay & Play package and a weeklong beach vacation at Tops'l Beach and Racquet Resort. Following dinner, attendees watched the organization's "Year in Review" video that highlighted smiling faces as well as images from ongoing programs such as First Responder Trainings, Camp FROG, conferences, workshops and other autism-friendly events hosted around the state.

Board of Director, Nancy Barnes, presented the annual President's Award to Denise Gillespie, Alice Murdoch and Cindy Nelson, each who have impacted our state with their combined 70 years of public special education experience. "Because of their efforts, approximately 1,000 AL educators and parents receive specialty training related to educating children and adults living on the autism spectrum. There are rural and sometimes urban school systems that report that this is the only education conference their teachers attend because of the reasonable and low registration fee," explained Bama Hager.

Additionally Kathy Lovell, Senior VP for Americans with Disabilities Manager at Regions Bank was given the Innovative Program Award for its commitment to becoming autism-friendly not only in its Alabama branches but throughout all Regions Bank locations in 16 states.

At the end of the night one lucky winner took home the Ultimate Roll Tide Package, which featured 2 tickets to watch Alabama's opening game against USC including airfare and hotel accommodations in Dallas.

Community partners include America's First Federal Credit Union, Carr Riggs & Ingram, Children's of Alabama, Cullman Savings Bank, Dale's Seasoning, Drummond Company, FaceForward Staffing, Glenwood, Hands Program, Honda Manufacturing, JOX Radio, Knights of Columbus, McGriff Seibels and Williams Inc., Perfect Service Heating & Air, Protective Life, Regions Bank, Summit Media, The E Group, Wind Creek Hospitality, Yellowhammer Construction, Paulette and Bill Pearson, Nancy and Ernie Barnes, Peggy and Keith Stevens, Bama and Jeff Hager, Senator Cam Ward, the Grandparents of Remy and Randi Cron and Rachel and Russ Barton. The Autism Society of Alabama very much appreciates everyone who makes the event successful.

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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 55,000 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).