



# HOWARD COUNTY AUTISM SOCIETY

## **HCAS President's Report – 2019 Annual General Membership Meeting - December 13, 2019**

HCAS Members:

In many respects, 2019 has been a year of highs for our organization.

In July we received the honor of recognition by the Autism Society of America as the *Affiliate of the Year*, out of approximately 80 affiliates nationwide!

This award is a reflection of the great work of our staff, board members, volunteers and members to advance our mission by providing support, promoting awareness, and advocating for positive change for our community. And, as demonstrated by the sampling of our activities and accomplishments in 2019, attached, this year has been no different. Thank you all for making this happen!

We continue to be strong financially and organizationally, too. October 2019 financials are available your review, detailing the financial health of the organization. And, this evening we will seek ratification of the HCAS Board of Directors for 2020, which includes six new board members who will each add significantly to our reach and impact.

At the same time, for our organization and many of us individually, 2019 will be defined by the passing of Madhu Thibaudeau in March 2019. Madhu was a vital and vibrant “pillar” in our community for many years, as long-time HCAS member, volunteer, staff member, advocate, and much, much more. As I have said before, in many ways Madhu embodied everything that is good about HCAS. She demonstrated a remarkable commitment both to her own family’s journey with autism and to the journey of those in the HCAS family as a whole. We are glad to be able to celebrate Madhu’s memory with the creation of the *Madhu Thibaudeau Family Fund* and by permanently renaming our annual volunteer award in her honor.

Thank you for attending tonight’s meeting. With your participation and support, HCAS will continue to be a strong voice for our friends, family members, and the community at large.

Patrick Boxall

President, HCAS Board of Directors

**Providing Support • Promoting Awareness • Advocating for Change**

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 308 • Columbia, MD 21046  
410-290-3466 • [www.howard-autism.org](http://www.howard-autism.org) • [info@howard-autism.org](mailto:info@howard-autism.org)

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**Partial List of HCAS Accomplishments and Activities, 2019**

- Created the *Madhu Thibaudeau Family Fund* to support our families most in need
- Held social events including:
  - Dad's and Mom's *Night Out* events
  - Bi-weekly yoga classes for 10-18 year olds on the spectrum.
  - Annual *Potluck Picnic*
  - Family visit to Kalahari Resort
  - *Fitness First* events
  - Winter and summer pool parties
  - Sensory-friendly movie events
  - Sensory-friendly Easter Bunny
  - Adult Social Group
  - Monday Fun-Day social group for young adults
  - Bingo Night
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual "Shine in Your Own Light Showcase" featuring performances & visual art by teens and young adults with ASD
- Continued to support families with multiple and complex needs through the work of our Family Navigator
- Held our 14th annual *Pieces of the Puzzle Gala* with a very popular, and groovy, 70's theme
- Held our 13th annual *One Step Closer ... Autism Walk and 5K Run*
- Held our 6th annual *Transition Symposium*, with the HC Transition Outreach Partnership, providing a full day of presenters and workshops covering a wide variety of Transition topics including a self-advocate track, and separate ½ day workshops on employment and self-advocacy for transitioning youth
- Held our annual special needs camp fair providing information on summer camp opportunities
- Held monthly meetings of the various support groups including the general HCAS General Support Group, the Asperger's Support Group, and a new Latino Parent Support Group
- Continued the *Monthly Speaker Series* featuring guest speakers on a variety of topics of interest to the ASD community
- Hosted HCPSS *Transition Journey Parent-to-Parent* meetings
- Continued execution of our *Family Advocacy and Parent Education (FAPE)* Grant, offering assistance to those with questions and issues surrounding the school system
- Continued updating our *Special Education News Center* with information and articles pertinent to special education advocacy and support
- Issued our eNewsletter, *Perspectives* throughout the year

- Conducted a Financial Review of HCAS 2018 and the IRS 990, and implemented a new investment policy to optimize returns from HCAS reserves
- Held *Brown Bag Series* workshops in partnership with Pathfinders for Autism
- Held meetings with HCPSS Department of Special Education and Student Services leadership to continue work on improving the services and opportunities for those on the spectrum.
- Advocated for an increased budget HCPSS Special Education with the Board of Education and County Council
- Participated in *2019 Developmental Disabilities Day* at the Legislature in Annapolis
- Partnered with the Arc of Howard County and Service Coordination to host a *Legislative Breakfast* and discussed concerns with the Medicaid Waiver programs and access to mental health services
- Delivered and/or co-sponsored autism training at public schools and with businesses and community organizations, including Lisbon E.S., Laurel Woods E.S., Ellicott Mills M.S. Walter Reed, SECU, HC General Hospital, Applied Physics Laboratory, FDIC, Rotary Club, National Archives 2, and the Kennedy Krieger CARD Center
- Advanced the *Patuxent Commons* housing initiative with the selection of Mission First as the developer, retention of a commercial real estate professional to assist with site search, and presentations to local and regional audiences
- Represented HCAS at local and regional resource events, including the Howard County Child Care & Preschool Information Fair, Honestly Autism Day, Night Out, Korean Festival, and Kennedy Krieger Autism Conference
- Funded community activities, including purchase of supplies for sensory friendly programming in the Howard County Library System, the Sprout Music Festival, and communications boards for six HCPSS elementary school playgrounds
- Supported the launch of new Sensory Friendly Sunday programming at the Robinson Nature Center
- Supported Reservoir High School production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*
- Promoted HCAS and our mission and events on HCC's Dragon Radio
- Celebrated *World Autism Day* with County Executive, Calvin Ball
- Celebrated Roger Thibaudeau as *Volunteer of the Year* at the ACS Humanitarian Awards, Beth Benevides with *Making a Difference* award by the HCPD, and HCAS's recognition by the Howard County Volunteer Center
- Celebrated HCAS's award as the Autism Society of America, *Affiliate of the Year*