



Connections

FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK™ - HIGH COUNTRY

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An Affiliate of
Family Support Network™
North Carolina

With Support From
Appalachian State University

Appalachian District Health
Department-Innovative
Approaches

Friends of Family Support
Network™—High Country

High Country United Way

Partnership for Children from:
Avery
Mitchell-Yancey
Watauga
Wilkes

Smoky Mountain Center

Information + Support

Families of Children with Special Needs
Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, & Yancey counties

Spring 2014

Three Families Provide Inspiration and Raise Awareness

The Run for Holland 5K was organized by Adam and Brooke Burluson to raise awareness for parents who have had or are having a child born with a physical or mental disability. It developed out of the couple's desire to educate others after a genetic test discovered that the baby they would be having had a high chance of having Down syndrome. Support from those around them led them to embracing their child, Holland, as a gift from God. Their 5K and 1 mile fun run was held on April 26th at Riverside Park in Spruce Pine, NC. There were 305 participants in the 5k and roughly 40 in the 1 mile fun run! Of the event, they say, "Our prayer is that [the Run for Holland] will raise awareness about Down syndrome and other special needs in our community. We want others to know that they are not alone on their journey to Holland; there is support and resources available if you find yourself on this path."



Brooke and Adam

The Buddy Walk for the High Country was conceived by Melissa Lewis, who lives in Ashe County and has a child with Down syndrome. Of the diagnosis, Lewis said, "I saw that my own family was pitying me and what our lives now would entail. I got in the shower that evening and cried for about an hour straight. Then I decided that Down syndrome was like every other syndrome or disease in the world, it is what you make it be." Over time, Lewis got more and more families involved in the event, which showed the community that people with disabilities were "just like everyone else". The event became a huge success, bringing in around \$14,000 with 300 volunteers, and looks to be even better for the second go around in the fall. Reflecting on her journey, Lewis shares, "Now people in our community don't look at us with pity, they look at us as a family that is raising awareness and that are doing something to change the face of Down syndrome. We have made some lifelong friends from having the Buddy Walk for the High Country."



Cohen Lewis

After attending a Buddy Walk, another parent and advocate for people with disabilities, Brooke Hollar, created an event of her own. Her son, Henry, was born with a diagnosis of Down syndrome, but Brooke promised that she would be his biggest advocate, saying, "I did not look at Henry and see Down syndrome; I saw a little human being. A lot of people today look at people with disabilities and see their disability and not remember that they are a person that God created just like me and you. I knew after having Henry I would be his biggest advocate, so I got started!" Brooke took time to educate herself and others about Down syndrome and spread awareness by having a celebration for World Down Syndrome Day on March 21st. The event, which was held in Watauga County, was backed by local organizations and churches and turned out to be a huge success with over one hundred people coming for the first year and double that the second year! It included games, refreshments (many of which were catered by the supporting organizations), and this year, a talent show was put on by people with disabilities. When speaking of her event, Brooke shared, "I will continue this event every year! I will support anything that advocates inclusion of people with disabilities into our communities! I am very interested in connecting with families of kids with DS and I also want to help provide support to new parents getting the diagnosis."



Talent Show Participants at World Down Syndrome Day

Thanks to ASU Students for their Amazing Support

11th Annual Dance Marathon February 22, 2014

\$33,246.49 was raised at Appalachian State's 2014 Dance Marathon. ASU students, children, and families all came together to dance and raise money to help families in the high country. Kaaren Hayes, Director of the Parent to Parent Family Support Network – High Country™, credits the Dance Marathon with keeping her program alive.

The Appalachian Educators raised the most money at Dance Marathon, raking in \$5,466. Amy Peterson, who raised \$430 of that sum, shared that her eyes were opened at the event to the diversity she will encounter in her future classroom when she met and talked with Parent to Parent families and danced with their children. Speaking of the App Educators' involvement with Dance Marathon and Parent to Parent FSN -HC™, she said, "We had such a large team because we are all about getting ready for whatever we will encounter [in our classrooms]."



Mega Yard Sale & Car Wash April 12, 2014

With help from interns Elizabeth Kerley and Katlyn Halley, the girls from Zeta Tau Alpha Sorority and ASU student volunteers, we raised \$662.87. This was the first time Parent to Parent FSN-HC™ ever held a mega Yard Sale and Car Wash. Thank you all for volunteering, donating or just coming out to support Parent to Parent FSN-HC™.

Welcome to Holland... By: Emily Perl Kingsley

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting. After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy." But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay. The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place. So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met. It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts. But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned." And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss. But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

Please read the sequel "Celebrating Holland—I'm Home" at <http://www.oafccd.com/lanark/poems/holland3.html>.



The Great Friend to Families Award recognizes sustained contributions by individuals to the well-being of young children and their families in the High Country area. Awards were given in two categories, Helping Hands (those who help families through their careers) and Helping Hearts (those who help through generous philanthropy and/or outstanding volunteerism).

This year, our Director Kaaren Hayes won the Helping Hands award along with Jennifer Grubb Warren, Ned Fowler, Mark Freed, Tiffany Minton, Todd Mortensen, and Bobbie Willard. The Helping Hearts were Fred Abernethy, Sarah Griffith Hawkins, Rebekah Gyger, Meggan Knight, Elizabeth (Libba) Moore, and Jan Rienenrth.

Egg Garden



What You'll Need:

- Eggshells
- potting soil
- seeds (choose a type that will look like "hair") and a marker.

How to Do It:

1. Clean your halved eggshells and fill them with potting soil.
2. Plant your seeds and water.
3. Once the "hair" on the egg starts to grow, use the marker to draw a face on the eggshell.