

Families for Effective Autism Treatment FEAT of Louisville, Inc. 2018 Annual Report

As FEAT looks back on 2018 and forwards to 2019, it is important to recognize that the rate of autism continues to increase with the latest estimates of 1 in 59 children. Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the U.S. Given the pronounced increase in autism over the past few years, FEAT strives to provide a strong network for family support and help coordinate with other organizations to offer programs that are needed in our community.

The FEAT Board of Directors and staff recognize that our new and current programs, through collaborative partnerships, are vital in this community. We also understand that the level of unmet needs continues to rise as the diagnosis of children with autism continues to increase at this alarming rate. However, we could not do what we do without the financial support of our generous donors, collaboration with our local partners and the continued passion of our very committed volunteers. *We thank each of you* and please know that your support will help FEAT continue to be a leading force for change and an even greater source of hope for the families that so desperately need these services.



New and Ongoing FEAT Programs

In 2018, FEAT continued focusing on collaborative efforts with other local agencies to help families highlighted by its leadership of the Autism Friendly Community working group of local autism service providers. Through these efforts, FEAT helped provide funding for several new programs:



- Partnership with Best Buddies Kentucky to provide peer support and friendship at Trinity High School, the University of Louisville and Bellarmine University for students with autism
- Partnership with Orchid House, a downtown area preschool program for medically fragile children with autism spectrum disorder, to assist with staff training
- Collaboration with over 35 other autism providers to create the Autism Friendly Business Initiative, a project that will enable all businesses in our community to become more autism-friendly through a video training tool.

In addition to these new programs, FEAT continues to support the following ongoing programs:

Endeavor Program – This collaborative program with Carriage House Educational Services utilizes a strong ABA approach to help children develop the verbal, social, emotional, and self-help skills required for younger children with autism to become successful when placed in a typical preschool or elementary school classroom. The skills learned in the Endeavor Program *increase school readiness* for young children with autism. Enrollment was at approximately 55 children at the end of 2018 and continues to expand.

Dreams in Motion – This therapeutic and recreational summer day camp for ages 7-21 for children with autism is a collaborative effort between FEAT and Dreams with Wings. The program offers onsite and community-based education and life skill activities as well as recreational summer outings. In 2014, Dreams in Motion summer camp began serving 7-year-old children and expanded camp capacity to 48 campers in 2017.



Get Your FEAT Wet – In collaboration with All About Kids and Home of the Innocents, children with autism learn to swim with one-on-one instruction and behavior support as needed. This program improves the health of children with autism by teaching them the lifelong skill of swimming, which will provide them not only with safety and enjoyment but also with the means for physical exercise. We hope to expand this program to other swim locations around our community.

Bluegrass Center for Autism Vocational Job Coach Program - Within their campus uniquely located in Mid City Mall, students are prepared to develop the communicative, daily living and job readiness skills required to function as independently as possible. These skills are taught in a “school-like” setting and through community-based instruction that extends into the stores in the mall. The mall becomes an extension of the classroom where lessons are not taught in isolation and are more easily generalized. Approximately 19 children participate in this program.

Autism Awareness and Education

FEAT was founded in 1999 with an emphasis on supporting autism awareness and education for families – this continued to be a major focus in 2017. Throughout the year, FEAT sponsored well attended monthly parent meetings, programs for children, special events and training opportunities.



FEAT held numerous free events for families such as Christmas with Santa at Oxmoor Center, an Easter Egg Hunt, family events at the Kentucky Science Center, Family Swims at Home of the Innocents Therapy Pool, Autism Awareness Day at a Louisville Bats game, Autism Awareness Assembly at Field Elementary, a Shriner Circus, Nutcracker, and A Christmas Carol outing for families and a Vendor Village at the Outrunning Autism 5K for parents to interact with local autism providers and businesses to help them make informed choices regarding the education, therapy and recreation services available for their children.



During the year, FEAT served over 900+ participants in our family and parent events named above. During the year, we provided indirect services to another 1,500 + people through two-way ongoing communications utilizing media and social media to promote FEAT services and educational opportunities for children and families.

In 2018, FEAT staff made a concerted effort to expand the use of social media to promote autism awareness as well as the programs FEAT and collaborative partners provide in the community. In 2018, FEAT also worked with local consultants to increase the effectiveness of marketing and fundraising activities including expanding the visibility and attendance of our key events. Our FEAT web page, Twitter and Facebook Page continue to add to the overall impact of these efforts being that families facing with the challenges of autism were able to learn about more FEAT and services available in the community. We also added Instagram pages for both FEAT of Louisville and the Autism Friendly Business Initiative.

Fundraising Events

FEAT remains active in its fundraising efforts to be able to provide the above programs and services to its members. The three major events held this past year included the following:

1. ***Create A Stir About Autism Dinner Gala*** – FEAT’s longest running event was held in September 2018 and included dinner, live and silent auctions and dancing. Funds raised from this event supported a variety of FEAT activities including direct program funding for the Endeavor Program, scholarships, and parent trainings.
2. ***Outrunning Autism – FEAT 5K Race and 1 Mile Fun Walk and 24-hour Extreme Run by Jim Ball***– was held in May 2018. A little over 1500 participants and volunteers participated in the largest autism event of this type in the community. In 2018, Outrunning Autism enjoyed another year at The Parklands of Floyds Fork, which provided a better run and event venue and support expansion in future years. This year, FEAT raised the largest amount since FEAT launched the Outrunning Autism events and race in 2005. Funds raised by this event went to support our collaborative programs, the Autism Friendly Community initiative and new program initiatives.

FEAT is excited about holding these same events in 2019 and hopes that their continued success will enable FEAT to support and grow existing and new programs in 2018. The dates and locations of these events are listed below:

1. **Outrunning Autism 5K**, Saturday, June 1st at the Parklands;
2. **Create A Stir About Autism**, Friday, September 20th Dinner, Auction & Dancing at the Olmstead.

Volunteer Contributions

During 2018, a large number of volunteers rallied together to help FEAT staff and board members carry out each of our fundraising events, including a large number of businesses who pooled their employees to assist with many events. The completion of these events would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of our many volunteers. Their service in terms of support for FEAT benefitted our programs throughout the year and have a profound impact on our organization with a conservative estimate of overall 175 volunteers contributing over 900 hours for our fundraising events and overall program support. **Thank you to our Donors, Volunteers and Partners.**

In closing, we are proud of the impact FEAT has made in the lives of families in our community and are so thankful for the continued support of our Board, staff, sponsors and volunteers that make this possible. Thank you and best wishes for a wonderful 2019.



Mission Statement

Families for Effective Autism Treatment (**FEAT**) of Louisville is a non-profit organization that actively supports and funds autism programs for the entire family. Created for families by families, **FEAT of Louisville** is dedicated to easing the autism journey through ongoing support, education and programs.

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