ANNUAL REPORT

16 / 17

STATS + STORIES

A Confluence of Information and Impact
Dear Friends,

This year at ABC of NC, we’ve been consumed by an extraordinary story—the expansion of our campus through our Hello World campaign, an initiative to open a world of possibilities for individuals with autism in our community. We’ve told this story in newspapers and on TV, and it’s impressive. Because of the generosity of hundreds of corporations, foundations, and individuals, the landscape of autism services in the Piedmont Triad is about to change for the better. And we couldn’t be prouder.

Even though we’ve focused on meeting the community’s need by serving more clients, we haven’t lost sight of the more personal side of what we do. While you may not see their stories on the news or read about them in the paper, the stories of our children with autism and their families are extraordinary too.

They are stories of early diagnosis and early intervention. They are stories of acceptance and belonging. They are stories of supported and empowered parents. They are stories of inclusion. They are stories of friendship and hope. They are stories that were made possible by you—our supporters and champions. So, thank you. Thank you for supporting all of the wonderful things that happen at ABC of NC. And imagine all the stories we’ve yet to tell.

Felice Brenner
ABC of NC Board Chair

ABC of NC’s $6.5 million Hello World capital campaign is on target for success. With the completion of our two planned buildings, scheduled for fall 2018, we will more than double our service capacity. ABC of NC’s expanded campus will provide room to grow current psychological, clinical, and educational programs, allowing us to serve more children and families; ensure reasonable wait times for diagnostic evaluations; and help families from any economic background access intensive therapies and educational interventions.

CAMPUS FEATURES INCLUDE:
- 24 applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy rooms
- Play areas to facilitate age-appropriate social interactions
- Diet expansion clinic
- Psychologist offices
- Speech, occupational, and physical therapy suites
- Independent living skills lab
- Vocational training lab
- Community access labs (grocery/retail areas, doctor’s office, dentist’s office, hair salon)
- Administrative offices
- Activities center

SERVICE CAPACITY

>2X
He would scream when he wanted something to eat or drink. He would scream when it was time to take a bath or get out. He would scream when it was time to go somewhere and when it was time to leave.

It was heartbreaking to watch Charlie, obviously in distress, and not be able to help him. I knew he probably had autism, but we couldn’t access the services he so badly needed. We languished for 18 months on a wait list for an evaluation at a center more than an hour from our home, all the while feeling like a critical window of opportunity was closing. And then we heard about ABC of NC.

In May 2016, I called the Autism Clinic. I took the first available appointment, scheduled for late September. But, desperate for answers, I asked them to call me with any cancellations. “Just give me 30 minutes notice, and we will be there,” I said. And they did. They called with cancellations, and we dropped everything and jumped in the car.

Charlie received his autism diagnosis through the Clinic at 8:30 a.m. on June 2, 2016, and by 9:00 a.m. I was leaving the center. Within a week, he was headed off for his first day in ABC of NC’s early intervention program.

On that first day, he wouldn’t respond to his name, but within three weeks, he turned his head when his teachers called “Charlie.” By three months, he responded to his name from 10 feet, and then 20 feet, and then from across the playground. Today, he doesn’t just know his name. He speaks in complete sentences. He asks and answers questions. He carries on conversations. He tells me he loves me.

At Charlie’s two-year-old check-up, he only spoke three words, and a year later, he still understood fewer than 20. He couldn’t communicate with me, and I couldn’t communicate with him. So he would scream.

Cost of lifelong care for individuals with autism can be reduced by two-thirds with early diagnosis and intervention.

Autism Society of America, 2007

Charlie is one of 105 children who were seen in the Autism Clinic for a diagnostic evaluation in 2016-17.
Parents of children with autism work, on average, five fewer hours per week than those of children with no health limitations. 

*Pediatrics*, 2012

**IN KINDERGARTEN, ETHAN WAS SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL SO MANY TIMES BECAUSE OF BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS THAT WITH TWO MONTHS LEFT IN THE SCHOOL YEAR, I HAD TO TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM MY JOB AND GO TO SCHOOL WITH HIM EVERY DAY.**

"Let's just get through this year; next year will be better," I told myself. But it wasn’t. Despite a one-to-one aide in his first-grade classroom, Ethan continued to fall behind academically, and once again, we found ourselves jumping at the sound of our phones because inevitably, he was being sent home from school yet again.

*Entex, ABC of NC*

ABC of NC was the first place I felt like I could leave Ethan, go to work, and not worry. I knew that I wasn’t going to get a call that he was being sent home again.

And more than that, I knew that he was safe. I knew that the staff genuinely cared for him. I knew that they accepted him for who he was.

260

On average, that equates to 260 hours of lost wages per year.

And now, it’s not just that I feel these things; he feels them too. My biggest concern has never been that the “world” wouldn’t accept Ethan, but that he wouldn’t accept himself—that he would find himself, in some way, lacking.

But he doesn’t. He’s happy being Ethan. And now he, too, recognizes his value.

"In 2016-17, 73% of ABC of NC clients were male. This is consistent with national statistics that indicate that as many as 4 out of 5 children on the spectrum are male.

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Valeria was fortunate to receive an autism diagnosis at three. The average age of diagnosis for Latino children is 54 months—more than 36 months after parents first become aware of developmental differences.

Autism Society of America, 2007

ABC of NC uses a variety of evidence-based educational and therapeutic techniques, like picture communication systems and other forms of augmentative and alternative communication, to help children develop to their full potential.

Valeria's Mother

DANELA

Birth

Awareness

Diagnosis

24 mo

48 mo

100 HOURS

Each year, ABC of NC delivers more than 100 hours of free classes for parents of children with autism. These trainings are open to existing clients and the broader community.
Grace loves electronics, singing, and listening to music; Anna loves science and art; she likes to build and create. Grace is quiet and reserved. Anna is social and can be a little demanding. Grace taught herself to read, and she has a love of languages. Anna is still working on her early reading skills. Grace is shy, preferring to play alone. Anna loves to be around other people. Grace is focused. Anna jumps from one thing to the next, rarely staying still for long.

Grace has autism; Anna does not. But, both found their place at ABC of NC—Grace benefits from intensive one-on-one therapy and Anna thrives in the inclusion program.

At ABC of NC, Grace’s language skills have progressed, and her self-help skills are stronger. She can now get herself dressed and use the bathroom independently. She is learning play skills—interacting with dolls, blocks, and toys—and making friends.

And Anna has learned a lot about autism. She is friends with other children who are like Grace, and she’s learned patience and understanding.

As a parent, it is wonderful to find somewhere that meets the needs of both girls—stretching them to be their best versions of themselves.

GrACE & ANNA

In 2016-17, ABC of NC, the only comprehensive autism services provider in the Triad, served children and families from 17 NC counties, including Yadkin, where Grace and Anna live.

ANYONE WHO IS THE PARENT OF TWINS WILL TELL YOU THAT EACH CHILD HAS THEIR OWN UNIQUE PERSONALITY.

ABC of NC’s inclusion program offers children with autism and those without a developmental delay an opportunity to learn and play together for a mutually advantageous experience.

“Anyone who is the parent of twins will tell you that each child has their own unique personality.

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NELL
Grace and Anna’s Mother

Studies have shown that when children with autism are in an inclusive environment, they demonstrate higher levels of social play, are more likely to initiate activities, and show gains in key skills: cognitive, motor, and self-help.

Jeter, 2016
When I walked through the door of ABC of NC, I knew very little about autism. I learned quickly that no one child with autism is like any other. And even children with similar profiles respond and behave differently.

My first assignment was in a class of early learners who were more severely affected by their diagnosis. The children in the class were nonverbal, and they had significant behavioral challenges. Engaging them could be difficult. I thought that I was “good with kids,” but nothing I did seemed to work.

When you are working with children with autism, it’s all about building relationships and trust, getting on a child’s level, and getting them to notice and be interested in you. You have to follow their lead and show interest in what they find interesting.

Some people talk about an “Aha! moment.” I had an “Eli moment.” That moment when a child, previously in a world all his own, finally welcomed me in. And since then, I’ve had more “Eli moments” and “Luke moments” and “Chloe moments.” I learn something new from each child.

I learn more about autism.
I learn more about myself.

AS A SENIOR REHABILITATION STUDIES MAJOR AT WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY, I KNEW THAT I NEEDED A 460-HOUR INTERNSHIP TO GRADUATE. BUT WHEN IT CAME TIME TO SELECT MY SITE, I HAD NO IDEA WHERE TO START. HOW WOULD I MAKE THE MOST OF MY LAST SEMESTER?

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But this isn’t the Sam who most people see. They see a 23-year-old man who is non-verbal. He makes loud vocalizations and engages in behaviors that make others feel nervous and sometimes scared. He can be unpredictable and aggressive.

People, institutions, and organizations give up on Sam, but not ABC of NC. At ABC of NC, Sam is surrounded by people who love him (almost as much as I do). They accept him unconditionally. They appreciate and celebrate the things that make him unique. They allow him to explore his interests and his passions. They expect a lot of him, and he delivers.

While Sam is easy to love, he isn’t always easy. But that’s OK because ABC of NC doesn’t require “easy.” Where others see limits, ABC of NC sees unlimited possibility. Where others see hopeless, ABC of NC sees hope around every corner. Where others see only autism, ABC of NC sees his humanity.

“SAM IS FUNNY. HYSTERICAL, REALLY. HE LOVES MUSIC AND IS A WONDERFUL DANCER. HE SHARES MY LOVE OF THRIFTING AND CAN SPEND HOURS COMBING THROUGH RACKS AND BINS. HE’S AN INSPIRED ARTIST—CREATING AN ALPHABET THAT IS ALL HIS OWN.”

JENNIFER
Sam’s Mother

Over the past ten years, ABC of NC has provided nearly $2.2 million in financial aid to students like Sam.

In the past five years, 137 students have been able to access services at ABC of NC through the organization’s financial aid program.

ABC of NC serves clients between the ages of 16 months and 21 years who have been diagnosed with autism or determined to be “at risk.”
hey don’t understand the anxiety that accompanies each outing—even something as simple as a trip to the grocery store. They don’t understand the limited diet; not simply picky eating, but self-imposed restrictions that make the goal of a balanced diet seemingly impossible. They don’t understand the uncertainty that hangs like a cloud over every day.

They also don’t understand the wonder of it all. The celebration of milestones, no matter how small. The unique personalities that add color and interest to your world. The sense of community that begins to envelop you.

Our kids are individuals. Each child has his or her constellation of strengths and challenges. But we have this shared experience that unites us.

These are my “warrior moms.” They let me know that I can do this. They build me up. They make me brave. They push me to do big things, like go to the pool or to see a movie. And while those may not seem big to parents of typically developing children, when your child has autism, they’re huge.

We found each other at ABC of NC. We became friends because of autism. But we remain friends because we can’t imagine traveling this journey without one another. Something is comforting about being surrounded by other people who live this life: one where autism is a big thing, but it isn’t the only thing.

Mothers of children with autism have levels of stress that are both severe and consistent across cultural and geographic areas, maternal age, and the child’s functioning level.

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Koegel et al., 1992a

AUTISM CAN BE LONELY. YOU CAN HAVE 100 FRIENDS, BUT IF THEY DON’T HAVE A CHILD ON THE SPECTRUM, THEY OFTEN DON’T UNDERSTAND.
**Contributions**

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**Grants**

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**Program**

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**Miscellaneous**

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**Expenses**

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**Change In Net Assets**

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<td>Total Income</td>
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<td>2,102,679.80</td>
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<td>(212,713.85)</td>
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**Functional Expense Allocation**

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Vision

The vision of ABC of NC is that all people living with autism spectrum disorder reach their full potential in a world where they are valued, accepted, and included.

Mission

ABC of NC is committed to providing high-quality, evidence-based diagnostic, therapeutic, and educational services to people with autism spectrum disorder; ensuring service accessibility to individuals from any economic background; offering support and hope to families; and advocating for inclusion and acceptance.