New in '22

In June, the Respite Program welcomed a new group of women joining us for the first time. It’s been several years since we’ve hosted an entire group of newbies. They were a terrific group and enthusiastic about our new tee shirts, too! They are a gorgeous color with our logo writ large and a pattern of our tagline: Refreshing Bodies, Restoring Hopes, Renewing Spirits.

Thanks to the owner of the Maid of the Mist who donated tickets, the gals got a proper summer initiation, rainbows and all. We hope these women return as alums.

Happy Fall!

The kids are back to school, the temperature is dipping, the season is changing. The Respite Program had a lovely spring with two vivacious groups and then took the summer off. In May, after several years of waiting, the alums from our cancer group were able to return. See their happy photo on the next page.

This issue we’re sharing some encouraging words about self compassion, sometimes more difficult than compassion for others. You’ll also hear from one of our Ausome Moms with a little of her story in getting treatment for her son who is on the autism spectrum. She hopes that someone else might be helped by reading this.

So, read on. Then make some soup, enjoy the fall, and be good to you.

Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.

Anne LaMott

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We’ll let these great quotes from the evaluations of two groups speak for themselves.

“It was a blessing to experience all the activities and all the laughter that came with it. I will be grateful forever.”

“I was able to be grounded spiritually and mentally instead of a million things going on in every way and feeling scattered.”

“I feel that my spirit/soul is restored. I know it has to do with being surrounded by the beautiful spirits of the women here.”

“It was an amazing experience to let go and try new things that I would not have ever thought would be so relaxing and helpful. Journaling was a great idea for me to take home.”

Note: New groups are given blank journals. They create customized covers and learn about the therapeutic practice of journaling.

“I can have a social life and other people see value in what I say.”

Science Plays a Role

Nicole is an auseome mom whom we have welcomed to several programs. She and her husband Ted are raising three beautiful children, Teddy, Jack and Bella. At 18 months, Teddy, now 10, (snuggling with mom on the left) was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum. Initially, he had verbal skills, but they receded to silence when he was a toddler. He later had limited language skills.

Because growing up, Nicole had a blood disorder that can be cured with stem cell treatments, Teddy’s stem cells were taken from his umbilical cord after birth and stored in a cryogenic chamber. The couple didn’t want their children to have the same medical struggles that Nicole had growing up. A few years later, after Teddy’s diagnosis, they discovered the Duke ACT medical trial at Duke University in Durham, NC, aimed at testing the efficacy of using an individual’s own umbilical cord blood (stem cells) to treat the range of challenges that come with an autism diagnosis.

They enrolled Teddy in this study when he was 5. The trial took one full year, as it was a double blind study—a type of clinical trial in which neither the participants nor the researcher knows which treatment or intervention participants are receiving until the clinical trial is over. The doctors from the medical trial turned the stem cells into an infusion that Teddy was given intravenously, under sedation. One time, Teddy received his stem cells they had stored cryogenically at birth, and the second time he was given a placebo. The family learned this two years after the study concluded. They made a third trip where Teddy was given an infusion of his brother’s stem cells which were a perfect match.

Within weeks of treatment, they saw an astounding increase in Teddy’s verbal communication and socialization skills which then continued to improve. After receiving the second dose of (his brother’s) stem cells, they saw another boom in his progression.

And the impact on Nicole and the rest of the family? The family took a leap of faith because they knew

Continued on the next page.
Gift Yourself

By Dr. Rick Hanson

Can you remember a time when you offered a gift to someone? Perhaps a holiday present, or a treat to a child, or taking time for a friend — or anything at all. How did this feel? Researchers have found that giving stimulates the same neural networks that light up when we feel physical pleasure, such as eating a cookie or running warm water over cold hands. Long ago, the Buddha said that generosity makes one happy before, during, and after giving.

Then there is receiving. Can you remember a different time when someone was giving toward you? Maybe it was tangible, something you could hold in your hands, or perhaps it was something like a moment of warmth, or an apology, or some kind of restraint. Whatever it was, how did it feel? Probably pretty good.

Well, if you are giving... toward yourself... it’s a two-for-one deal! And besides the benefits noted above, there are the implicit rewards of taking action rather than being passive (which helps reduce any sense of learned helplessness, to which mammals like us are very vulnerable), and of treating yourself like you matter, which is especially important if you haven’t felt like you mattered enough to others.

Further, when you give more to yourself, you have more to offer others when your cup runneth over. Studies show that as people experience greater well-being, they are usually more inclined toward kindness, patience, altruism, and other kinds of "prosocial" behavior.

Gifting yourself comes in many forms, most of them in small moments in everyday life. For example, as I write this, the gift is to lean back from the keyboard, take a breath, look out the window, and relax. It’s a do-able gift.

Less tangibly, earlier this week I was getting wrapped up mentally in wanting a friend to succeed in his business, so I gave myself the “treat” of letting go of my over-investment in things beyond my control. Sitting in a meeting earlier today and thinking about this practice, I took in the gift of appreciating how fortunate I was to learn from the other people in the room. Not doing can also be an important gift to yourself: Not having that third beer, not interrupting a friend’s irritated account of a hassle at work, not bugging a lover who wants some space right now, not staying up late watching TV, not rushing about while you drive... You can see how many opportunities there are each day to offer yourself simple yet beautiful and powerful gifts...

Knowing your own giving heart — which is usually offered to others — can you extend that heart to yourself?

Rick Hanson is a psychologist, author and teacher. You can find his resources at www.rickhanson.net. We edited this article slightly for space.

Science Plays a Role continued

if they had a chance to help Teddy, they had to at least try.

Nicole is overwhelmed with the positive impact. She says as a family, they can be more engaged with each other and grow together because Teddy has gained an amazing ability to express himself.

As far as advice about maintaining Teddy’s progress, the people at Duke said to continue working with his current therapeutic interventions—speech, occupational therapy, sensory integration, and a psychologist. That’s a lot of therapy and is common for children on the spectrum.

If anyone is interested about learning more, feel free to email Nicole at: NicoleLaMonte@gmail.com

The study itself can be found here: parentsguidecordblood.org/en/news/results-duke-act-study-cord-blood-autism-highlights-parents

Self-care is never a selfish act — it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others.

Parker Palmer

Please stay in touch. Send us your new contact info.

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Call us if you move
Schedule for 2023

March 24 - 26 — Alums who started in a summer program
April 28 - 30 — Grandmothers raising their grandchildren
May 19 - 21 — Women with cancer
June 16 - 18 — Mothers with low income
Sept 29 - Oct 1 — Women raising a child on the autism spectrum

NOTE: At time of publication, women are required to bring proof of full vaccination for COVID. We will update you next year when we send out applications.

The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something.
Don’t wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.

Barack Obama

Stay-for-One-Night Offer

If you’d like some quiet time to yourself for a day and a night, the Respite Program continues to offer our alums access to the Center of Renewal (COR) for an overnight stay. We will cover the cost of a room for one night and up to four (4) meals. If you’d like to extend your stay, you can pay for any additional costs.

To stay at COR, you MUST bring proof of full COVID vaccination. Two or three alums can come together. The Program may be able to help with transportation. Even if you took up this offer previously, you can return this fall or winter. This is NOT a Respite Program; you will have to entertain yourself. There is wifi and of course the beautiful grounds for walking. We recommend making a reservation at least two weeks in advance. You can stay during the week or on the weekend as long as COR has a room. Call Teresa at 716/877-6896 to make a reservation.