



MyGOAL Celebrates 5 years

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MyGOAL Inc.

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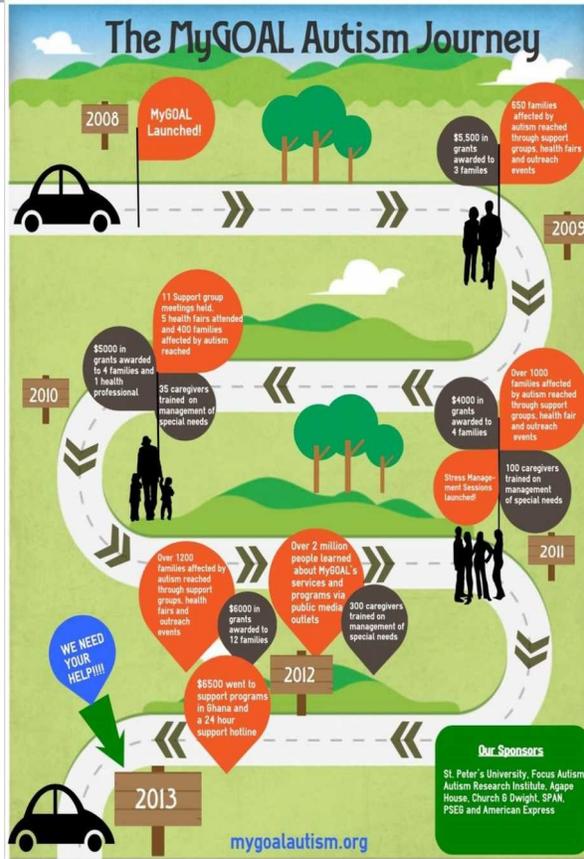
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The year 2008 marked the birth of My Gateway to Overcoming Autism in Life Inc (MyGOAL Inc). It was created as a tool to connect and bring resources to families affected by Autism. Since May of that year, MyGOAL has been committed to providing support through various programs and events that uplift families and provide them with resources. There are also various annual outreach events, Mothers day Party, Bowlathon, Gala and the Holiday Party. These events provide families the opportunity to relax, since they normally don't get the opportunity due to their responsibilities caring for their loved ones. We celebrate 5 years of over 50 support group meetings, parent to parent engagements, local and global training development programs to over 500 participants in Ghana, West Africa; Stress Management



programs, siblings programs and several successful fundraisers. We also celebrate 5 years of providing monetary grants to over 20 families. These grants are only made possible because of the generous donations of supporters and sponsors. Special thanks also goes to our sponsors Agape House of Worship, Focus Autism, Autism Research Institute, Church and Dwight, St Peters Healthcare System, PSE&G, Wells Fargo and many more who have partnered with MyGOAL in order for us to continue to provide resources to families affected by Autism. And we thank our MyGOAL Autism families, who are committed to finishing the race as one team.. It has been a great journey and many families have been touched by the efforts of MyGOAL.

-Dr. Genevieve Kumapley

The Faces of Autism by Tray Kearney

Black, White, Indian, Asian, African, Hispanic, rich or poor. The first thing I want you to know about AUTISM is that it does not discriminate. The second thing you need to know is the numbers are growing at a rapid rate. The third thing you should know is early intervention is key! Please do not ignore the signs. If your child is not making his/her milestones and you feel something is wrong in your gut just get it checked out. It's always better to be safe than sorry. I don't want to bore you with statistics I just want to bring awareness and tolerance to everyone who reads this. I am not a neurologist nor am I a doctor of

any sort. I'm just a concerned mother who lives with autism everyday. When my son was



first diagnosed on the spectrum I was silently devastated and I felt so alone. I tried to figure

out what I did wrong. I took my prenatal vitamins. I went to all my doctors visits. I ate fairly well. I didn't drink or smoke. I got all his shots, took him to ALL his doctor visits, never let him sleep on his stomach and I never let him sleep with the bottle in his mouth. I could go on and on. I thought I did everything right so I asked God, "Why me?" Well I'm not there anymore. I have embraced this journey and all I want to do is help others who are affected by autism which means everyone.

Haven International



Our Global initiative, Haven Project was launched in 2012, with a vision of a self-sustaining special education center in Ghana where Autism will be diagnosed and treated. On a visit to Ghana in 2011, Dr. Genevieve Kumapley, Founder of MyGOAL was devastated with the lack of resources and access to education for our individuals with Autism. With an invitation from Autism Research Institute to create an Autism Awareness program in Ghana, Dr. Kumapley took up the challenge and the opportunity to invite colleagues who will support this initiative. In 2012, Dr. Kumapley and her colleagues, Dr. Barbie Zimmerman, and Dr. Lorell Levy, each the mother of a child with autism, along with their colleague, Ellen Osei, an occupational therapist traveled to Ghana to train parents, educators, and public health officials on early identification, therapeutic interventions and supportive strategies for the treatment of children with autism. In 2013, other professionals joined the project these include, Ade Otubanjo, SLP, Dr. Gloria Bonilla Santiago, Jerlyn Witherspoon. In 18 months, our collaborators and team have impact over 500 lives and reached out to millions of Ghanaians through media outlets. This project was generously sponsored through a grant from Focus Autism, Saint Peter's University Hospital & Autism Research Institute. We are excited about the impact MyGOAL is doing locally and globally.



Faces of Autism...

I thought I did everything right so I asked God, "Why me?" Well I'm not there anymore. I have embraced this journey and all I want to do is help others who are affected by autism which means everyone. It may not be your son or daughter but it will soon affect you in some way. As the numbers grow you will be affected by autism. Whether it's your child's schoolmate, your doctor's son, your best friend's child, the woman you go to the gym with, your hairdresser, your next door neighbor, someone in your church family, or someone you work with. Trust me, it's that close. You already know someone dealing with autism. For a lot of these people autism is a silent lonely journey.

If my son was not ASD (Autism spectrum disorder) I probably wouldn't be writing this article. Before my son was diagnosed, I knew very little about autism and what a family goes through on a daily basis. I never could have imagined the challenges they face. April is autism awareness month for you but for families living with autism, everyday is autism awareness day. It's funny because I know just as much about autism as you do the only difference is I'm learning something new everyday. Not by choice but because I have to; something new happens with my son everyday. It's hard because no two cases are alike. The doctors don't know what causes it, so it's frustrating because if the doctors don't know what causes it how can they cure it. They can't!!!! The good thing is they teach us strategies on how to DEAL with it and how to cope. When your child has a cold you get antibiotics, when your child cuts himself you get him stitches, when your child breaks a bone you get a cast, when your child has a problem with math you get a tutor. When your child has autism you live with it. Imagine your child not making eye contact with you, imagine your child not answering to his name, not because he is ignoring you but because

he hasn't connected himself to his own name. Imagine your child at 4 years old never speaking a word, imagine your 3-year-old crying and



screaming to the top of his lungs and you're frantic because you don't know what's wrong and he can't tell you he has a stomach ache. Imagine a dad with his first born son who has dreamed of playing catch but his son can't even grasp the concept of what a ball is. Imagine having a cart full of groceries and just leaving them in the store because you have to leave because your child is having a melt down and there's nothing you can do. Everyone is staring and shaking their heads. Imagine your child banging his head on the floor so often you have to carry a pillow everywhere you go. Imagine a mother who has to take care of her grown son because he will never be able to live on his own, imagine a frustrated couple heading to divorce court because the stress and reality has set in and had taken a toll on their marriage. Imagine a single mom dealing with special doctors, special diets, special schools and no support system. Imagine your family and friends not knowing what to say or do or better yet pre-

tending like there's nothing wrong. I think you get the picture but you could never imagine unless you were living it everyday. Don't get me wrong, as parents we don't want you to feel sorry for us. We are not having a pity party. We just want you to be aware and understand that sometimes that child in the grocery store having a melt down is not just bad and crying over a piece of candy. Say to yourself maybe it's a little more serious than that. Trust me, I used to be that person in the store saying "If that was my child I would straighten him right out" or "He needs a good whooping" or "What is wrong with his mother?" Well guess what, now I'm the lady being looked at. This journey is teaching me so much about tolerance and judgment. Let's not be so quick to judge. We all want our children to be the smartest kid in the room, so a lot of us as parents live in denial until reality hits, then you have to deal with the fact that I should have gotten my child help a long time ago. Don't be that parent that has to say I knew something was wrong. Don't let your needs outweigh the needs of your child; help is out there. The spectrum is so broad, your child, with help, may be healed. There are children that were diagnosed ASD but with the proper help are no longer considered ASD. Germaine is a loving, kind, sweet little boy who uses another way to communicate other than words. That doesn't make him weird or stupid; he just simply learns different. The only time I notice that my son is different is when I interact with another child his age and they talk to me. Germaine has never spoken a word so that's normal to our family. We know that he will speak one day. He has showed us that action speaks louder than words.

We are the faces of autism. Not just Germaine but his father his siblings and me. Look at me I am the face of autism and then look in the mirror because one day soon it could be you. One of the main reasons I share this is to let families know, you are not alone. There is support for you.

Volunteer Appreciation

In 2013, we held a volunteer appreciation event, called “Thanks for Giving”. We celebrated all of our volunteers, donors and supporters on this special day. It was our way of saying thanks for giving of their time, talents and donations. We couldn't have made it without supporters and volunteers!



2013 “Laugh for Autism” Gala

The gala was more than having fun, it was an opportunity to give a night out to families who normally don't get an opportunity because of their commitments to caring for their special need individuals. We were also able to honor 4 families, our heroes with grants at the gala.

