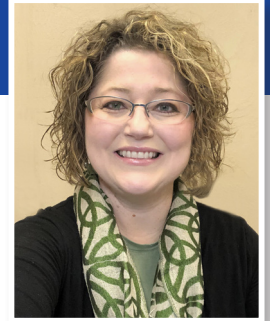




# HOPE & THRIVE ACADEMY

*Finding Hope. Learning to Thrive.*

## SPRING • 2026 • NEWSLETTER



**D**uring our last Celebration Banquet, we had the privilege of hearing from Leslie who shared his personal story and the incredible impact Hope & Thrive Academy has had on his life after losing both of his parents. As his Aunt Charlotte often says, “He is living his best life ever!”

Leslie took this moment seriously, rehearsing his speech multiple times to ensure he felt comfortable sharing his heart in front of the crowd. When the big night arrived, he delivered his words beautifully. However, Leslie clearly felt the performance warranted a specific response. When a standing ovation did not happen immediately, he did not skip a beat. He simply gestured for the crowd to stand.

Of course, everyone rose to their feet in thunderous applause. Leslie took his bow and exited the stage, leaving us all with a smile.



It is these unscripted moments that make working with individuals with disabilities so rewarding. Beyond the joy, Leslie taught us a valuable lesson that night about the simplicity of faith and expectation.

Matthew 7:7-8 and Luke 11:9-10 reminds us: “Ask and it

will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Why do we wait? That night, Leslie wanted a standing ovation, so he asked for one—and he received it. James 4:2-3 offers a gentle correction to our often-hesitant nature: “You desire but do not have... You do not have because you do not ask.”

How often do we miss blessings, support, or breakthroughs simply because we are too afraid or too proud to speak up? Leslie’s boldness serves as a beautiful reminder for us all. Whether in our spiritual lives or our daily walks, there is power in the “ask.”

HTA’s needs are ongoing, and the Lord is faithful to provide in His perfect way and in His perfect timing. And He uses you and me to conduct His purposes. I want to ask you to be still for a moment and ask the One who owns it all how He might use you to bless HTA students.

Just ask, and you will receive.

Tracy E. Lewis, Director

### HOW CAN I HELP?

- **Volunteer** support, particularly on Monday’s and Tuesday’s during our Respite/Social Track
- **Provide tuition assistance**
- **Donate** disposable paper products (bowls, plates, napkins, forks, spoons, cups), copy paper, individually wrapped snacks, and bottled water

# STUDENT SUCCESS

Alycia Paad's passion for crocheting has blossomed into a professional venture. By starting her own shop on Etsy, she is turning intricate loops and stitches into a vibrant business, displaying her artistic talent and determination to forge her own path.

Alycia recently participated in her first vendor event – the Entrepreneurial Market at the S.M.A.S.H. Autism Expo where she engaged with people who stopped by her table – an experience that she genuinely enjoyed.

Alycia's success serves as a powerful example of hope for our entire HTA school community, proving that with creativity and persistence, every student can find a unique way to thrive.

Our "Crafting Hope" project, funded in part by a grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission, helps make this opportunity and other community outings possible.

Well done, Alycia. We are delighted to celebrate your incredible enterprising spirit!

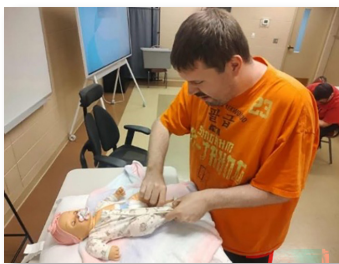


## SEMESTER UPDATE

Our students are growing and learning new skills every day. Celebrate their successes with us and help reinforce what they are learning!

**JOB SKILLS.** Students are learning soft skills, tackling problem-solving strategies, and role playing how to manage workplace challenges with maturity and professionalism. Lately, they have explored the duties of an event planner and participated in woodworking and blacksmithing classes.

**LIFE SKILLS.** We have been learning about the food pyramid and proper hygiene. Additionally, students learned how to wash, dry, and



fold sheets and make a bed. They also learned how to safely hold a baby and how to change a diaper.

**FITNESS.** DJ, Von, and Owen earned a total of 21 first place medals at recent taekwondo tournaments!

**SEWING.** Students created functional hand-sewn items like corner bookmarks, pin cushions, jar openers, keychain wristlets, and small drawstring bags.

**BOOK CLUB.** Reading *The Puppets of Spelhorst* by Kate DiCamillo taught us about the value of community, working together, and embracing the unexpected. One of our instructors created puppets for students to use in a year-end performance.



# DONOR SPOTLIGHT



Bruce and Elizabeth at an HTA Celebration Banquet

**B**ruce Campbell has been with our ministry since the beginning. He helped us start the program and served as board chair. He supports us regularly, including our annual banquet. We are so thankful for Bruce and his wife, Elizabeth, and they have always been willing to help however needed. We recently caught up with Bruce to talk about his connection with Hope & Thrive Academy and here is part of that conversation:

**Hope & Thrive Academy (HTA):** How and when did you connect with HTA?

**Bruce:** In the summer of 2012, I met with Tracy Lewis and Rick Kopituk, and they shared their vision of a school to address the needs of adults in the area who had recently aged out of the local schools' special needs programs. I was an elder at Morristown's First Presbyterian Church and they needed permission to use the basement of the church for the school. I met with Session and received the necessary permission, and Hidden Treasures Academy was born.

**HTA:** Why is HTA's mission and ministry so important?

**Bruce:** There are hundreds of adults who need skills for independent living. HTA's curriculum and classes address this need. HTA (now known as Hope and Thrive Academy) has graduated a large number of students who are working and living independently. But there are more who could benefit from HTA's programs. HTA has been successfully placing students back into society as independent and productive citizens. They accomplish their mission and continue to do what is necessary to give students what they need to succeed. Tracy continues to be the driving force behind the school, now with the support and backing of Holston Home for Children.

**HTA:** What about HTA excites you the most?

**Bruce:** Their ability to generate results. They get the job done. They give adults what they need to succeed independently.

**HTA:** What compels you to give of your time and resources to support HTA?

**Bruce:** Elizabeth and I had a son, Chris, who was born two months early and he was challenged from day one and as we lived with him it was in my heart to help people like him. I was involved and saw the challenges and lived them. So, when Rick and Tracy came to see me on that day I was already on that page. I had a heart to help.

## PRAYER REQUESTS & PRAISES

- Joe's dad, diagnosed with cancer and placed in hospice care
- Jobs for Caleb and Josh
- Buddy's health
- Leslie's friend Kathy who had hip surgery
- Ms. Marcia's upcoming knee surgery
- Health and strength for Ms. Sue, Ms. Lora, and Pastor George

### PRAISES

- Wonderful, well-attended Superheroes 5K Run and 1 Mile Walk-A-Thon and for all our event sponsors that helped make it a success!
- Max moving into Independent Living
- Leslie and Matthew moved from a small apartment into a larger house with more room
- Ms. Cindy's successful hip replacement surgery
- Matthew getting baptized



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P.O. Box 237 | Jefferson City, TN 37760 | (423) 254-3744



Hope & Thrive Academy is a program of  
Holston Home for Children

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## UPCOMING

### Annual Celebration Banquet

Date TBA. Can your family and/or business be a sponsor?  
Contact Tracy for details!



Hope & Thrive Academy's mission is to express the love of Christ to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, and to empower students to lead more productive and fulfilling lives within our communities.



# HOPE • GROW • THRIVE