



April 2023

Dear Friends of UCP Heartland,

During the month of March, we celebrated Developmental Disability Awareness Month across the country. With the month of April upon us, we shift the focus to Autism Awareness Month. Today, 1 in 34 children are diagnosed with Autism. As a result, there has been an expansion of knowledge and awareness surrounding Autism and now the shift towards acceptance is an important one. At UCP Heartland, it is a priority to continue to bring awareness/education, along with promoting acceptance through our advocacy work and the services we provide. These key components and philosophy are a big factor why UCP Heartland started the Autism program in Columbia and then expanded those services to St. Louis. We are committed and understand the importance of knowing that people with autism bring a unique perspective and have incredible strengths, and we celebrate the differences and abilities they bring to society.

UCP Heartland Autism Services has served 60 children over the past year in Columbia and St. Louis. We are excited about the future of this very important and much needed service. If you would like to learn more about our Autism Services and the other services UCP Heartland provides to children and families in St. Louis and central Missouri, please visit www.ucpheartland.org/autism-services/.

Columbia Wing Ding

We are so excited for our 31st Annual Columbia Wing Ding happening in just a few days! On April 25th, you and your friends can help decide who has the best wings in town. This amazing event features traditional, dry rub, and specialty wings from your favorite local restaurants. Proceeds go to support our Autism Services and Child Development Center. To learn more, donate, or to buy tickets, visit [Columbia Wing Ding!](#) Don't miss out on this incredible (and tasty) event!



Give STL Day

Over the past 4 years, UCP Heartland has been a participant of this important annual day of giving in the St. Louis area. This year, Give STL Day is Wednesday, May 10th, so I encourage you to put it on your calendar as a reminder. Our goal this year is to raise \$5,000 and the funds will be used to support all of UCP Heartland's important programs, including Autism Services as referenced above. I encourage you to visit our Give STL page and watch our inspiring videos [here](#). We are happy to share that going into that day, UCP Heartland has already secured \$2,000 in matching funds to help build momentum. As always, I

thank you for your support in advance! Look for us on UCP Heartland Social Media platforms, share these details with your circle of influence, and click [here](#) to donate!

Missouri Legislative Update

This is always an important time of year as we are winding down the Fiscal Year and gearing up for a new year. The budget is a key part of the legislative process along with other bills that impact the disability community. The 2023 legislative session will be coming to an end in about 3 weeks, but there is still much work to be done. UCP Heartland is continuing to advocate and work diligently with our partners at MARF, a state provider association. Our focus is specifically around the designation of Missouri being an Employment First State, appropriation in the Missouri budget for Vocational rehabilitation to receive the full federal match, and a rate reimbursement increase that would include paying at a minimum \$17/hour for Direct Support Professionals. I appreciate the work of MARF staff, provider agencies, and all of you who have been advocates for disability issues at the state level. Please reach out if you would like to discuss in more detail these key priorities and how you can help in the final stretch.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about UCP Heartland, please do not hesitate to reach out.

As always, thank you for your support of UCP Heartland.

Sincerely,
Clint