



*Think You Know Joy?
You Haven't Seen Anything Yet!*

*By Founding Partner Jason Norton,
CFP®*

HOW EXTRA SPECIAL PEOPLE, INC. (ESP) IS REDEFINING THE POSSIBILITIES

In 2010, as my wife, Christy, and I celebrated the blessing of becoming new parents, we never could have imagined the challenges and the overwhelming sense of joy that lay ahead. That year, we welcomed our son, Drew, into our world and were flooded with every sensation that new parents experience: fear, worry, exhaustion, immense happiness, gratitude...the list goes on. What we didn't anticipate was that within just two short years, we would have a medical diagnosis that would forever change our lives.

Days before Drew's second birthday, we received the results of medical tests that answered a lot of questions

but also left us scratching our heads. The diagnosis of mitochondrial disorder meant that Drew's mobility and speech development would



be impacted. What we didn't understand was the incredible community of support, individualized encouragement, and joy Drew—and we—would find in our relationship with Extra Special People, Inc. (ESP).

Founded in 1986, ESP is a nonprofit organization located southwest of Athens in Watkinsville, GA. It is the only program of its kind

in the northeast Georgia region, serving more than 350 individuals with disabilities and their families across 26 counties. Their philosophy is that "every child, of every ability, deserves access to transformative experiences that allow them to engage, connect, and thrive."

Drew is among those individuals who have benefitted from ESP's mission, team, and truly unique programming which currently includes after-school, summer camp (eight weeks), family support, and employment opportunities. Recently, I caught up with Executive Director Laura Whitaker to discuss this incredible organization and its impact on our family.

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Laura, thanks for taking time to talk with us. I noticed that the quote you have selected to best represent you on the ESP website reads, "Sometimes you choose your job, other times it chooses you." As a family that sees immeasurable value in ESP, we feel very fortunate that this job has chosen you. Tell us a little about what inspires you most about the ESP mission.



I think you, Jason, have previously used the words "adaptive normal" to describe Drew's experiences with ESP. In other words, you have seen him engage at a level that aligns with his abilities. This is how we are different. Our organization is not about babysitting or intensive therapy. It is about figuring out what each individual's ability level is and giving them accessibility to transformative

experiences. It can be theater, dance, cooking, sports, outdoor education, community service, horseback riding, zip-lining...things that kids typically do. We adapt the activity so they can be successful in doing what others do. From age four up, our participants are growing through



interaction with each other. We have a Certified Recreational Therapist on staff who is always gaining new insights and innovating our programming to create environments so rich in resources that each child is inspired to participate.

You are right. I have a phrase for special needs children who don't get access to these kinds of programs. They are called

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Company Update

Special Needs Planning

DESIGNATION ACQUIRED

Jason acquired the Chartered Special Needs Consultant (ChSNC™) designation in December, a designation that is only available to individuals with extensive knowledge in financial planning. Through the required rigorous study, Jason has become one of only a few planners who now specialize in working with families requiring expertise in special needs planning. Congratulations, Jason!



the “waiting room group.” In other words, the only time they leave home is to see a specialist. The first time we pulled up at the camp at 8:30 a.m. and heard the team chanting, “Drew, Drew, Drew,” I knew I didn’t ever want him to be a “waiting room kid.” How do you explain the special culture of ESP?

At the core of who we all are, we want to be celebrated. That is why we cheer for each child as they arrive. I am a huge Disney enthusiast, and I think that every business or organization aspires to some level of the Disney experience. We are very fortunate to be able to do just that for our community of individuals—children and adults with behavioral disorders, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, fetal



alcohol syndrome, Angelman syndrome, spina bifida, mitochondrial disorder, and many other disabilities.

There are reasons people love going to Disney World. It is organized chaos. At the same time, the sights, smells, sounds, and interactions are designed to intentionally create an environment of fun where each person can align their disability with a very positive reinforcement. We want to celebrate who they are, not who they are not. When they walk through the front doors or past our big tree, it is no longer about overcoming a disability. It is about joy, fun, and friendship. It is about what they can do, not about what they can’t.

I am especially proud of our Big 3 events that really allow our participants to shine. Our annual Big Hearts event at The Classic Center is an incredible night of talent, philanthropy, and fun. Our annual Big Jump skydiving event helps raise funds for our summer camp. And our annual Big Trail & Tug event is a day of genuine family fun that includes several games and a lot of delicious food.

You mentioned the word joy. In what ways do you see joy as a driving force behind ESP’s mission to help individuals engage, connect, and thrive?



I think one of the greatest examples of this is Java Joy, our coffee cart business that provides meaningful employment to several of our participants. Today, more than 80-percent of working-age persons with disabilities are not employed, while more than 70-percent of them say they would really like to work. We are trying to change that.

The Java Joy slogan, “keeping companies fueled with joy,” really says it all. Those running the business are called Joyristas, and they are focused on spreading their own joy into the lives of the customers they serve. It is their mission, and they take it very seriously.

There is one story that I love to tell about our Joyristas. It was the week of our overnight camp, the favorite week for our adults. They look forward to this time all year long. We received a Java Joy booking for one morning that week. Our three Joyristas were up

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ESP IS REDEFINING THE POSSIBILITIES *(continued from page 3)*

at 5:30 a.m. on their own, dressed, and ready to go by 6:00 a.m. What college student is that passionate about a job? It's not about the job, the coffee, or even engaging. They know they have something that no one else has. It is an unprecedented, transformative joy...a superpower. I wish we could bottle it and give it away.

In our experience, the model for ESP is truly unique. Do you think it can be recreated in other communities?

I do, but the community demographic is crucial. We are so fortunate to be in a college town. First, this setting is very inclusive, tolerant, and embracing of people with disabilities. That is so important. Not every community is like this. Also, we rely heavily on our student staff and volunteers to run each program. They have been the heartbeat of ESP for 31 years. They are energetic, positive, crazy, yelling, screaming, hugging, and loving individuals who are motivated to give back in some way. Currently, we have 125 volunteers who help run our 360 daily after-school enrichment programs.

I remember one situation where one girl decided to volunteer to fill the shoes of her roommate who was no longer available because of an internship. Our volunteers see this as a significant investment in the community. They leave everyday knowing that they have made a difference in the life of someone. If other college

towns can provide a similar setting, I think there are real possibilities. Maybe this could become a growing initiative across the SEC someday. I would love to see that.

How does the financial support of donors impact your ability to give unconditionally to the northern Georgia disabled community?

Quite simply, we couldn't do what we do without our supporters. It costs us \$1,000 per child per week to run our summer camp.

Families pay anywhere from \$2 to \$300 per week. Clearly, our ESP Fan Club membership is devoted to helping

us expand the transformative experiences we can provide. The financial support allows us to continue to increase our capacity. Today, we can serve 110 participants each day. In addition, we are focused on making our vision for Camp Hooray a reality. The model for Camp Hooray is a unique overnight camping experience for campers of all abilities.

How can potential donors and supporters learn more about giving opportunities?

There are several ways to learn more. I am available at laura@extraspecialpeople.com or **706-769-9333**. Additionally, potential donors can go to our website, www.extraspecialpeople.com, and click "Donate" in the menu.



Community Outreach

Our Commitment to Local Community

By Founding Partner Chris Caldwell,
CFP®, CRC®, AIF®, MBA

TOYS FOR TOTS AND JAVA JOY

The month of December provided several opportunities for Highland Trust Partners to reach out to those around us. The entire month, as well as in October and November, Highland Trust Partners continued its tradition with Toys for Tots and collected toys for distribution as Christmas gifts to less fortunate children in our community.

We also held our annual Christmas Client Luncheon in December and were pleased at the excellent turnout! Also, the good people of Java Joy, a program developed by Extra Special People, Inc. (ESP) were invited to serve coffee to the attendees. (See our cover article containing an overview of ESP and the incredible difference that they are making in the lives of so many.) Thank you to all of you who attended our workshop and enjoyed the wonderful food with Highland Trust Partners.



Tools & Information for 2018

Technology Corner

Evernote is essentially a virtual notebook you have with you everywhere- perfect for downloading whatever is bouncing around in your brain. You can make notes directly in the app, save images and articles from the web, upload pages from physical notebooks, and easily track tasks. Evernote can even handle audio files. The best part? Everything you add to Evernote is searchable, so you can find it next week (or even five years from now) quickly and easily.



Evernote

Nook by Barnes & Noble is a free reading app giving you access to an online library of over 4 million eBooks, comics, graphic novels, and magazines! The app is customizable with multiple font and page styles along with powerful organization and social sharing tools. It even offers recommendations just for you from expert booksellers.



Nook

Operations Reminders

1. Once again, it's tax season! This is a gentle reminder to carefully review your LPL monthly statements for information regarding tax forms and updates.
2. Have you experienced a new "life event"? Please call Tomekia, April or Kelsey to update changes to your account profile. Please Note: updates cannot be accepted via email.

Market Index Returns*

Fixed Income	Current Yield 1/30/18
90-Day T-Bill	1.42%
5-Year T-Note	2.50%
10-Year T-Note	2.72%
30-Year T-Bond	2.97%

Source: Bloomberg

Index	2018 (1/1/18-1/29/18)	2017 (One Year)
Dow Jones Ind.	7.05%	28.11%
S&P 500	6.83%	21.82%
NASDAQ	8.16%	29.73%
MSCI EAFE	5.89%	25.69%

Source: Morningstar Research

*The Dow Jones Industrial Average is comprised of 30 stocks that are major factors in their industries and widely held by individuals and institutional investors. Bond yields are subject to change. Certain call or special redemption features may exist which could impact yield. The Standard & Poor's 500 Index is a capitalization weighted index of 500 stocks designed to measure performance of the broad domestic economy through changes in the aggregate market value of 500 stocks representing all major industries. The NASDAQ Composite Index measures all NASDAQ domestic and non-U.S. based common stocks listed on The NASDAQ Stock Market. The market value, the last sale price multiplied by total shares outstanding, is calculated throughout the trading day, and is related to the total value of the Index. The MSCI EAFE Index is a free float-adjusted market capitalization index that is designed to measure the equity market performance of developed markets, excluding the US & Canada. The MSCI EAFE Index consists of the following developed country indices: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

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