

May - June  
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# Tide water TEACHER

A MAGAZINE FOR EDUCATORS ACROSS HAMPTON ROADS

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CHRYSLER MUSEUM'S  
NEW SUMMER  
TEACHER INSTITUTE

# ONE SMILE *at a Time*

By: Jill Haag and Rachel Cassels

"Giving back to the community and supporting local families to make every day a great day for children with severe illnesses and tremendous hardship is a top priority for The We Promise Foundation."

Frank wakes his mother up at 6:45AM. He has her shoes in his hand and he is thrusting them at her not-yet-opened eyes. Pulling on her wrist, he yanks her out of bed, excited and smiling. Frank is a 13-year old non-verbal autistic child. Today is the first day of Camp Gonnawannagoagin' and Frank looks forward to camp all year. His mother knows that without the grant funds they receive from the We Promise Foundation, there would be no camp for Frank.

Camp Gonnawannagoagin' is a special summer program for autistic children sponsored by F.A.C.T. (Families of Autistic Children in Tidewater). F.A.C.T. offers six one-week camp sessions that begin in early July and run through mid August. Each day

is filled with educational and recreational field trips into the community, including visits to museums, gardens, skating, karate, yoga, laser tag and boating. Children can also express their creative side with arts & crafts, sports, games, cooking and music!

"We Promise has been a rock on which F.A.C.T. has stood on in our ongoing efforts to meet the need," states Chairman Sharon Slipow. "Their partnership with us directly touches many children, like Frank, who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend any kind of summer program."

Giving back to the community and supporting local families to make every day a great day for children with severe illnesses and tremendous hardship is a top priority for

The We Promise Foundation. Locally-based in Virginia Beach, the foundation has made dreams come true for more than 500 children and is steadfast in its commitment to making a difference in the lives of children within the community by delivering hope, compassion and inspiration to children who have won more battles than most fight in a lifetime. With a mission to put a smile on a child's face by making their dream come true, We Promise is proud to do its part to help children facing severe hardship.

F.A.C.T. shares a similar mission through their dedicated efforts to help families struggling with the ongoing battle of autism. F.A.C.T. does this by creating social, recreational and vocational programs



designed to meet the unique needs of individuals with autism. And through Camp Gonnawannagoagin', they give children and teens with autism the ability to attend an exceptional summer camp program designed to meet their unique needs and foster camaraderie with others who share their stories.

Autism is a neurological disorder that primarily affects an individual's ability to communicate and interact socially, and many children who have autism are unable to speak or communicate their most basic needs or desires effectively. There is rising concern as it's estimated that 1 in 100 children is affected by autism today, and this figure continues to rise.

"In times of greatest need, we will always be there to lend a hand," states We Promise Foundation Chairman, Phil Richards. "We applaud F.A.C.T. for making a life-changing difference in the lives of autistic children, and we are both honored and humbled to be a part of this much-needed program."

To find out more about the We Promise Foundation and Camp Gonnawannagoagin, visit [www.wepromisefoundation.org](http://www.wepromisefoundation.org) and [www.camp4autism.org](http://www.camp4autism.org). The We Promise Foundation and F.A.C.T. need your help to continue putting smiles on children's faces, *because together*, we can all make a difference . . . *one smile at a time.*

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