Utah Autism Give Receives Community Investment Award | CPD

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Left to right: Gordon Richins, Shane Johnson, Leeann Whiffen, Megan Nickel and Sean Whiffen

Utah Autism Give, an American Fork-area non-profit, has received the Community Investment Award from the Consumer Advisory Council at Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities. The $500 award was presented by Gordon Richins, the CPD’s Consumer Advocate, and Shane Johnson, Associate Director of Development at the CPD.

The CAC, which is comprised of five self-advocates, five parents and five non-profit agency representatives, gives the award twice a year. CAC members nominate, advocate and vote for the recipients.

Utah Autism Give was nominated by Laura Anderson, a parent CAC member. UAG is a parent-driven 501(c)(3) non-profit organization giving hope to individuals with autism and their families through programs designed to offset treatment costs and strengthen family relationships.

“The focus is to help pay for services to improve the lives of those affected with autism, and/or their family members,” Anderson wrote in her nomination. “For example, paying for the initial consultation expense to start an in-home behavior analysis program. Or, providing an Apple iPad and language program built to improve those who are non-verbal or struggling with communication. The funds are paid directly to the service providers, or directly towards purchasing the products or services, rather than simply giving any money to families themselves, to ensure effective usage of the funds.”

UAG was started in 2009 by Leeann and Sean Whiffen and Megan Nickel, parents of children with autism who understood the difficulty and expense of finding appropriate therapies and supports for their children. UAG achieved 501(c)(3) non-profit status in 2011.

UAG has no marketing, advertising or employee expenses and very few basic operating expenses, so nearly all donations are directed towards the families who need the help. No funds are distributed outside the state of Utah.

Since most funds that are awarded to families are in the $500 to $2,000 range, “This donation is important. It makes a big difference,” said Leeann Whiffen.

Visit the Utah Autism Give website and its Facebook page.