

The HCZ25 Buzz



Healthy Connections Zero to Five
Newsletter

www.hcz25.com

June 2026



Sarah, Ava, Savannah, Lillie,
& Trey

Welcome to the mid-year edition of the HCZ25 Buzz, a newsletter that's all about what's happening in the world of Healthy Connections Zero to Five. We recently celebrated our oldest daughter Savannah's high school graduation. We are so proud of Savannah, not only in her academic accomplishments, but also in the beautiful young lady she has become, inside and out. It's a reminder that time is like a vapor and a precious commodity that passes entirely too quickly. Here we are midway through 2026 and what a great 6 months it has been here at HCZ25 as you will see as you read all about our 2026 journey thus far.

Connecting International Style: To start the year, HCZ25 members Ben and Kirsten Busbee traveled south of the border to Ecuador to bring in the New Year while visiting with their friends, Carole and David Cole. Below is a recap of their two weeks stay in San Jose, Ecuador.

I've known Carole for nearly 20 years. She has worked for the Charles Henderson Child Health Center in Troy, AL for over 30 years as a Business Development and Grant consultant. Carole also serves as a board member and business/grant consultant for Healthy Connections Zero to Five. While in Ecuador our hosts treated us to a 5 star stay while at Casa Cole pictured on the right.



Ours was such a pleasant experience, with Carole's permission, I'm providing a brief PSA on Casa Cole in our mid-year newsletter: Carole and David Cole recently opened Casa Cole hospitality venue in San José, Ecuador. We truly had a wonderful trip — great food, easy sightseeing, and the kind of relaxed pace you only get on the coast. The villa has panoramic ocean views, spectacular sunsets, and patios on both levels that are perfect for morning coffee. It's set up beautifully for small groups, whether it's an executive retreat, a creative team looking for quiet space, or a wellness-style gathering. The Coles also arrange curated local experiences, which makes the

stay feel more intentional than a standard rental. Carole jokingly said that we were their 'test case'. The entire stay was expertly planned down to the smallest of details. If you ever need a private, comfortable spot that supports real connection, Casa Cole is worth keeping in mind. Interested in learning more about Casa Cole, feel free to email Carole at caw222@gmail.com



Carole ensured that we had an even-mix of business and pleasure during our stay. We spent a few days mapping out our 2026 business strategy for HCZ25. We even did a zoom call with Sarah back in Spanish Fort, AL. Technology is amazing, it's like she was next door. We were able to see and touch and experience the rich culture and welcoming communities around San Jose and the coastal region. We were also invited to meet with business owners and families supported through Carole & Davids philanthropic spirit. We visited several of the local communities served through their nonprofit organization, Spirit of Wellness (SOW). During the trip, HCZ25 partnered with the SOW to help provide funding for a

specialized wheelchair for Ronato, a six-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, pictured here with his mother. Seeing the impact this gift will have on Ronato and his family was a powerful reminder of how even small acts of generosity can make a meaningful difference.

We had the privilege of visiting the children at a local orphanage, **Fundación Santa María de la Esperanza**. During our time at Esperanza, we met some truly delightful and inspiring children. We also had the honor of meeting an equally remarkable and amazing couple, **Erwin and Danielle Musper**. Over the course of several years, the Muspers endured the heartbreaking loss of both of their children through tragedy and illness. In the years that followed, they immersed themselves in work and travel while searching for meaning, purpose, and healing in the midst of their grief. As Erwin shared, *"Through the emptiness of losing our children, God led us here. Unknown to us at the time, what was intended to be a temporary visit has now been our home for more than 18 years. Today, we are blessed with over 70 children to love, raise, nurture, and support at Esperanza."* We were deeply honored to meet the Muspers and the children at Esperanza. On behalf of HCZ25, we were also grateful for an opportunity to make a financial contribution to support the therapeutic and counseling services that help these children heal, grow, and thrive.



We also had the pleasure and opportunity to spend time visiting and working with Carole's daughter, Cathy Colins, who oversees several key functions within Spirit of Wellness. Her responsibilities include community outreach programs, working with families such as Ronato's and managing the organization's local food pantry. Cathy's dedication, along with the efforts of Carole and David continues to bring hope and practical support to countless individuals, families and small business owners throughout the region.

The trip was an inspiring reminder of the life-changing work born through a single vision and a willingness to work to make that vision a reality.



Carole, David, Kirsten, & Ben



Serving, Silver Sponsor: The HCZ25 team was out in full force at the 2026 Elmore County Night to Shine event in February. Ben, Kirsten, Sarah, and Savannah proudly represented HCZ25 as volunteers during the celebration, which is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation. Night to Shine is a prom-like event designed to honor individuals with special needs, giving them an unforgettable evening filled with fun, friendship, and celebration.

We were honored to be part of this special night dedicated to recognizing and uplifting members of the community. The evening was a humbling experience. We were the ones who left feeling honored and richly blessed by some of the sweetest, most genuine, and sincere people we have ever met. Their joy, gratitude, and spirit made a lasting impact on us. Night to Shine is truly a special event, that we are honored to be a part of and help sponsor. We hope to be able to continue to serve and financially support Night to Shine for many years to come.



First Annual Fund Drive

We are now halfway through our second full year of operation at Healthy Connections Zero to Five, and what a journey it has been. From the very beginning, we have said that the story of HCZ25 can only be described as a **God Thing**, and we continue to give Him all the glory for every door that has opened and every family we have been able to serve. Our hope and prayer remain the same: that we will be able to sustain and expand our mission to support families with young children who have special needs. Each year on March 21 (3/21), communities around the world recognize **World Down Syndrome Day** — a date chosen to represent the three copies of the 21st

chromosome that result in Down syndrome. At Healthy Connections Zero to Five, those numbers carry a deeply personal meaning. That's why we chose March 2026 as our inaugural **3-2-1 Fund Drive**, a month-long reminder of the children and families who inspire our work every day. Funds raised through the 3-2-1 Drive will directly support our mission by: **Funding therapeutic services** for young children; **Supporting** local elementary school special education programs; **Strengthening** the Healthy Connections community; **Providing specialized equipment** such as adaptive wheelchairs; **Promoting advocacy efforts** for the special needs community. We are thrilled to share that our inaugural fund drive was an overwhelming success, raising **nearly \$10,000**. This achievement is a testament to the generosity of our families, friends, and corporate sponsors who believe in the mission of HCZ25. We are truly grateful for every gift, every prayer, and every act of support that helped us reach — and exceed — our goal. Your partnership allows us to continue walking alongside families who need us most.



Community & Support: We were privileged to serve as a **Silver Sponsor** for the **4th Annual O's Cool Bike Ride & Foundation**. This special event, held each year on the last

Saturday in April on the campus of Troy University, celebrates the life and legacy of **Owen Wayne Lewis**, beloved son of Heather and Onick Lewis. Proceeds from the ride help provide **balance bikes** and promote **cycling safety** for children — including those with special needs — ensuring that every child has the opportunity to experience the joy, confidence, and independence that riding can bring. We extend our heartfelt thanks to **Onick and Heather Lewis** for their dedication, compassion, and the incredible work they continue to do for their community. Their commitment honors Owen's memory in a way that touches countless families.



We were grateful once again in May to sponsor one of the riders participating in the **Journey of Hope - Gear Up Florida**. This inspiring event

brought together **32 team members from 15 universities**, each clipping into their pedals with a shared purpose and the belief of every person who contributed to their journey. Donors who gave. Sponsors who invested. Volunteers who showed up. Together, we helped fuel a mission bigger

than any single rider. **HCZ25** was grateful to play a part in this incredible effort — an effort that ultimately raised **\$148,000** to support individuals with disabilities. It was a privilege to stand alongside so many who are committed to creating a more inclusive and supportive world.



Last but certainly not least in our midyear report, we were excited and deeply honored to be recognized as one of the new sponsors of the **Wetumpka Depot Players Penguin Project - *Singing in the Rain***. What makes this partnership so meaningful is the heart of the Penguin Project itself: a cast made up entirely of children and young adults who each have a disability, yet step



onto the stage with extraordinary courage, joy, and talent. Over a nine-month period, the dedicated staff and volunteers at the Depot work side-by-side with these inspiring young actors and actresses, guiding them through rehearsals, building confidence, and helping them discover the magic of the performing arts. The Wetumpka Depot is one of only a handful of theaters in the Southeast offering this kind of opportunity to the special needs community — a gift that changes lives. The evening was a powerful reminder that every disability can be transformed into an **Ability** when a child is surrounded by encouragement, patience, and the right support. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Depot Director **Kristy Meanor** and Directors **Daniel Harms** and **Hannah Meherg** — not only for bringing this beautiful production to life, but also for the warm hospitality they extended to HCZ25 as we became part of the Penguin Project family.

"In my heart I plan my course, But the Lord Established my steps"
Proverbs 16:6

THANK YOU



Happy Summer Everyone. We hope you've enjoyed reading through our midyear highlights. Thanks to the outpouring of your support, HCZ25 has been able to provide financial assistance to a wide range of programs that directly benefit children with special needs and the caregivers who love and advocate for them.

As we reach the midpoint of 2026, we remain amazed by the impact HCZ25 has been able to make in such a short time. We are truly blessed — and deeply grateful — for the family members, friends, and corporate sponsors who continue to believe in our mission and stand beside us.

Together, we are building a more inclusive and supportive community — **one child, one family at a time.**

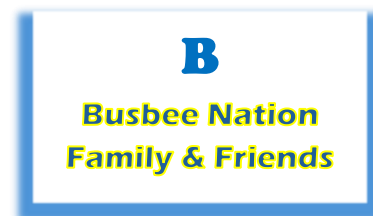
Sincerely,

Sarah B. McKee

Healthy Connections Coordinator
Healthy Connections Zero to Five



Brundage Rotary Club
Brundage, AL



Good News Guys
Mulder Church Men's Group