ACM LIFTING LIVES® ANNOUNCES $750,000 ENDOWMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER TO LAUNCH THE ACM LIFTING LIVES® AUTISM LAB AT VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER

LOS ANGELES, CA (August 12, 2020) – ACM Lifting Lives®, the charitable arm of the Academy of Country Music®, announced today a $750,000 fund to Vanderbilt University Medical Center for programs and research demonstrating the healing power of music to improve the lives of children with autism spectrum disorder. This gift creates the ACM Lifting Lives® Autism Lab at Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and will establish autism as one of ACM Lifting Lives’ signature initiatives while enabling Vanderbilt to expand the reach and impact of its expertise in the field.

“Since 2012, ACM Lifting Lives has partnered with Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC) on a week-long residential program for musically talented individuals with Williams Syndrome, which affects 1 in 10,000 people. This camp has held a dual purpose of studying Williams Syndrome and other developmental disabilities by providing music enrichment through both performance and education, and we are so thrilled to be able to partner with VKC on another scale,” said Lyndsay Cruz, ACM Lifting Lives Executive Director. “Given our commitment to people with developmental disabilities, Vanderbilt invited us to build on our partnership through support of a program to bring the healing power of music to a much larger population: children with autism spectrum disorder, who now represent 1 in every 59 children in the United States.”

The rising incidence of autism diagnoses underscores the importance of investment in promising programs and research.

“The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center’s relationship with ACM Lifting Lives is unique and has been a catalyst for the Center’s mission to conduct groundbreaking research and then share these discoveries to benefit the lives of children and families everywhere,” said Jeff Balser, MD, PhD, President and CEO of Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Dean of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. “Through the ACM’s generosity we are grateful for the opportunity to extend and amplify this critical work.”

The ACM Lifting Lives gift will support the following programs at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center:

- **TRIAD** (Treatment and Research for Autism Spectrum Disorders), a wide-ranging program whose mission is to improve assessment and treatment services for children
with autism spectrum disorder and their families, while advancing knowledge and training. ACM Lifting Lives’ funding will support family training and community engagement programming as the TRIAD team builds on existing partnerships with the Tennessee Department of Education, school districts, the U.S. Department of Defense and the Tennessee Early Intervention System. The goal is to build capacity in local communities and school districts to help families facing autism.

- **Sense Theatre**, a theatre program designed to enhance the social and emotional functioning of children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder and related neurodevelopmental disorders. Research on the program has demonstrated that the communication and social skills of children with autism can be significantly enhanced through participation in structured theatrical and musical experiences. Funding will enable more families to participate.

- **Music Cognition Lab**, a multidisciplinary program that focuses on the relationship among music, language and social development, incorporating neuroscience, psychology, education, audiology, speech-language pathology, medicine, music and engineering. ACM Lifting Lives’ funding will support this important research on the impact of music on language acquisition and development.

- **Expansion of Telehealth**, enabling professionals to provide long-distance education, intervention and monitoring. Already a leader in the use of telehealth, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center will be able to reach far more children, particularly those in rural and other underserved areas.

“The timing of this gift could not be more advantageous,” said Jeffrey L. Neul, MD, PhD, Director of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. “The COVID-19 pandemic has made the expansion of telehealth vitally important in treatment of people with developmental disabilities as in all areas of health care. Previously, we used remote technologies mostly to provide teachers with tools to use in the classroom. More recently, we have demonstrated that we can use telehealth to accurately diagnose children with autism, monitor their progress and coach parents in best practices. Now we can apply that knowledge to serve far more families.”

For more information about the Academy of Country Music and ACM Lifting Lives visit [ACMcountry.com](http://ACMcountry.com) or [www.ACMLiftingLives.org](http://www.ACMLiftingLives.org). You can also like Academy of Country Music on [Facebook](http://Facebook) or follow on Twitter at [@ACMawards](http://@ACMawards) and [sign up for the FREE ACM A-List](http://@ACMawards) for more immediate updates.

**About ACM Lifting Lives®**

ACM Lifting Lives® is the philanthropic arm of the Academy of Country Music dedicated to improving lives through the power of music. Through partnerships with artists and strong ties in the music industry, ACM Lifting Lives® funds music health programs while also serving members of the music community who face unexpected hardships through its Diane Holcomb Emergency Relief Fund. With generous donations and the support of artists and fans, ACM Lifting Lives has
funded national music therapy programs serving various mental and physical health organizations. Some of the recipients have included patients at children’s hospitals and other healthcare facilities, recovering veterans, people with Williams syndrome and individuals suffering with mental illness. For more information, please visit www.ACMLiftingLives.org.

**About the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center**
The mission of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development is to improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families through research, service, training, dissemination, and educational advocacy. For additional information, please visit vkc.vumc.org.

**About Vanderbilt University Medical Center (the parent organization of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center)**
Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) is one of the nation’s leading academic medical centers and is one of the largest comprehensive research, teaching and patient care health systems in the Southeast. The most heavily utilized quaternary, referral healthcare facility in the Mid-South, VUMC sees over 2.3 million patient visits per year in over 150 locations, discharging 66,000 inpatients and performing 67,000 surgical operations. The medical center is the largest non-governmental employer of Middle Tennessee citizens, with more than 25,000 staff, 2,000 of which are physicians, advanced practice nurses and scientists appointed to the Vanderbilt University faculty. For more information and the latest news follow VUMC on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and in the VUMC Reporter.

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