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# Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Recipe for success: Two teachers from Heartspring selected to attend the World Autism Congress & Exhibit in South Africa**

Wichita, Kan. – Kim Thomas, Heartspring Education Department Head (5 Years) and Lindsay Randle, Heartspring Speech Language Pathologist (2 years) were selected to attend the World Congress on Autism in Cape Town, South Africa October 25 – November 4. Based on their paper, the two were accepted to present a poster session about Heartspring programs focused on improving academic, language, social and fine motor skills while building important life skills for children with special needs. The presentation titled “Transdisciplinary Services for Students with Autism and Other Disabilities Using Life Functional Skill Activities” was presented to an international audience.

The presentation detailed the fact that Heartspring students come to Wichita from all over the United States and range in age from 5 to 21 years with the average length of stay for a student being three years. Heartspring programs help children reach out and enjoy the world around them, discover more about life, interact with people in different situations and

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become more independent. With this goal in mind, Heartspring created three programs to expose students to a variety of functional activities. The purpose of these programs was to collaborate and create activities that give students opportunities to practice skills that are on their IEPs and those that are a common deficit to our student population. The targeted programs focused on improving academic, language, social, and fine motor skills, while building important life skills. The majority of the students at Heartspring have a primary diagnosis of autism along with other multiple disabilities including mental retardation and seizure disorder. The data collected during one program focused on language and functional academics in an unstructured environment is presented. Observational data for all programs is shared that demonstrates growth in areas that were not specifically targeted on a student's IEP. Methods to increase student's success and understanding while participating in the programs are described. Supports required for students that are non-verbal and have behavioral challenges also were described to the international audience.

*It has been over 70 years since Heartspring first began its mission of helping children with disabilities achieve their full potential. Since 1934 Heartspring has been one of the nation's top facilities serving children with special needs. Our charge originated in Wichita and has grown to help children across the nation and around the world. Heartspring experts have traveled to Europe and Asia, providing training to organizations that need our help. Teachers from other countries have looked to Heartspring and Wichita for education as they strive to better the lives of children in all corners of the globe – truly making Heartspring a worldwide center for children with special needs. Heartspring provides greater independence for children with disabilities through the Heartspring School, Heartspring Pediatric Services, the Heartspring Hearing Center, consultation services and Heartspring World Reach. For more information please call Katie Bishop at 316-634-8821 or email at [kbishop@heartspring.org](mailto:kbishop@heartspring.org)*

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