

why the Y

Dear Friend of the Athens YMCA,

***"My daughter, Shelby, is autistic.** My life as a parent of a child with special needs has had extreme highs and extreme lows. It is difficult to navigate the channels of waivers, programs, caregivers, and more. We are their voice and advocate for life.*

Shelby had amazing teachers and parapro's throughout her years in school. Like all parents, decisions are hard after our children graduate from high school. In Shelby's community the saying is "many people with special needs graduate to the couch," I am adamantly opposed to that saying. I want my daughter to continue to learn, maintain the life skills she perfected while in school, and be engaged with the community. Thankfully our YMCA offers an amazing program, Sunshine Studios, for adults with special needs to help ensure that all have a chance to continue to grow mentally, physically, and spiritually.



Shelby loves coming to the Y to see her friends. She doesn't always love that she must continue to learn and work on her skills, but that is Shelby being Shelby. This program offers me an opportunity to work

while knowing that she is in a safe place with loving and nurturing people. I want Shelby to always feel like she matters and like she belongs. Sunshine Studios provides that for her. I hope this program continues to grow and can assist many more parents with children or adults with special needs. The Athens YMCA is a beacon of hope for all of us.” Laura Osborne, Finance Director at the Athens YMCA

So, why the Athens Y?

Laura and Shelby would tell you, because it’s a place where everyone belongs and has opportunities to grow!

One of our strategic goals is to create a space designed specifically for this program. The space will resemble a living lab seen in residential facilities and some high schools. Many families need respite care. We hope our program can provide that for many more families in the future.

If you want to help make sure Sunshine Studios can meet the needs of our community for years to come, you can make a contribution to the Athens YMCA below:



GIVE TODAY!

Blessings,

Shae Wilson
CEO