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Published: April 29, 2011

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## Fiesta will aid USF autism center

By MEGAN HUSSEY



Food, music and a silent auction will be among the highlights of Fiesta by the Bay from 5:30 to 9 p.m. today at Gaspar's Grotto, 1805 E. Seventh Ave., Tampa.

Celebrating its sixth year, this fundraiser will benefit the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida, which serves children in Pasco and Hillsborough counties and surrounding areas.

Recently, CARD-USF partnered with Pasco schools to have two Walks for Autism.

"The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at USF is supported through the USF Foundation's Autism Services Fund, a 501[c] [3] tax-exempt charity organization. CARD-USF, located within the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences at the University of South Florida, serves over 6,000 families and professionals across 14 counties in southwest Florida," a news release states. "It is one of

seven statewide CARD sites offering services and trainings at no charge. Additional support from the community allows CARD to expand projects and provide special events to families and professionals right here in Tampa Bay."

Fiesta by the Bay will feature food provided by Tijuana Flats and music and dancing with DJ Deb.

"Joey's Voice High Heel Hike team will be hosting 'Get the Scoop on Autism' and offering scoops of Tanya and Matt's ice cream for a donation," said Christine Rover, program planner and analyst at USF's Center for Autism & Related Disabilities in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences.

And this year CARD has added a photo booth to the festivities.

Professional photographer Angel He and her team will set up a photo booth complete with Fiesta inspired props. All guests will take home a customized Fiesta by the Bay photograph to remember the fun.

Also featured will be a silent auction that will offer a variety of items.

"We have an amazing line up of silent auction items again this year including roundtrip airline tickets from AirTran, a three-night stay at Hyatt Vacation Club Key West, a Bucs football autographed by Mike Williams, a Lightning hockey stick autographed by the whole team, hotel stays, a Ritz Carlton Sarasota brunch, Disney passes, jewelry gift certificates, scuba lessons, tap shoes, teacher baskets, family game night, pounds and pounds of the World's Finest Chocolates and much, much more," Rover said.

The event will support local efforts to aid and support autistic children.

"CARD-USF provides communities, organizations, agencies, service providers and families with the knowledge and skills to support children and adults with autism and related disabilities," the news release states. "We also work with early intervention, schools, employers, and colleges and universities."

Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$25.

For information on autism, as well as CARD-USF, visit <http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu/> or call Christine Rover at (813) 974-9264.