

Jason Foundation opens new office

By Tena Lee
HENDERSONVILLE STAR NEWS

Twelve years after Jason Flatt ended his young life, his family joined state and local dignitaries Thursday to celebrate a new chapter for the non-profit group named in his honor.

Grieving the suicide of his 16-year-old son Jason in July of 1997, Clark Flatt started the Jason Foundation, Inc. three months later in the break room of his Hendersonville insurance office.

With the support of national spokesperson Phillip Fulmer, corporate sponsor Wal-Mart and former Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher, the group has become a national leader in youth suicide awareness and prevention. JFI programs are now used to some degree in all 50 states and several foreign countries.

Despite the suggestion by many JFI board members to move the non-profit to a more visible location like Nashville, Flatt resisted and continued to lease space in his hometown.

On July 19 - the anniversary of Jason's death - the nationally recognized group made its intentions to stay here permanently by cutting the ribbon on its new two-story, 10,000 square-foot headquarters on Volunteer Drive.

Flatt, his wife Connie, son John and daughter-in-law Sheri were joined by several local and state dignitaries including Hendersonville Mayor Scott Foster, former and current Tennessee Attorney Generals Paul Summers and Robert Cooper, Jr., and Vanderbilt University football coach Bobby Johnson.

Supporters from as far away as Indiana and Florida attended the celebration.

"We wouldn't have missed this for anything," said Jason Holmes, whose company Horizon Health is a corporate sponsor of the Jason Foundation. Holmes traveled from his home in Tampa, Fla. to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"I think having this new, beautiful facility speaks to the impact of an organization like this," Holmes added.

"This is definitely a Hendersonville success story," said John Coleman of Psychiatric Solutions, Inc., the national clinical affiliate of the Jason Foundation. "This is a great example of where something that was conceived here has reached national and international recognition as one of the most successful initiatives to educate the general public about the silent epidemic of teen suicide." PSI has 97 affiliate offices in 33 states, and the Jason Foundation has a presence in each of those offices.

Attorney General Cooper presented the group with a letter from Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen.

Mayor Foster, Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner Susan Cooper and former Attorney General Summers also spoke of the group's impact.

"This is a program that truly impacts the lives of those across this state," Cooper said.

"Twelve years ago we had a death that reverberated across this state," Summers said. "Twelve years later we have a birth of seismic proportions."



Former Tennessee Attorney General Paul Summers, Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner Susan Cooper, Connie Flatt, Tennessee Attorney General Robert Cooper, Jr. and Clark Flatt celebrated the opening of the Jason Foundation's new building on Volunteer Drive on July 16. TENA LEE/HENDERSONVILLE STAR NEWS



Dr. Bruce Chesser (right) greeted Seth and Luke Walker Saturday at First Baptist Church of Hendersonville. Members voted Sunday, July 19 on whether or not to confirm Chesser as their senior pastor. Results will be announced Sunday, July 26. TENA LEE/HENDERSONVILLE STAR NEWS

FBC votes on new leader

Decision on Chesser to be announced Sunday

By Tena Lee
HENDERSONVILLE STAR NEWS

Members of Hendersonville's First Baptist Church will have to wait until Sunday to find out if Little Rock Pastor Bruce Chesser will be their next senior pastor.

Chesser delivered sermons Sunday, July 19 to three packed worship services at the 9,800-member church - one of the largest within the Tennessee

Baptist Convention.

After introducing himself as an Alabama native, husband and father of two sons, Chesser preached a sermon about what it means to "worship authentically" based on a chapter from the book of Isaiah.

Following each service, members voted by ballot whether to confirm the 52-year-old preacher as their new leader.

Chesser was chosen by a nine-member pastor search committee that included Sumner County Criminal Court Judge Dee Gay; Jason Cline, a former Hendersonville High School coach; Bill Alexander; Pat Cassetty; Wynton Overstreet; Deb-

bie McDuffie; LeaAnn Altizer; Bob Moon and Chairman Kevin Kunce. The committee was elected by church members more than a year ago following the death of Senior Pastor Glenn Weekley in September of 2007.

Kunce told church members Sunday that after 18 months of searching for the right person, the team's choice was unanimous.

"We believe this is the man God has picked to lead us into the future," he said.

Chesser asked the congregation to pray for members of the church he was

» **FBC, 6A**

Long Hollow tends to its flock on Twitter

Sumner churches, businesses turn to social networking

By Eric Miller
HENDERSONVILLE STAR NEWS

Long Hollow Baptist Church is essentially open 24 hours a day due to its adoption of the increasingly popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

The church has several "feeds," which cover everything from overall reminders for upcoming events to other feeds that follow mission trips and other activity.

Participation from church members has been explosive since launching the church's Facebook page and Twitter feed, @longhollow.

"We saw roughly 800 people join our Facebook page roughly three days after it launched," said Eric Murrell, interactive communications manager for Long Hollow Baptist.

As of Monday afternoon, the church has 1,265 people connected to their Facebook page. With an average weekly membership of 5,500 divided between three campuses, the boils down to 23 percent of the congregation.

The areas in which they've seen the largest growth haven't been the technologically savvy youth of the latest generation, Murrell said.

"Our largest area of growth for us as far as demographics is 35 and over on social networks," he said.

When Murrell started his position two years ago, online communications were vastly different for the church.

"We were more dependent on a weekly e-mail blast and just have updates to the Web site once or twice a week depending on our Web site provider at the time," he said. "They'd have to come to us for information rather than our information coming to them."

However, social networking sites now allow people to conduct all of their online social interactions in one place.

"I think that's where things are going," Murrell said. "People are communicating, but they want to communicate all in the same place in the simplest way possible."

» **SOCIAL NETWORKING, 6A**

