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Autism Community Together of Northeast Indiana



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2006 Walk-To-Talk

The **2006 Walk-To-Talk** will be held at Lawton Park on Saturday **May 20th**. The "It's All About the Team" concept will continue this year. Team packets will be mailed later this month. Team Registrations are due Friday April 28th by mail. Team Registration enables you to receive donations online at www.ACTpositive.org/WalkToTalk/. Team benefits include t-shirts and a chance to win prizes. We look forward to a record setting turn out as the weather at the end of May is bound to be better than the freezing rain, snow and sleet we endured last year during Autism Awareness Month. Proceeds of the Walk-To-Talk benefit Summer Programming in Northeast Indiana.



A Reverent Cat in a Dog's World CD Launch Party

Sunday April 30th
Sonrise Church,
Scott Rd & St Rd 14
6:00pm to 8:30pm.

The latest installment of the "Cat" CDs for Autism will be launched. The event is for parents and friends of families dealing with autism to relax in a coffee-shop environment, enjoy music from local jazz musicians, share information and relate to one another.

"A Reverent Cat in a Dog's World" is a compilation CD to encourage families dealing with this disorder. All proceeds to the autism fund at Helping Hands Ministries (www.hhmin.org).

ASD Spectrum Highlight: Aspergers Syndrome

Autism is often the short cut to describe a large spectrum of similar disorders. 30 years ago there was no need for differentiation. However, today those impacted by Autism spend a great deal of time delineating between High Functioning Autism, Aspergers, PDD-NOS and just plain Autism. Some refer to Autism in the context

of the most severe cases and leave the rest to be PDD-NOS.

Subcategories of Autism Spectrum Disorders create confusion in the general public, but seem to be a source of comfort and basis for positive action for families.

ACT will take a look at different aspects of the syndrome over the course of the next year to broaden understanding and resources available in the community.

In this issue we have asked those in the local Asperger's Syndrome Community to provide some insight.

Children's Autism Center Opens April 1st

Starting April 1st Fort Wayne will be home to a new school for children with Autism. The Children's Autism Center (CAC) mission is to offer Verbal Behavior/Applied Behavioral Analysis Services to any individual in need.

CAC offers a peer social program, a classroom type model for younger children, and homework instruction for older children. They will also accept clients who only want summer hours.

Programming is individualized for each student with staff to student ratios set at one to one.

The Clinical Director for CAC is Selma Martinez, MS, BcbA. Audry Chapin and Meghann Geyer will serve as on site Speech and Language Pathologists. The organization is looking expand their professional team to include an occupational therapist and well as a psychologist.

The center can service 10-12 children. The number of hours of service for each child depends upon physician and staff recommendations as well as the family financial situation.

Thanks to Indiana's Autism Mandate, some students are able to finance program participation under the auspicious

of a physician approved Plan of Care. Autism Insurance Mandate coverage is not unique to CAC. Other service providers in the community provide covered services. To learn more about Indiana's Autism Insurance Mandate, visit <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/ServArticles/INhealthInsurance.html>



CAC is a not-for-profit organization. As the organization aims to have a healthy tuition assistance program they will be conducting regular fundraisers. The first such event is Saturday April 22nd from 7-9PM at the Hilton Hotel.

CAC is located at 6208-A Constitution Drive on the Southwest side of Fort Wayne, I-69 exit 105. For information contact Jill Forte at 260-459-6040.

CAC will be hosting an open house in April. Consult the ACT website for details as they become available.

ADDITIONAL CENTER-BASED EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Learning and Development Center 405 West Wayne Street, (260) 426-3424, www.ldckids.com

Center for Learning 3310 Mallard Cove, (260)469-3925, oliveswenson@fwcl.org

Masonic Learning Center 431 West Berry Street, (260) 423-2593, ext. 25, fwlrnctr@juno.com

Specialty Tutoring, 12603 Coldwater Road, (260) 637-0144, ib-gnee@mchsi.com

Homeschooling Your Asperger's Child

by Lori Dunn

How do you home school an autistic child? I can't answer that for everyone. But for me, it required my own research of books for special needs children, asking questions to the special education teachers at the local school, working with a tutor and adjusting *my* time and talents to my son. Sound like a lot of work? It is; but well worth it.

Jeremy wasn't learning like my other kids. I tried everything but standing on my head. He had outbursts, couldn't focus for more than a few minutes at a time, and he had

poor motor skills. This sent us in search of an answer. Tests were run with a neurologist but nothing was found. The local school tested

him and said he probably suffered from Aspergers Syndrome and was definitely learning delayed.

Oh yes, and mentally retarded. Even though the teacher agreed with me that 'mentally retarded' was not accurate, it was still on paper thanks to standardized testing. I agreed to a couple hours a day at the school and his teachers were wonderful. But, when it was time to go to middle school, my hus-

band, myself, and Jeremy decided it was time to come home full time.

Jeremy is a much happier, adjusted young man now. Reading is a huge struggle, but we're making progress. The ability to read can unlock the world for him.

As I continue this article on home schooling with Aspergers, I welcome your response. I'm hoping to find other parents home schooling their special needs children and build a network that would allow us to learn from each other. Please feel free to e-mail me at ljdunn6@localnet.com.

"Sounds like a lot of work? It is; but well worth it"

Tales from Teaching Matthew or How Do You Teach Social Skills to Someone Who Can't Read Body Language? by Jan Zavodny

My name is Jan Zavodny and my son Matthew has High-Functioning Autism. Actually at 21 years old, he seems more ADD than Autistic now, due to years of one on one training and Behavioral Counseling. The stories I am going to share are from the one on one type situations that my husband Steve and I have found ourselves in with Matthew that provided teaching moments for all 3 of us. The first one that comes to mind was teaching Matthew that Temper-tantrums are not an effective way of getting his point across or getting his way. This was one of Steve's moments of sheer brilliance that brought about a profound change in Matthew's behavior. I do have to caution that most of these ideas may not work on any or all other children with Aspergers or High-Functioning Autism, but they worked great with Matthew. When Matthew was about 4 years old, we were at Glenbrook Mall and he didn't want to go with Mom and Dad to the next store from Doctor's Pet Center. So Matthew hits the floor, face down, kicking and screaming that he isn't going to go. Steve gets a smile on his face and says, "That looks like Fun." So he also drops down onto the floor, face down, and begins to throw his own Kicking and shouting temper-tantrum. "I don't want to put up with anymore temper-tantrums" he shouts. Matthew immediately got up, totally quiet, and moved behind my leg. Then he looks out and says "No Daddy, No". Steve finished his temper-tantrum and Matthew never threw another tantrum in public. For some children embarrassment may work and for others it might not. The next teaching moment that comes to mind happened when Matthew was 14 and in 7th grade. We were at a Boy Scout meeting and one of the other mothers came to pick up her son. Luckily she

knew Matthew very well or the next few moments would have been even more embarrassing than it was for me. This mother is rather over weight. Matthew says hi to her and then says "You're Fat!". I said "Matthew you shouldn't say such things." And he immediately replies, "Why not? It's True!" All I could do was apologize. Luckily the lady had a great sense of humor and promptly agreed with Matthew. Later that evening I talked to Matthew about what he had said, all the while trying to find the right words to help him understand that blatant honesty is not always the best policy. Finally I used a problem Matthew had had in School earlier in the week to get my point across. He had been teased by some of the boys at school about be weird and different. It had hurt him quite a lot. I asked him how he had felt when the boys and called him weird and different before and he said it hurt a lot. I also asked him why it hurt so much when the boys only thought they were saying the truth as they saw it. Even though he is different and a little weird, it still hurt to be told the "Truth", didn't it. He said yes. So I said "how do you think Mrs. Soandso felt when he told her the "truth"? He said she must have been hurt too. So I reminded him to remember the way the guys treat him before he speaks the "truth" again. It helped a lot, but we still have occasional problems. Another situation that demanded a solution was when he was in 9th grade. He was attending his church's youth group and one of the girl's complained that she had told Matthew 5 times to leave her alone, but that he didn't until she yelled at him. This was a girl that Matthew had grown up with and that knew him very well. I couldn't believe what the lady at the Youth Group was saying about Matthew. When I asked Matthew what had happened, he said

that he had put his hand on the girl's shoulder to get her attention and as soon as she said to leave her alone, he did. So I called the girl's mom, who was one of my best friends, and asked her what her daughter had said about Youth group that night. The girl had said it went OK and headed up stairs to do her home work. She hadn't been upset at Matthew at all. We finally figured out that the 5 times the girl had told Matthew to leave her alone, had been done with the shrug of her shoulder. The first and only time she actually spoke to him, he did exactly what she asked him to do. We had run a foul of Teenage Girl Body Language, a language Matthew couldn't understand at all. So I had him put his hand on my shoulder and shrugged it just a tiny bit. He left it there. I asked him what I had just said and he said nothing. So I shrugged a little harder, and he still couldn't get what I was trying to say to him. Finally, I heaved my shoulder and threw his hand off of my shoulder. And he finally understood that I didn't want his hand on my shoulder. Then I had him put it back on my shoulder and shrugged just the tiniest of shrugs. His hand flew off my shoulder immediately. He had gotten the message. Now there were only about 1 Billion other possible messages that he could get from a teenage girl through Body Language and he would need to be taught each one as they came up. We are still finding more teachable moments every day it seems. And we probably will for the rest of our lives with Matthew. He is beginning to come up with his own moments and figure out his own solutions and we pray he may some day find a lady who will love him for himself enough to be willing to help him to continue to learn the do's and don'ts of social skills.

April 2006

Schedule of Events

- Monday March 20, 7-9PM Northeast Indiana Autism Parent Support meeting, Dupont Branch of Allen County Public Library
- Friday, March 24, 6:30PM 12th Annual Silent & Live Auction "Reach for the Stars"
- Wednesday/Thursday May 3-4, "Going to the Heart of Autism: Relationship Development Intervention Therapy" by Steve Gutstein, Indianapolis, IN
- Saturday May 20, Walk-To-Talk 12 noon at Lawton Park

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30 A Reverent Cat in a Dog's World Launch Party 6PM at Sonrise Church			Autism Awareness Month			1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Tahcumwah Family Get Together	10	11	12	13 Asperger's Support Group	14	15
16	17 Northeast Indiana Autism Sup- port Group	18	19	20	21 Summer Program Applications Due	22
23	24	25	26	27	28 Walk-To-Talk Team Registration Forms Due	29

A Place for You—The Social Club

AWS is pleased to announce a new addition to our program - A Place for You – The Social Club. The Social Club brings together individuals who enjoy and/or want to learn to become more active and connected to the community. Whether it's a dinner out or attending a play, or just being with a group learning a new skill, the Social Club will be fun and energizing!

Social activities offer unique opportunities for developing friendships, visiting new places and learning new

things. With the guidance of a professional direct support staff person, your loved one will gain experiences that enhance his or her ongoing development and quality of life.

A Social Club calendar can be mailed or e-mailed to you monthly. You/your loved one can select up to four activities each month. There is a monthly program fee plus the cost of each activity.

If your loved one is interested the Social Club, call Margie Cantey at 260.744.6145, ext. 2410 for more details. You don't want to miss out on the fun. Call today!



Rewards of Volunteering: An Adult with Asperger's Syndrome by Katia Cook

It's nine am on Tuesday morning, and the kitties at the Fort Wayne Animal Care and Control are waiting for me. They prowl around the edges of their rooms, waiting for that moment when the door opens and the morning routine begins. Three hours later, with the help of another volunteer or staff member, I've fed the kitties and given them clean rooms, as well as some much needed attention.

However, the kitties haven't been the only ones who've benefited. I've gotten out of the house, gotten a workout, socialized with the other volunteers and staff, and gotten the feeling I'm needed and belonged somewhere. As an adult with Asperger's Syndrome, who has struggled all of her life to "belong somewhere" those feelings are important-even though they may be brief.

As an adult with Asperger's Syndrome, volunteering has been a life saver in my life. For various reasons, getting a full time job has been difficult, and volunteering has given me something to do.

It's also given me a few friends. Even though we're not close enough to hang out together, I'm learning to appreciate friendship in any form if it's genuine. Besides, I know if it wasn't for my blindness over many social rules, as well as the fear of being rejected, I know we'd probably be closer. Volunteering has also given me many skills I'll be able to use on a job. Even

though it hasn't led to a job in the organizations I've volunteered with, due to lack of experience, I've got several job references. My extensive volunteer work also led to two academic awards at Ivy Tech Community College, and the offer of scholarships from colleges all over the country.

As an adult with Asperger's Syndrome, I've found volunteering to be the perfect way to meet people. It's so much easier for me to talk to people I don't know when I have a job to do. The structure makes me more at ease, and drives me out of my shell. It also gives me something in common with the other volunteers or guests of the organization. If I want to talk to someone new, I have a base to begin from.

I can't recommend volunteering high enough for all my fellow sufferers of Asperger's Syndrome. It gives you something to do, a chance to make a difference in this world, priceless experiences, friends, and if you're lucky, a job.

Where do you start? Just take your special interests, and look for organizations related to them. Chances are they'll be thrilled to have you, even though you have Asperger's Syndrome-if you choose to tell them you have it!

"To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here."

Autism Week at Camp Red Cedar

July 17-24, 2006 is Autism Week at Camp Red Cedar. 2006 marks the second year for this week long Autism-specific week of camp. Great efforts are underway to improve upon last year's inaugural splash.

Highlights include

- Lower staff to camper ratios
- Activities tailored to those with ASD such as swimming and daily horse riding
- Activities to build social skills
- Schedules modified to keep pace with camper's needs
- Music therapy
- Exposure to top area professionals focused on serving the Autism Community



Individuals can apply directly to Camp Red Cedar by calling 260-637-3608.

During the week of July 17-24 individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders who are resident in the counties serviced by ACT only pay a \$35 fee instead of the customary fee of \$325. This offer is extended on a first come first serve basis. Individuals desiring 100% scholarship can apply to ACT via a Summer Programming Application.

NEW Asperger's Support Group

A new group focused on those impacted by Asperger's Syndrome is now meeting in Fort Wayne. The group meets the second Thursday of each month at Lutheran Hospital in Special Function Room 3 starting at 7PM. For more information contact Kristen Schoon at Krprschoon@aol.com.



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**AUTISM COMMUNITY
OF NORTHEAST
INDIANA**

**Walk-To-Talk
May 20, 2006**

A new spacious indoor children's playplace with the area's largest indoor playground system is coming to Fort Wayne—it's Playtime! There is so much available:

- a designated toddler area
- a stage area with costumes
- a library with comfortable seating
- an arts and crafts room
- A developmental play room
- two party rooms
- numerous play tables and toys
- an adult lounge with couches and free WiFi

ACT Autism Community Together of Northeast Indiana

ACT's role is to engage and support individuals, families, medical professionals, therapists and educators on effective methods to improve the lives of individual with Autism and their families in Northeast Indiana. By focusing on the front-line service providers and high-tech solutions, we will be able to build communities of providers and promulgate best practices for enhancing the lives of people with Autism. ACT's key programming consists of:

- Parent Mentor Network
- Lecture Series
- Community website
- Summer Programming for Individuals with Autism
- Training Sponsorships for area Professionals

it's playtime!

And did they host
Birthday Parties?

For more information please email us at info@its-playtime.com and one of our staff members will be happy to answer any questions.

It's Playtime!
7755 Coldwater Road
1/2 mile North of I-69.

**It's Playtime will be ready
to play this April!**