

A C T Autism Community Together

Volume 2, Issue 2

Spring 2004

April Autism Awareness Month! *There is Something for Everyone*

As we prepare for National Autism Awareness Month, we want to thank the many dedicated volunteers, parents, professionals, and organizations who have helped us accomplish many tasks since starting our organization. April is an exciting month filled with many awareness activities and fundraising opportunities to benefit individuals with Autism in our community. As exciting and busy as April will be, it is also a time to reflect on the beautiful individuals with Autism that motivate and encourage us everyday. Through the uncertainties and struggles we all may face in our lives, we are touched by the children and adults who inspire us with their unique

personalities and gifted hearts. We give great thanks to all individuals with Autism who have made our hearts bigger and our lives richer. May this month be filled with hope and enthusiasm as we focus on a disability that brings with it many wonderful gifts.

Wednesday April 7th is Autism night at the **Fort Wayne Komets** game.

Friday April 9th, **IPFW Student-Athlete's DON-Athon Dance Marathon** to benefit Autism.

Monday April 12th is **Autism Appreciation Day**.

Nationally-prominent speaker and author, **Stephen Shore**, Ph.D. candidate at Boston University will present on April 19th at Lutheran Hospital.

Awareness exercises within elementary schools

WALK-TO-TALK at the University of St Francis on April 24th

Cathy Zwick, MA, RD, CD will hold an April 14th seminar on the dietary needs of people with autism.

Pizza Hut Fundraisers Tuesday April 13th at the Pine Valley location and Tuesday, April 27th at the Decatur location.

Articles in this ISSUE

Autism Appreciation Day	2
Training Sponsorships	2
Walk-to-Talk	3
Pizza Hut Fundraiser Coupons	3
Sarah Fisher, driver of Kelley Racing to visit Fort Wayne	4
ACT Features: Autism and Vision	5

Biaggi's Offering Gluten-Free Pasta

Biaggi's recently announced that their menu has been expanded to include gluten-free pasta. Imagine Mussels Pomodoro or Chicken Flortine Soup followed by Biaggi's amazing house salad, gluten-free pasta with a marinara sauce and a generous serving of raspberry sorbet for dessert. Individuals can feast on a gourmet gluten-free casein-free meal in the warm inviting atmosphere of Biaggi's at Jefferson Pointe in Fort Wayne. Managing Partner Ken Davenport says the company desire to make accommodations for guests with allergies drove the new menu options. Davenport says that the Rotelli pasta can be substituted for any of its

pastas on the menu.

For a look at the menu, visit www.biaggis.com/diningmenus/faxablemenu_1.pdf.



Now dining out can be hassle free. What a relief to know! To make reservations at Biaggi's at Jefferson Pointe, call 459-6700 or contact Managing Partner Ken Davenport at kendavenport@biaggis.com.

Up and Coming Events:

- ◆ April 12th, Autism Appreciation Day!
- ◆ April 13th Eat at Pine Valley Pizza Hut (don't forget the ticket)
- ◆ April 19th, Stephen Shore @Lutheran Hospital at 7 PM
- ◆ April 23rd, Sarah Fisher at Walk to Talk Dinner
- ◆ April 24th, Walk to Talk at St. Francis
- ◆ April 27th Eat at Decatur Pizza Hut

APPLICATIONS FOR FREE SUMMER SPEECH AND OTHER SERVICES WILL BE ON AVAILABLE APRIL 19th

Autism Appreciation Day 2004

Listen to WMEE morning show on April 12th and join us in thanking those nominated for Autism Appreciation Day.

Lorie Ailor	Karla Clarke	Cathy German	Maureen McAfee	Cindy Roy
Patty Atkins	Nan Daley	Denise Gordon	Linda Okleshen	Jenny Schulte
Sheila August	Linear DeGrella	Jackie Gruesbeck	Tim Ollinger	Kara Skaggs
Cindy Barron	Connie DeLong	Stephanie Hartman	Jan Patterson	Lowell Timm
Martha Barry	Susie Ehlerding	Patty Hartman	Cathy Pratt	Sherill Uhey
Angie Baxter	Ann English	Susan Holleran	Nancy Rathburn	Cheryl Ulrich
Tina Beber	Peggy Farlow	Diane Jones	Tracy Ray	Michele VanMeter
Jim Beights	Becky Flickenger	Carrie Kracium	Marcia Rayl	MaryJane Verstynen
Joy Bodine	Susan French	Beth Lash	Holly Rothenbush	Jodi Warner
Lori Brown	Rae Fuhrmann	Craig Martin	MaryKay Rowe	Dewayna Watts
Natalie Cagnet	Denise Hess	Julie Macnamara	Jodi Warner	Jennifer Wible

Training Sponsorships

Tami Householder, Amy Marra and Susan Holleran are the first to receive training sponsorships as part of Project Pipeline. Tami is a special education teacher in East Noble School Corporations, Amy is a First Steps Developmental Therapists and Susan is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Saint Francis. Tami, Amy and Susan will attend Vincent Carbone's Introduction to

Verbal Behavior in Indianapolis May 12, 13 and 14th. Upon returning, they will each provide 10-hours of free service to area families. Project Pipeline's aim is to increase the quality and quantity of providers with Autism-specific training in Northeast Indiana. Applicants may request to be sponsored to any pre-eminent con-

ference. Applications for sponsorship are accepted on a continual basis and are reviewed monthly. In exchange for sponsorship, applicants are expected to provide 3 hours of service per \$100 sponsored. Applications can be downloaded from the ACT website.



ACT to Host Dr. Vincent Carbone's Verbal Behavior Workshop

On October 5 and 6th, ACT will host Dr. Vincent Carbone's Teaching Verbal Behavior: Hands-on Training for Tutors and Therapists in Fort Wayne at Lutheran Hospital. This 2-day workshop will be conducted by Jennifer Godwin, BACBA and Tammi Kaspar, MS/SLP-CCC, BACBA, associates of Dr. Vincent Carbone. This

workshop is designed to provide tutors, therapists, and parents that serve as their child's primary therapist with guided practice in implementation of the teaching methods described by Dr. Vince Carbone in Workshop #1: Introduction to Verbal Behavior. Substantial workshop time will be dedicated to guided practice in

methods of effective instruction as demonstrated via video tape during the Introductory Workshop. Each participant will receive individualized feedback regarding teaching methods. Prerequisites: Attendance at Dr. Carbone's Workshop #1: Introduction to Verbal Behavior and experience in teaching children with Autism.

2004 Walk-To-Talk

Join us for 2004 Walk-To-Talk to benefit the Summer Programming Initiative.

The festivities begin at 11 AM on the University of Saint Francis. The 1-mile Walk commences at 1 PM with a dedication from Fort Wayne City Councilman, Tom Didier, and balloon release.

Pre-walk festivities will include a clown appearance, moonwalk, giant slide, sensory activities, games and

crafts.

Pre-registered teams will compete for 12-dozen Krispy Kreme doughnuts.

Minimum donation to walk is \$10.

See brochure enclosed.

Walk-To-Talk T-shirts will be sold.

All donations are tax deductible. As

ACT is a 100% volunteer organization, direct contributions benefit

local individuals with Autism. ACT

board members and their families

are precluded from benefiting from the Walk-To-Talk proceeds.

If you would like to volunteer or have any crafts, games or therapeutic equipment to donate, please contact Cathy Zwick at (260) 724-8980 or the ACT office at (260) 609-7412.

Come for the Walk,

Stay for the Fun!

Walk-To-Talk Sponsored by . . .

LUTHERAN HOSPITAL
OF INDIANA
REHABILITATION SERVICES

HAP
Hall Aluminum Products, Inc.

WELLS FARGO

Baden
Gage & Schroeder LLC
Certified Public Accountants • Business Consultants

Wayne Asphalt & Construction Co., Inc.
"The Specialists"

Russ Moore
TRANSMISSION SPECIALIST

MSI
MILL SUPPLIES, INC.

FELDERMAN
DESIGN - BUILD

Media Sponsors: WOWO-AM, WANE-TV

Eat Pizza and 10% will go to Autism Dine-in, Carry-out or Delivery

Pizza Hut FUN'DRAISER TICKET
10% of bearer's purchase will be donated to:

Group: **ACT**
Date: **April 13, 2004**
Time: **~open~**
Location: **Pine Valley**

Valid on dine-in, carryout or delivery. Fundraiser donation excludes sales tax and alcoholic beverages. Offer good on regular priced purchases only. Coupons not valid. Ticket must be presented to server or delivery driver to receive donation. Only valid during specified dates and times.

Help support the Autism Community of NE IN

Pizza Hut FUN'DRAISER TICKET
10% of bearer's purchase will be donated to:

Group: **Autism Community Together**
Date: **April 27th**
Time: **11AM-11PM**
Location: **Decatur**

Valid on dine-in, carryout or delivery. Fundraiser donation excludes sales tax and alcoholic beverages. Offer good on regular priced purchases only. Coupons not valid. Ticket must be presented to server or delivery driver to receive donation. Only valid during specified dates and times.

Sarah Fisher to Attend Walk-to-Talk Dinner

On the eve of Walk-To-Talk, ACT will be hosting a fundraising dinner and silent auction. Kelley Racing Team Driver, Sarah Fisher, will be on hand at Sycamore Hills Country Club.

23 year old Sarah Fisher will be driving the Cure Autism Now! Car for the Kelley Racing Team this year.

She became the youngest driver in IRL IndyCar Series when she made her debut in 1999 at 19.

She is a three-time winner of the

IRL's most popular driver award. In 2000 she became only the third woman in history to qualify for the Indianapolis 500.

Sarah's favorite's include watching Trading Spaces or friends. She likes Rhythm and Blues as well as Country Music. Her favorite food is macaroni and cheese.



Her favorite race track is Texas Motor Speedway. Dave Blaney is her racing hero. When she is not on the track, she is driving a BMW.

Her hobbies include shopping,

home renovation, karting and spending time with family and fans.

Tickets to the Walk-to-Talk dinner are \$100 per person and may be obtained by calling (260) 609-7412 before April 15th .



LECTURES

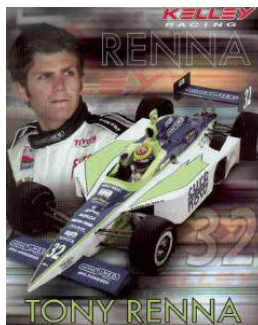
Apr 12 th	Stephen Shore !
May 10th	Dr. Cathy Pratt on Managing Problem Behaviors

All lectures are at Lutheran Hospital's Kachmann Auditorium and start at 7PM

RSVPs to all events are requested!

ACT Receives Tony Renna Autism Grant

The Autism Community of Northeast Indiana is thrilled to be the recipient of Autism Advocate of Indiana's first annual Tony Renna Grant. 26 year old Renna, 2003 driver of Kelley Racing's Autism car, was killed in a private testing of a Ganassi's IRL team car at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on October 22, 2003. Debbi Savini, Tony's fiancé, recalls how passionate Tony



was about Autism staying up late into the night researching it on the web.

Thanks to the Tony Renna grant, ACT will host Stephen Shore on Monday April 19th at Lutheran Hospital. Leaders from Autism Advocates of Indiana will be on hand to present ACT with the award. Attendance at the Stephen Shore presentation is free, however, advanced registration is encouraged by e-mailing info@ACTpositive.org or call 609-7412.

New at the Library

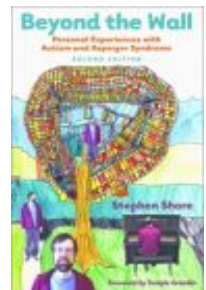
New titles donated to the Allen County Public Library are:

- Souls: Beneath and Beyond Autism by Thomas Balsamo and Sharon Rosenbloom—The Book and The DVD
- Indiana Medicaid Waiver Video
- The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (A.B.L.L.S.) by Mark Sundberg and James Partington
- The World of the Autistic Child by Bryna Siegel
- Educating Children with Autism by National Research Council

" If you don't live in Allen County, take advantage of the Interlibrary Loan Program or check the racks of your local special education department"

Stephen Shore- April 19th

Reserve your spot for Nationally-prominent speaker and author, Stephen Shore's, presentation on April 19th at 7PM at Kachmann Auditorium in Lutheran Hospital. E-mail info@ACTpositive.org or call (260) 609-7412.



Autism and Vision

Fred Zwick, O.D., TPA Certified Optometrist,
Gundersen Lutheran Whitehall Eye Clinic,
Whitehall, Wisconsin

Autism is a complex developmental disability that is described as a behavior syndrome and grouped with other related disorders under the broad heading of "Pervasive Developmental Disorders". Since it is a neurobiological disorder, it impacts the brain affecting the processing of and response to information from the senses. Because autism involves sensory impairment, and vision problems are more common in children with autism, it would greatly benefit parents to become more knowledgeable about vision problems and therapies.

Normal Vision Development

At birth, the size, structure, and growth of the eyes are almost complete but the infant is not born with the visual abilities to function in the world. The development of vision and integration with the senses and brain are just beginning. There are many steps and processes in the development of a child's vision that occur automatically. Early in a child's life, touch is the primary sense that directs vision, but as the visual system begins to further develop, other senses become involved. This integration and processing continues throughout the child's life involving visualization and motor skills such as hand-eye coordination, and even verbal skills involving language and communication. During the child's development and maturity, the body, brain and eyes strive to act as a coordinated unit, seeking to explore and experience the world.

Vision Development and Autism

Vision development is erratic and inconsistent in a child with autism. The child's visual system may be anatomically intact, but the automatic integration with the sense of touch may be faulty as well as with other senses such as hearing, smelling, and tasting. Because the body, brain and eyes do not act as a coordinated unit, learning life skills is greatly hindered. Inspecting the world and learning about it is accomplished with deficient motor skills and sensory input.

Common Visual Patterns and Autism

Poor eye contact	Blinking or squinting
Side viewing.	Tilting the head
Poor visual attention	Eyes that cross or turn
Constant scanning or visual sweeping	
Clumsiness, poor hand-eye coordination	
Excessive fixation	Frequent headaches
Dizziness, carsickness	
Unusual reaction to light and colors	
Closing or covering one eye	
Avoiding close work and activities	

Hyper-sensitive Touch and Vision

(from the College of Optometrists in Vision Development)

Many autistic people are defensive when it comes to touch, hearing, and vision. In some situations, they perceive normal sensory input as excessive and, therefore, will try to avoid it. In vision, this may result in "scanning" or constantly sweeping the eyes around to avoid prolonged exposure to certain objects, colors, or lights. They are visually defensive and, therefore, visual information is gathered in illogical pieces which affect perception.

Stimulus Overselectivity: Tunnel Vision in Autism

(from the Center for the Study of Autism, Salem, OR)

Many autistic children tend to focus on specific aspects of an object while completely ignoring the object as a whole. For example, it might be difficult for an autistic child to differentiate between a fork and spoon if the child attends to only the silver color rather than the shape. There may be difficulty in choosing an apple from an orange if their focus is upon only shape. One theory states that these children are born with too much concentration and cannot expand their attention span. Another theory proposes that these individuals cannot comfortably process all the information at once because it is too overwhelming and they become visually defensive.

Poor Integration of Central and Peripheral Vision

(from Achievers Unlimited and the College of Optometrists in Vision Development)

Many autistic children have problems using their central vision system for any length of time, which may be due to being visually defensive. Looking off to the side of an object, or viewing the world from the side (peripheral) vision might decrease this excessive stimulation for them. On the other hand, they may be constantly distracted by what is going on around them in their peripheral vision. This can interfere with the attentiveness and detail that is gathered by the central vision and visual information about the environment is lost or faulty. In addition, excessive concentration on an object in the central vision may help to shut down the distraction in the side vision which may explain why some autistic people exhibit excessive fixation behavior.

Vision Examinations for Autistic Patients

Just because children with autism might be nonverbal or exhibit some challenging behavior, please do not assume they cannot undergo a comprehensive vision examination. Too often, vision problems that would have been detected early in non-disabled children go undiagnosed for children with disabilities perhaps because of the anticipation that the examination would be too difficult to administer. While most optometrists do not offer vision therapy services, one with a developmental background is able to diagnose and recommend some types of therapy and offer referrals if additional therapy might be required.

Optometry vs. Ophthalmology

Do you know the difference between an optometrist and an ophthalmologist? They are both "real" doctors but their focus of education is different. Ophthalmologists are trained in surgery. Optometrists are educated to diagnose and treat conditions and diseases of the eyes that do not require surgery. Some optometrists have further training

(Continued on page 6)



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www.ACTpositive.org



Engaging and Supporting those
surrounding those impacted by
Autism Spectrum Disorder.



ACT's role is to engage and support individuals, families, medical professionals, therapists and educators on effective methods to improve the lives of individuals 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 featuring local personalities
- Workshop Series for families and providers
- Community website

In addition to these initiatives, ACT is working on community development projects with educators and medical professionals.

Autism and Vision—continued

in behavioral and developmental conditions and are able to prescribe and direct vision therapy programs. The doctor of choice for autistic individuals is an optometrist. Before choosing an optometrist, ask if they routinely perform children's eye examinations or if they have had special training in children's vision. Be sure they can refer you to an optometrist who has further training in behavior and developmental vision if necessary.

What to Expect

The vision evaluation will depend upon the level of cooperation and development of your child and require about 30 to 60 minutes. It should begin with a thorough history including symptoms, physical and medical health, developmental history, and specific visual demands. In addition, the doctor should measure the clarity of your child's vision as well as the refractive error, eye movement skills, focusing ability, depth perception, and binocularity (eye teaming). A thorough evaluation of your child's ocular health with dilation should be performed to insure that the anatomy of the eye is normal and without disease. Depending upon the doctor and your child, more tests may be administered.

The Results

The optometrist should discuss the results of the evaluation and recommendations, explain the benefits and expected results, and answer your questions. Be an informed consumer and do not hesitate to ask questions and request explanations. Depending upon the results of the examination, lenses to compensate for hyperopia (far-sighted), myopia (near-sighted), astigmatism, and/or prism may be prescribed. A follow up visit may be required to either evaluate the effect of the lenses or perform additional testing. A consultation with an optometrist educated in behavioral and vision therapy may be recommended.

How Will My Child Respond?

The goal of corrective lenses and/or vision therapy is to allow the eyes to direct the body. As a result, there should be greater eye teaming ability, more stable central vision, and better visual processing. As these processes progressively improve, hand-eye coordination, better body sense and orientation, and better development and learning may also gradually improve. Each autistic child possesses individual strengths and weaknesses and therefore the success rate and progress may vary

greatly from child to child.

Conclusion

Vision is an important part of any child's development, which is a process that begins with a complex integration of vision, the brain, and other senses. Motor coordination, perception and language skills develop later. Autism interrupts this automatic process through hypersensitivity, over-selectivity, and central/peripheral vision conflict causing incomplete sensory input, uneven motor skills and an inability to accurately evaluate the environment. It is known that vision problems are more common in autistic children, so thorough vision examinations are recommended on a routine basis to insure good eye health, determine the need for corrective lenses, and possibly recommend other forms of therapy such as visual training.

A full bibliography is available at www.ACTpositive.org.