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VISION:

*We envision a
community where
people with autism
achieve their
maximum potential
as they live, learn
and work.*

2012 Achievements and the year is not over yet!

Did you know that we:

- ◆ Planned and coordinated the first county-wide autism training for first responders
- ◆ Talked to over 2,500 people who called or emailed for autism help and support
- ◆ Provided workshops/educational conferences **for over 1,000** people
- ◆ Sent 52 weekly autism e-blasts and four newsletters to over 8,000 readers each time
- ◆ Mailed over 2,600 hardcopy newsletters to those in our database without email access, thanks to grant funding
- ◆ Sponsored 70 support groups in 44 counties
- ◆ Coordinated an All Abilities Camp Fair
- ◆ Recorded a webinar with Three Rivers Wealth Management
- ◆ Taught "Autism, Understanding and Helping" to teachers, preschool staff, Keystone Stars teachers from 10 counties, University of Scouting leaders, YMCA staff, and numerous first responders, police officers, and legislators
- ◆ Employed or contracted with five (5) adults with autism for photography, acting, database development and website maintenance
- ◆ Hosted information tables at several large local corporations, PNC Park Pirates Game, and many 5K walks
- ◆ Produced autism-awareness press pieces including newspaper, magazine, radio, video blog and webinar
- ◆ Introduced over 365 people with autism and their family members to dragon boating, rowing, yoga, swimming, kayaking, pottery, and wall climbing
- ◆ Initiated 2 Apple After-Hours events, teaching about communication apps to our families, adults, and local Apple professionals
- ◆ Hosted World Adult Autism Day at Pittsburgh Center for the Arts where our adult friends shared information about their volunteer pursuits or vocations
- ◆ Added over 100 new books to our free lending library
- ◆ Featured several writers with autism in our newsletter
- ◆ Coordinated a Saturday Seminar on pain Management taught by a local woman with autism
- ◆ Planned several "Autism Friendly Santa" events
- ◆ Referred hundreds of callers to doctors, therapists, job training, educational advocates, housing supports, and numerous other providers to meet individual needs

**Look inside for more outreach, education and support services from
ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA**

This edition brought to you by
The Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust

*Thank You To Our Last
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THANK YOU!

**"The Autism
Connection
of PA starts
with you."**

Executive Director Message

Dear Families,

Insurance problems. Staff changes. Transition to adulthood. Sometimes it seems like life keeps throwing curve balls. We conducted our annual survey in order to do our best to help with your challenges, so let's look at some of the results.

1. People finding us from Internet searches increased by 16.7% this year. We changed our name so that people looking for autism help in Pennsylvania could find us faster online. We also hired people with autism to optimize our website, and it has paid off. The power of autism is at work!

2. Dear "Mom-of-a-boy" - I apologize to your son who was upset that we changed our name from ABOARD to ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA. We know change is hard. We didn't mean to upset anyone.

3. We will begin Sunday seminars for those who told us they cannot attend on Saturdays. While we have had several outings on Sundays (Outdoor Classroom, swimming, Riverquest boat trip), we will now offer informational seminars.

4. There were one or two who said we do not offer enough activities for people with a greater degree of disability (I don't often use the term "low functioning", it's just a personal thing). **Every activity we offer – for example, rowing, yoga, pottery, or bowling - is definitely open to all.** We experience the full range of autism at our events, and we love to see the joy on faces when people successfully face a new challenge. Please don't be shy; come out and try!

5. We also heard that we do not offer events for people with milder impairments. Again, we welcome all. If you have an idea for a social event and you have Asperger Syndrome or HFA, call us and let's talk about how we can make that happen together. Additionally please call for the latest list of adult or teen social groups.

6. There was a four-way tie for the categories you most worry about; Finances, Jobs, Fitting Into Society, and Family Stress. We'll offer seminars or workshops about those areas this year. But do call us at 412.781.4116 about that stress; we can help with that every day.

7. Two people said that we do not ask for money often enough, and another said we do this too often. We try hard to balance a little fundraising with a lot of autism programming. We do repeatedly "advertise" events to keep them on peoples' radar and we accept the increasing offers from those calling to offer events to support your Autism Connection. We have broadened our "asking" to include those unaffected by autism; we don't like to hound our families for money (see Family Stress and Finances in previous paragraph? We get it). So feel free to pass on our fundraising information to others if you cannot participate.

Those were highlights of your responses. As with your phone calls, emails, support groups, conference or event attendance, we appreciate your ongoing participation. This helps us make better autism connections for you all year long.

Sincerely,

Luciana Randall

Executive Director

Family Day at The Outdoor Classroom



ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA partnered with Outdoor Classroom to offer exciting and free outdoor activities at The Outdoor Classroom on Saturday, August 4, 2012!

The event took place in the meadows, creek and forests of Boyce Mayview Park in Upper St. Clair, PA. It was a hot and sunny day but that did not stop the families from enjoying the camp fire especially with a nice cool down hike in the creek! The families also went on an insect safari, creek exploration and bird sighting nature hikes! They enjoyed nature sensory boxes, unnatural scavenger hunt, bird feeder crafts and other recycled nature crafts.



Support Group Happenings



Call Marie Mambuca at ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA at 412-781-4116 if interested in attending or starting a support group!

We currently
have
70 groups
in
44 counties!



GET CONNECTED TODAY TO A GROUP FOR ASD ADULTS, PARENTS AND SIBLINGS!

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

NORTH HILLS PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

We are a group that meets once a month to talk about what might be happening in our parents'/children lives from school, medical, home and even the stress in our lives. We are fairly unstructured because we want to allow people to have freedom to talk about what is going on to-day. We do not have a one belief system or treatment plan on what do with our children. We don't endorse or bash any one protocol. If there is more information requested by a parent, we try & have another parent help them from their experience. We are very nondenominational on all approaches on how to work & live with autism.

For information please contact:
Astrid Arroyo
412-358-0393
la.bella@verizon.net

Maureen Wirth
724-625- 0284
mhwirth@gmail.com

WESLEY SPECTRUM'S PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Wesley Spectrum Services (WSS) Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings have had some really great speakers!

Last month, Jennifer Fulton from ABOARD's Autism Connection provided our parents with great resources. Our parents are still talking about how kind it was of Jennifer to provide those valuable resources and answer all of their questions. This month, Amber Kelley, a WSS Outpatient Office Manager, spoke on Reducing Stigma. The focus of her talk was how there is often stigma associated with receiving services, not only for our children, but if we seek out treatment as well. We also discussed ways to reduce stigma. She provided many useful handouts and resources, as well as information about our WSS Outpatient program. In October, we are looking forward to Dr. Larry Sutton, a psychologist, coming to present on Transition to Adulthood. This has been a heavily requested topic, and we are looking forward to his presentation!

For information please contact:
Kristen Mahoney
724.443.4888
kmahoney@wesleyspectrum.org

I MATTER TOO SIBLING SUPPORT GROUP - GIBSONIA

I am the proud mother of two beautiful children, one of which is on the autism spectrum. I have found it to be difficult for my daughter, who

is typical, to handle this on a daily basis. Through this group she has been able to understand about her brother's diagnosis and meet friends in similar situations. I have come up with a lot of information as well as games and ideas that would be helpful in explaining the conditions and tools to use.

For information please contact:
Tammie Sauers
724.351.2582
tammiesa@gmail.com

TRACKS CONSULTING PARENT SUPPORT GROUP - ROBINSON TOWNSHIP

Do you have a child with autism who is school age? School is an important experience in a child's life and one that can provide many wonderful educational and social experiences. It's also true that supporting a child with autism in school often causes parents to have to answer tough questions and make difficult decisions. The TRACKS Consulting Support Group is run by three special education teachers who are dedicated to supporting families who are supporting school age children with autism. TRACKS Consulting encourages you to bring questions about IEPs, inclusion, and other topics pertaining to your child, when you

Support Group Happenings Continued

attend. They look forward to the opportunity to answer your questions, share information and provide support! Hope to see you there!

For information please contact:
Natasha Dickson
412.256.8722
natashadickson@tracksconsulting.com

ADULT SOCIAL GROUP PITTSBURGH

The Social Outings group has had a nice summer. We visited PNC park for a game as well as Phipps' Conservatory and the Zoo. Next up a visit to The Pittsburgh Glass Center for a tour and glass blowing demonstration followed by lunch at Quite Storm in Garfield and we also enjoy potluck at Community Human Services (CHS) in Oakland on Sunday, September 30 from 1:30-4:30.

For information please contact:
Heather Conroy
724-787-5194
heather.a.conroy@gmail.com

ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP PITTSBURGH

This is a group of 10-20 attendees who meet to discuss a variety of topics. For example, the discussion can focus on issues including the appropriate amount of 'stim', how family members respond to this, and

the desire to see family and how to interact with family. Members take turns talking and asking each other questions. As a group they decided to be more positive instead of complaining so they talk about the new positive things going on their lives as well.

For information please contact:
Rebecca Klaw
412.247.0599
rebeccaklaw@aol.com

BIOMOMS

This group has had monthly presentations: Energy Medicine by Dr. Dan Wagner, Juice Plus-Whole Food Nutrition by Kim Swanko, Enhancing Natural Healing by Dr. Erin Griner, along with discussions on alternative therapies, supplements, chemical free body and household products.

For information please contact:
Lori Scears
Loridscott@yahoo.com
724.413.9821

ASA OF PITTSBURGH PARENT DISCUSSION GROUP MONROEVILLE

The Autism Society of Pittsburgh hosts a monthly support group for parents on the 4th Monday of every month at the Monroeville Public Library. Each meeting focuses on a different topic such as stress,

sibling issues, or nutrition.

For information please contact:
Heidi Hess asapgh@aol.com
412.856.7223

GROWING TOGETHER: FOR FAMILY MEMBERS OF ADULTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Dr. Pletcher was invited to speak. He is a pediatrician at UPMC and is very active in the transition process from the child to adult health systems. He presented on the various ways to make this transition go smoothly for the individual, the family and the physicians.

For information please contact:
Linda Marino
412.904.5945
lmario@jfcspgh.org

FBR FAMILY, SOCIAL & PLAY GROUPS - MONROEVILLE AND NEW KENGSIGNTON

Family Behavioral Resources offers a Family Support Group and Social Skills/Play Group monthly for children with Autism Spectrum Diagnoses and their siblings. Families come together in an open forum setting to discuss various topics. Periodically guest speakers come into the group to explore special topics with the group. The social skills play group is open to children of all ages and is offered during the

time of the Family Support Group. Overseen by Behavioral Specialist Consultants and Therapeutic Support Staff, this group provides an opportunity for children to develop their socialization, play skills, and coping with each other's uniqueness and differences.

For information for the Monroeville group please call: 412-824-4005.

For information for the New Kensington group please call: 724-337-1890.

ASK-AN-ASPIE

Ask-an-Aspie is a group is for parents, families, and service providers of people on the autism spectrum. This group is led by Caitlin Freeman and Phil Garrow, two adults on the autism spectrum. In this group, we will share what we have learned in seven years of participating in and supporting the autism community. Our first monthly meeting will be on Sunday, October 21 from 3:00pm to 5:00pm in the Oakland Community Human Services (CHS) Building, 372 Lawn Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213. Join our group and see our meeting schedule at our website: www.Ask-an-Aspie.com Email: caitlin.freeman@gmail.com, or call: 412-605-0113

Continued on Page 10



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Community Outreach

Sibling Support Groups

Trainings for School Districts

Summer Camps (STAPs)

FBR offers Family Support Groups, Social Skill/Play Groups, and Sibling Support Groups in areas where needs have been identified. *All support groups at FBR are proudly hosted in collaboration with and support from ABOARD.*

1-866-4-FBR-ASD; autismservices@familybehavioralresources.com; www.familybehavioralresources.com;



A **CARF Three-Year Accreditation** has been awarded to **Family Behavioral Resources** for its Intensive Family-Based Services – Mental Health (Children and Adolescents), Outpatient Treatment – Mental Health (Adults), and Outpatient Treatment – Mental Health (Children and Adolescents). *BHRS is accredited under Outpatient Treatment. **Ask us about CARF today!**



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A Boy Named Jack

By Shawn McGill

Exactly eight years ago today marks the beginning of labor for my first and only child, Jack. It was a long, intensive 24 hours, of which I will spare you the details.

However, if you have not had a child and anyone dares to tell you, "oh, you will forget about the pain once you have that baby in your arms", it's a lie. All lies!

Contrary to popular belief, despite my being rough, tough and dirty, I always knew I wanted to be a mother. I knew that with or without someone I would be a mother. The "partner" or "better half" piece did not matter much to me. Now if you know anything about me the one thing you know is that once I set my mind to something, there is little stopping me. So at the age of 28 I welcomed Jack into this crazy world. He was the tiniest, most precious child I had ever laid eyes on. At only 5 pounds and being born three weeks early, I sensed something very fragile about him.

Jack was a well thought out, highly anticipated child. From my perspective I don't know that he could have asked for a mother who wanted him more than me.



Once he was finally in my arms and I looked into his eyes, I struggled to leave him for a second. The early weeks with Jack were easy, a bit too easy in fact. Although he had a number of feeding issues, he slept like a trooper.

The only catch was that Jack needed constant physical touch. There was no separating my skin from his.

Constant movement was also very helpful. I remember countless nights when I would put Jack in the Jeep and drive him until he fell asleep. I would have to keep the engine running in order for him to stay asleep. Now I know it was likely the sound that soothed him, either way I spent many hours sleeping in a Jeep with a running en-

gine, whatever it took.

After only eight weeks I headed back to work full-time. The first day of leaving Jack at daycare was probably one of the most traumatic events in my life. Fortunately for us we have been blessed with so many loving, caring, helpful teachers, support staff, etc. throughout the years. As Jack grew older I started to notice changes. The characteristics of autism became more evident as time went by and at 18 months Jack was diagnosed.

Eventually I cut back work out of necessity because of Jack's medical and developmental complexities.

Treatments and therapies became a way of life, a full-time job in itself. I have to say it was time well spent because the investment yielded a tremendous return.

Over the next three years Jack and I worked through intensive programs and treatments; to replace his communication of tantrums, biting, and head banging to more functional modes of communication like picture exchange and very basic sign language.

We worked on building Jack's tolerance to the world that felt so painful to him - a toothbrush in his mouth, food on his tongue, the lights in a grocery store, the noise in a restaurant. By this point I felt like I had completely given up my life in an effort to give him the hope for one. Progress was slow and I began to slip, mentally and physically.

It was when Jack turned two that our lives took a very different twist. In December of 2006 I suffered a small mini-stroke from complications of an undetected congenital heart defect. Within the next year I underwent a number of hospitalizations, invasive surgeries, intensive treatments, and harsh recovery.

A Boy Named Jack Continued

By Shawn McGill

eries. It took over a year to find a surgeon who would even consider the repair of my heart because the surgery was "too risky", only a 20% survival rate. For whatever reason I forged ahead with little fear because of one reason...a boy named Jack.

Before my surgery Jack's treatment team spent countless hours creating social stories for him in an effort to help him understand where I was going and why I was there. It was important to me that he be given the information because it impacted his life and I knew he could and would understand. Jack spent the entire time in Cleveland while I was in the hospital, with my father and step-mother who were caring for him and visiting me.

It was me who needed Jack because he was my inspiration to live. Jack stayed with me, running around the prep room like a crazy little man, up until they wheeled me away for surgery. My step-mother was hysterical, my father as stoic as always, and I knew Jack was getting it all. Even though Jack was not talking, he bent down and kissed me. I took my watch, put it on his wrist, and told

him he needed to wear my watch and keep it safe so when I got out of the hospital I would know exactly what time it is. He loved numbers and time and Jack kept that watch on, even though he struggled to wear clothes. I still wear the watch (in fact I had it on today), and Jack still has a passion for numbers and time.

Needless to say I survived. The road to recovery was certainly something, and I was very fortunate to have so many wonderful people in my life. Many of those people were the same people who were providing care to Jack; TSS, BSC, OT, my dad, my step-mom, the list goes on and on. I recall many moments when I thought it would just be so much easier to die. Collapsed lungs, leaky heart valves, etc. All it took was seeing that boy's face and I would force myself up as much as possible; to keep the same routines, to create the best memories I could create, and to do my best to generate a sense of hope. No matter what, I wanted Jack to know who I am as his mother and as a person.

By the age of four Jack was talking. Despite having a

stroke, I clearly remember the first time Jack said the words, "I love you". For most people this may not even be an etched memory but for me it is probably the biggest imprint in my heart and in my mind. Throughout the journey, and even still today, no accomplishment is small. From saying a word to putting a toothbrush in his mouth, to now being able to tell me what he had for lunch at school, I have learned to celebrate all moments.

Nothing is too small of an accomplishment.

In my work I talk a lot about inspiration and who in our lives has made the greatest impression to inspire and motivate us. Sometimes that is a good person and sometimes that is a bad person, but they are influences nonetheless. For me this person is without a doubt, my son.

Jack has in many ways been

my guardian angel. More importantly, Jack has taught me to see the numerous attributes that each person possesses. He has also inspired me that with hope, courage, dedication, work, and the right support around you, anything is possible.

Here is to celebrating the life of one incredible, big hearted young man. Happy Birthday my dear son.

Shawn McGill, MSW Consulting Support and treatment, coaching and skill development for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders. Comprehensive risk screenings and risk management plans for problematic sexual behaviors, sexuality consent screenings, program and group curriculum development, staff training and development.

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resource
page at
www.autism
ofpa.org
or

<http://autism-support.org/autism-support-groups/pa-autism-support-groups/>



Support Group Happenings - Continued

BUTLER COUNTY

AUTISM SUPPORT GROUP @ PARENTS IN TOTO - ZELIONOPLE

Our group takes a break over the summer. We will meet Thursday, Sept. 27, noon to 2:00. We are expecting a couple of new parents. We will catch up on what went on over the summer. We will discuss what topics we want to deal with in the next few meetings. We meet the 4th Thursday of the month from noon to 2. We adjust this over Thanksgiving.

For information please contact: Catherine Lalonde
 724.538.4823
clalonde@zoominternet.net

CLEARFIELD COUNTY

DUBOIS ASD PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

This group has had a variety of discussions, Behavioral Health Choices and concerns with picking a provider, transition, bullying, inclusion and safety issues. ABOARD's Autism Connection, with the help of this group, is organizing a seminar "Autism & Sexuality" on November 17, 2012 at DRMC. More information will be coming, watch the Friday email blast.

For information please contact: Kelly King
 814.653.2671
seeking@usachoice.net

LANCASTER COUNTY

SPANISH SUPPORT GROUP "BIENAVENTURANZA"

We are always trying to provide all information to our parents in Spanish. We keep a close communication with the IU13 and other professionals in autism in the area. They are always happy to help our group by coming to our meetings and sharing information with our parents about IEP's, school to work transition programs, power of attorney for children with disabilities, etc. The ages of the children's in our group vary from 6- 19 years old.

For information please contact: Emma Gutierrez or Alicia Ortiz 717.397.8308 or 717.341.2980, grupobienaventuranza@gmail.com Leave a message in English or Spanish.

LEBANON COUNTY

AUTISM SPECTRUM SUPPORT GROUP

We have not been flourishing lately. Our pool party was rained out this summer and then the rain date was rained out so we have not gotten together for awhile. We have also decided that we will not be having monthly meetings due to such poor attendance last year. We will be continuing family activities and breakfasts. A hayride and bonfire is planned for October and of course, the Christmas party in December. We are reaching out to Lebanon Valley College

to help provide educational programs for our families since they are faithful supporters of autism awareness. Our email information sharing and advice sharing continues. It will be a year of changes.

For information please contact: Diane Grumbine
 717.838.7946
diane@lebanonautism.com

MCKEAN COUNTY

KANE & BRADFORD PALS SUPPORT GROUP

We had a great PALS group in the spring. Two families with children of the same age were able to connect. It was great for them to know they were not alone and talk about things that worked with their kids to help one another.

We meet monthly in McKean County in Kane and Bradford. We begin with a 10 min. "topic of the month" then the parents get to talk with each other. We are fortunate to have free child care so the parents get a break and can focus on their child's needs. Everyone is welcome to attend!!

For information please contact: Christie Chesebro
 Autism Service Coordinator
 814.362.6535
cchesebro@guidancecenter.net

Support Group Continued

MERCER COUNTY

PACT

This is a lovely group of parents and siblings who love to meet to vent to each other and provide each other support. They have made it a group goal to raise awareness in their community about autism and ABOARD's Autism Connection. They discussed how difficult it is for them to get their school to comply with IEP's and laws. They brainstormed how to help one of their kids handle math class alleviating a lot of stress for the parents. They also rejoiced together when one student got a job and is doing well.

For information please contact:

Bonnie Schaefer

724.699.0966

nojudge2000@yahoo.com

WYOMING COUNTY

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

This group enjoys getting their kids together for picnics and swimming. With winter coming they will make other plans!

For information please contact:

Mildred Johnson

570.836.2350

millie77j@yahoo.com

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WESLEY SPECTRUM SERVICES

Shaping Behaviors Before They Get Too Big

By Lu Randell

Shoulder nuzzles. Ponytail tugs. Elbow nudges. All these and more can be communicative signs of affection from young children with autism to mom or dad.

When a little one lacks words, children and parents need and crave these connections. Naturally, the child's unique nonverbal signs of affection are encouraged and welcomed.

Head butts, hair yanking, and shots to the ribs, however, can still mean "hi!" or "I like you" or "what's for dinner?" but they can also mean unwelcome stares, pain, and real injury. How do we bridge the gap and shape communicative behaviors in the secret language of special families from early childhood through adulthood?

Start to think about the ABC's of behavior: **Antecedent**-what happens before the **Behavior** and **Consequences**-what happens after. Then experiment with changing the environment, altering your reactions, and teaching the child more appropriate replacement behaviors.

Start early

If your small child has developed a habit of something like sticking his face into your armpit for comfort, stop for a minute to imagine this happening when he is 40

and you are 65 years old. If it seems uncomfortable in that scenario, start to fade this to a more socially acceptable gesture. Teach a replacement behavior such as a shoulder-to-shoulder nudge, or a sideways hug. If you sense the child craves the facial pressure, offer to cup his face in your hands or teach him to massage his own face. Reward the new behaviors with something positive to keep them going strong.

Be creative - What can you substitute?

Example: Playing with others' hair can be done for a variety of reasons. Some with autism crave the scent of certain hair products and will seek a peer, grab their head, and bury their face in the hair. Others like the tickling feeling on their face.

Besides being personally invasive and painful, this can get dangerous. A great behaviorist helped a client stopped this behavior. She conditioned a wig with the same hair product used by the "sought after" girl. The student could then stick his face in the newly conditioned (and conditioning) wig. Over time the wig was cut down until it was about the size of a paintbrush. He kept this in his pocket and swished it under his nose as needed.

While not something you see everyday, this was a lot more

socially acceptable, and safer, than the former wrestling hold.

So ask yourself: what is the function or purpose of the behavior for the child? What can you replace this with that meets that need? This is trial and error time, but with patience you can succeed.

Offer a real punching bag vs. a human one.

Many people go to the gym and work with either heavy or fast punching bags. Does your person with autism tend to hit or pinch people as a way to say "hi" or "let's play?" Can you switch that to a fist bump, hard "high five" or some other solid contact that doesn't hurt? Or if these are pressure-seeking behaviors, can he or she use a punching bag, pillow, heavy clay, or something else with similar resistance instead? Recipients of arm pinching may find relief by switching to a thin, slippery undershirt beneath a heavy hoodie. Falconry gloves (hawk training gloves that cover the arms) soccer shin guards or other protective gear from the sporting world are used by many caregivers to help "ignore" behaviors that hurt in attempt to extinguish them.

Another example - running

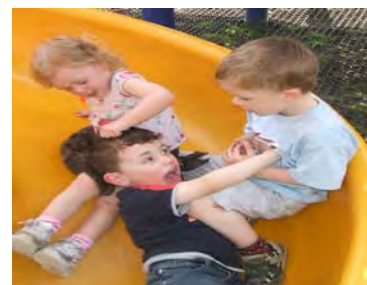
If your child with autism

runs until he or she is caught, could the goal of running be to get deep pressure input?

Offer scheduled hugs, bean bag chairs, spandex undergarments, or lying under couch cushions while watching TV instead. Or could your person just run for fun, like so many people do? If you think that's the case, advertise for a high school or fitness runner who can train with the person in an enclosed track. Think about the health benefits, relaxation, better sleep, and lifelong pastime this could initiate, not to mention providing a peer mentor and socialization!

It's not that easy

This is a "crash course" aimed only at helping you look at some possible functions of behavior at your house, and some real life examples of solutions used to manage these types of challenges. Think about the behaviors in your family, and if they are not things you'd like to see in 10 or 20 years, maybe it's time to get them shaped up. Call us with questions; we have books, conferences, webinars, or professional referrals to share with you about your most pressing concerns.



How To Select a Transition Program

By Bonnie Rubin

Sometimes young adults graduate from high school ready for something other than a lengthy and costly college education. They need programs with a focus on job readiness and workplace success. The best programs take unique needs of all individuals into consideration. Other important factors to consider when shopping for training programs are the organization's solid relationships with corporate partners, internship opportunities, and career focused employment goals.

An ideal program is one that is business-driven and departs from conventional training programs by reversing the typical model, focusing on the human resource needs of the business community, and then providing a matching training program to prepare candidates to fill these needs.

Since learners are unique, students often need training programs that are designed for beginner to intermediate level content. Competitive employment areas such as computer skills, customer service and job readiness classes are also key. Students should be evaluated for

employment opportunities based on both hard skills related to their potential profession and soft skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, work ethic, and leadership. The purpose of a quality program is placement in unsupported competitive employment with benefits. Additional elements of great career training include coursework in career management skills, resume preparation, interviewing and public speaking, and end with an internship with an area employer. These will allow graduates to work in a variety of industries. These skills can also generalize to many other employment opportunities

The best programs offer a well-developed network of employers, government agencies, and other nonprofit organizations that would support students with job placement opportunities. Competitive wages and benefits should be expected in final job placement situations.

When college is not appropriate and jumping into a minimum wage job seems too limiting, families should seek comprehensive and reasonably priced training options. Specialized employment projects can be just the right solution for a high school graduate who wants to get on a career track sooner rather than later, and with experi-

ence, confidence, and marketable skills.



Bonnie Rubin is the Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Disability Employment Project for Freedom. The organization is a 501c(3) nonprofit incorporated in 1998. Project for Freedom provides qualified individuals with disabilities a technology, professional skills and customer service training that then results in opportunities for competitive employment.

You can learn more about Pittsburgh Disability Employment PROJECT FOR FREEDOM www.projectforfreedom.org or visit Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/ProjectForFreedom> or Tweet @pgh_freedom.



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Your membership has benefits! It supports our work in meeting the needs of Pennsylvanian families challenged with autism spectrum disorders. It also keeps your organization "front and center" in the minds of those very families.

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Contact

**Jennifer Fulton at
412-781-4116 or
Jennifer@autismofpa.org
to become a member
today and start
experiencing the
benefits!**

ABOARD'S Autism Connection of PA Organization/Corporate Partners

ACHIEVA	Family Behavioral Resources	Pressley Ridge Autism School
The Alliance for Infants & Toddlers	Familylinks, Inc.	Rehabilitation Specialists
Alliance Health, Inc., Allegheny	Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration	River Pediatric Therapies
Associated Occupational Therapists, Inc.	Glade Run Lutheran Services	The Safety Sleeper
Augmentative Communication Consultants, Inc.	Green Acres Contracting Co., Inc.	Shamrock Solutions, Inc.
Autism Education and Research Institute & AERI and Behavioral Health Services	The Integrated Care Corporation	Southwestern Human Services
Barber National Institute	InVision Human Services	TEIS
Bayada Pediatric Home Healthcare	Ligonier Valley Learning Center	Total Learning Centers
Brain Balance Achievement Center of Pittsburgh	Metz Lewis Brodman Must O'Keefe, LLC.	Tri Medical Rehab Supply
The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh	New Story	University of Pittsburgh Autism Center of Excellence
Community Care Behavioral Health	NHS Human Services	Value Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania
Crossroads Speech & Hearing	PACE School	The Watson Institute
The Early Learning Institute	Paula Teacher & Associates,, Inc.	Wesley Spectrum Services
Easter Seals Western PA	Pediatric Therapy Professionals, Inc.	Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic
	Pediatric Therapy Specialists, Inc.	Westmoreland CaseManagement and Supports
	PLEA	WJS Psychological Associates, Inc.

Please Join ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA & Princess Lanes for a FREE FAMILY BOWLING DAY!



DATE: Sun. Nov. 11, 2012

TIME: Session 1
12:30 - 2:30 PM

Session 2
3:00 - 5:00 PM

PLACE: Princess Lanes
Back of Caste Village
Shoppes in South Hills
540 Weyman Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15236
www.bowlprincess.com

COST: FREE—Thanks To
Princess Lanes and
Caste Family Fund

RSVP: You must RSVP at
www.autismofpa.org to
reserve your lane and
time slot. Families with
children 21 years of age
or younger.

**See you at the lanes for a fun
day of family bowling!**

For additional questions call
Rebecca Williams-Thomas at
412-499-0165

or email rebecca@autismofpa.org.

Registration is first come first serve and
will not be available via phone or email.



The Autism ID Card

The autism ID card helps
people on the autism spectrum
explain their medical condition
to **Police, EMTs, and other
first responders** in the event
of an emergency.

In November 2009, Autism
Speaks hosted a National Town
Hall Meeting to address the
needs of adults with autism.
The number one priority agreed
upon by the hundreds of autism
service providers, parents, and
people on the autism spectrum
was improved training for first
responders. To meet this need,
SEO Pittsburgh, in
collaboration with the
Allegheny County Office of the
Public Defender, have created
an Autism ID Card for
individuals on the autism
spectrum to present to police,
medical personnel, and other
first responders in the event of
an emergency.

I Have Autism:

My medical condition impairs my ability to
communicate with others. As a result I may have
difficulty understanding your directions, and
I may not be able to respond to your questions.
I may also become physically agitated if you
touch me or move too close to me.

Please do not interpret this behavior as a refusal
to cooperate. I am not intentionally disobeying your
instructions.

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Over Please

I am requesting that you contact the person
noted below on my behalf; s/he will confirm my
diagnosis and provide information you may need
about my identity. Sincerely,

My Printed Name

Contact Printed Name

Produced by www.downtownpgh.com
for Autism Speaks and Caste Family Fund.
(Funded by ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA
and Princess Lanes Bowling Center)

Contact Phone #

This Card Approved by the Allegheny County Office of the
Public Defender, 543 Pines Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

ABOARD's Autism
Connection of PA has produced
these cards and
are available for FREE for
individuals! Larger quantities
are available for a small fee.

To order Autism ID Cards,
please contact us at
(800) 827-9385 or at
support@autismofpa.org

AUTISM CONNECTION OF PA

35 Wilson Street,
Suite 100
Pittsburgh, PA 15223

Phone: 412.781.4116
Toll Free: 800.827.9385
E-mail: news@autismofpa.org

We are on the web!

www.autismofpa.org

MISSION:

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA provides a lifeline to support families and individuals affected by autism. We give hope and information to families and professionals by connecting them with each other, and to the resources that enable them to navigate their unique challenges.

VISION:

We envision a community where people with autism achieve their maximum potential as they live, learn and work.

Education - Advocacy - Support



*ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA
is a 501 (c)(3)
nonprofit organization.*

Your donation qualifies as a charitable deduction. ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA is registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State Bureau of Charitable Organizations. To receive a copy of the official registration and financial information, please call 800-732-0990 within Pennsylvania or visit www.dos.state.pa.us.

Yes, I want to help ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA

Name: _____

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Gift Amount & Payment Method

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

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Or click donate button online at
www.autismofpa.org