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Two Great Walks to Help those Affected by Autism

We often meet people at conferences and other events, who say, "I love your organization and support you at your walk every year." Often, though, these folks are referring to a different walk. Contrary to popular belief, ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA does not get funding from any other autism organization. There are two great walks held in Pittsburgh every year that support different autism missions. These events are easily mixed up.

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA has benefitted from **Highmark's Walk for a Healthy Community**, for nine years. This year's tenth annual event on May 19th, will benefit 70 Western PA non-profit health and human services agencies. Highmark underwrites the event; 100% of the money that is raised by our walkers goes directly towards funding our programs.

The other walk is for the national organization Autism Speaks. They support autism research at sites in Pittsburgh and throughout the US and other countries. This worthwhile organization has raised millions of dollars for autism research and awareness during its many years in existence. People often think Autism Speaks fund us, but while we are professional friends, they do not.

ABOARD was formed in 1996 by a group of families of children with autism. Over the years, we have connected thousands of parents with the services that their children need, and with each other for support.

Currently, we connect families, as well as our adult friends with autism, to support groups and needed services. We offer a lending library of over 800 titles, sponsor 63 support groups across PA, provide outdoor and creative arts autism events, along with sensory-friendly Santa and Easter Bunny events. Our numerous accredited conferences are consistently highly rated by the parents and professionals who attend.

As the incidence of autism has increased, so has the number of families who need our supports and services. Please walk with us this year on May 19th at Stage AE on Pittsburgh's North Side in order to keep these services alive in your local community for many years to come

Go to
www.walkforahealthycommunity.org
to register.



ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA is one of the 70 local health and human service organizations benefitting from the Walk for a Healthy Community presented by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield

WHERE: Stage AE, Pgh. PA
WHEN: Saturday May 19th
REGISTRATION: 7:15 am
5K WALK START: 9:00 am
1-MILE WALK: 9:15 am

Thank you for your support!

Executive Director Message



Lu Randall
Executive Director

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



Dear Community,

We hope this warmer weather is lifting your spirits as it is ours'. Our work has covered the whole spectrum of autism since our last newsletter. No matter the season, there is always a lot going on in our Pittsburgh office, and in our surrounding counties where we are working to do more outreach. Here are some examples of our efforts:

We have recently helped families handle several dangerous situations involving our young people and abuse or bullying situations. We also worked to resolve two situations of near homelessness and self-neglect related to two adults on the spectrum. These generally involve teaming up with social workers, investigators, the police, an employer, and in one case, a local pastor and another volunteer who were out looking for one person. He turned out to be just fine and had found safe housing on his own, but forgot to let his friends know. People have been through some rough stuff lately, and we are glad to have been able to help out.

We have been fortunate and thankful to have been able to provide training and information for: the National Association of Social Workers, numerous leaders of Laurel Highland Boy Scout Council, Keystone Stars early childhood teachers from ten counties, the Cambria county autism community, our Camp Fair families, and the large crowd at our Spring Conference in Monroeville, PA.

Many in our community gathered in February with key sponsors for a very festive Gala at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. This is one event where families and providers can really enjoy themselves while chatting about our mission with other supporters. We were so proud to share the talents of a high school student on the spectrum who provided half of the evening's live music. We also attended the Frostbite 5K race, an event donated to us by a brand new company called Positive Movementz, with professional photos provided by Robert Hester, an enthusiastic man with autism who showed up on his own to work the event. We

are very grateful that he did!

Please help us out as we strive to cover broader areas both programmatically and geographically. Share our phone number, web address and emails with anyone you know who may need to talk with us. Tell these friends "don't worry, open up to them; they have heard it all!" No problem is too small, nor too intense. Many times someone in the office has "been there, done that" and it makes our day complete when we can help others clear the same hurdles we have encountered.

Take good care of yourselves, check out our upcoming events, and we hope to see you soon as we all work our mission of creating better autism connections in Pennsylvania.

Lu Randall
Executive Director

Thank you to:
The FISA Foundation
&
The Edith L. Trees
Charitable Trust

For generous grants vital to the continuation of high quality programs & events we provide to the autism community.

Thank you to our Supporters!

General Donors to ABOARD

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Brentwood H.S. Alumni
Association Members
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BNY Mellon Community Partnership Campaign

Carol J. Schlott
Charles R. Schlott
Vicki Ann Caldart
Anonymous

Benefit for ABOARD

Ansaldo STS USA for raising funds during the company donations, the profit from the "reindeer food" sales and employee donations.

St. Benedict School in Johnstown, PA for holding a dress down day.

The Pittsburgh Foundation – Grant from Pittsburgh Fives Charitable Gift Card Program

Moxham Street Hockey Game
Nancy and Matthew Birus

Stella & Dot Trunk Show

Renee Georgi

2011 Park Ticket Sale

Take advantage of the discounted rate while supporting

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA!

Idlewild Tickets - \$18.00 (100 Tickets Available)



The gate price at Idlewild this year is \$33.99. Children 2 and under are free. **Tickets are valid WEEKDAYS only any time, May 28th June 6th – August 9th and September 3rd.** Tickets cannot be upgraded to weekend usage and are VOID after September 3.

Sandcastle Tickets - \$15.00 (250 Tickets Available)



The gate price at Sandcastle this year is \$31.99. Children 3 and under are free. Tickets are **valid any day**.

Kennywood Tickets - \$20.00 (250 Tickets Available)



The gate price at Kennywood this year is \$37.99. Children 2 and under are free. **Tickets are valid for any day in May, June and September. Tickets valid WEEKDAY only for July and August but can be upgraded to weekend usage at gate.**

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Qty:

Idlewild _____ x \$18.00 = _____

Sandcastle _____ x \$15.00 = _____

Kennywood _____ x \$20.00 = _____

Total Order = _____

CASH _____ CHECK _____

For Credit Card Orders: (please check) ☐ VISA ☐ Master Card

Card # _____ Expiration Date _____ 3 Digit Number _____

Name on Card _____

Signature _____

Mailing Order Form To:

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA
35 Wilson Street, Suite 100
Pittsburgh, PA 15116

Tickets will be sold on a first-come, first serve, upon payment basis only.

Tickets can not be promised to be delivered by any certain date. Tickets will be mailed as soon as ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA receives them from the parks but we have no control over when they release them. We can typically mail tickets at end of May to first week of June.

For more information contact

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA at

412-449-0165 or autismofpa.org



Photos of Evening!

Thank you to Diane Gross for capturing this special night with her photographic talents.

Gala photos can be downloaded for free at:

<http://keystonepix.lifepics.com/net/Login.aspx?>

Please enter the following at the login to access photos:

Email: events@autismofpa.org

Password: gala2012

Thank you for your General Donation to the Gala:

Jessica L. Lynch & Gerard Arnone

Dr. John A. Brungo and Patricia G. Weber

Robert and Margaret Crane

Crawford Ellenbogen LLC

Dakota Engineering

Michael and Jamie Dunn

Deborah Ferrara—PLEA

Pete Fuscaado

Adam Gill of

Gill Landscape Contracting

Stan and Patricia Hasselbusch

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Ron and Catherine Lalonde

Rich and Mary Beth

Marchionda

Dana and Abby Meissner

Thomas and Jennifer Schubert

TEIS Early Intervention

Chris Teachout

Albert & Megan Tressa

Philip and Elise Orlando

Mark and Barbara Wallace

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA 12th Annual Gala



Dr. Linda Cordisco, Grandin 2012 Award Winner
Lu Randall, ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA Executive Director



Tom Caste, ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA Board Member & Gala Honorary Chairperson
Stan Hasselbusch, ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA Board Member & Gala Special Honorary

Nearly 250 guests were on hand to celebrate the 12th Annual Gala to benefit ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA on February 18, 2012. Held at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, the evening started off with each guest receiving a complimentary "Puzzle-tini" cocktail as they made their way through the beautiful Tropical Forest into the Special Events Hall. Once inside the Hall, guests were treated to a musical performance by Patrick Lah, pianist, as they enjoyed tasty hors d'oeuvres and fabulous drinks. Prior to the kick-off of the program, artist George Williams dazzled the crowd with three fabulous paintings, created right before their eyes! Two of his paintings were highly sought-after silent auction items, and the

third went home with a lucky raffle prize winner.

As the evening's program got underway, guests continued to enjoy delicious foods from three different dinner stations. Honorary Chairperson Tom Caste, President of Royal Mile Asset Management, kicked off the program by thanking all the generous sponsors and introducing the evening's Special Honoree – Stan Hasselbusch, former President and CEO of L.B. Foster Company. Following Stan was Lu Randall, Executive Director of ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA, who introduced Dr. Linda Cordisco, 2012 Grandin Award Winner. At the conclusion of the program, guests were invited to enjoy made-to-order cappuccino and espresso beverages, as well as a variety of scrumptious

desserts, all while enjoying the musical talents of marimbist Vincent Wallace.

With the recent introduction of a new name – ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA – the 12th Annual Gala offered extra cause for celebration for the staff and Board of Directors. The event would not have been possible without the exceptional support from more than 30 sponsors, plus many generous in-kind donations from local businesses and individuals. Thanks to their generosity, as well as that of guests and other donors, ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA diligently continues to serve as a lifeline to support families and individuals with autism. We couldn't do it without you...thank you!



Ralph Martin, Trib Total Media and Sharon Martin
Debbie Coonelly and Frank Coonelly, The Pittsburgh Pirates



Steve Crane, ABOARD's Autism of PA Board Treasurer and
MJ Crane, Gala Chairperson

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA -12th Annual Gala Sponsors and Auction Donors

Thank you to all our sponsors for support the evening!

PLATINUM PLUS SPONSOR

TRIB Total Media

PLATINUM SPONSORS

PNC Bank, Pittsburgh
RJ Lee Group
UPMC, UPMC Health Plan, and
Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic

DIAMOND SPONSOR

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Autism Education and Research Institute
Mine Safety Appliances
Pressley Ridge School for Autism
The Watson Institute

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Meyer, Unkovic & Scott LLP
Nathan Speech Services
NHS Human Services
PGT Trucking
The Pittsburgh Pirates
Roy Diamond and Associates
Value Behavioral Health

Thank you to our Auction Donors:

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The Capital Grille
Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh
Child Health Association of Sewickley
Clay Café
Coffee Tree Roasters
Coraopolis Collision & Repair Services, LLC
Steve & MJ Crane
ESSpa Kosmetika
Fairmont Pittsburgh
Friends of ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA
Marty Gefsky
Renee Georgi, Northwood Realty
Gale Green
Jason & Carolyn Komich Hare
House 15143
Izzazu Salon & Spa of Wexford
Jewel Thief
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Pittsburgh International Children's Theater
Pittsburgh Opera
The Pittsburgh Pirates
The Pittsburgh Power
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium
PlanToys
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Lu Randall
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Diane Startari
Sweetwater Center for the Arts
Trader Joe's
Venture Outdoors Inc.
LuAnn Vesho
Richard Wallach & Kathleen Donahue

Support Group Happenings



ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA is the largest facilitator of autism support groups in Pennsylvania.

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 63 groups in 47 counties!

ALLEGHENY COUNTY NORTH HILLS JUST US PARENTS

We are a group that meets once a month where we 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 today. 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 parent, we try & have another parent help them from their experience. We are very non-denominational on all approaches on how to work & live with autism.

When: First Monday of the month.

Time: 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Where: PANERA on McKnight across from Ross Park Mall – Conference Room Childcare not available. For questions or more information please contact: Astrid Arroyo at 412-358-0393 at la.bella@verizon.net Or Maureen Wirth at 724-625-0284 or mhworth@gmail.com

ADULT SOCIAL GROUP

The ABOARD community outings group for individuals with autism & Asperger's meets once per month to participate in events like bowling, going to dinner, visiting museums and amusement parks, or meeting for a potluck. The Social Outings Group is for adults on the autism spectrum who want to partici-

pate in social events in a friendly and supportive environment. Our next activity will be a potluck at Carnegie Mellon University on April 29, 2012. For more information please email heather.a.conroy@gmail.com.

"I MATTER TOO" SIBLING SUPPORT GROUP

This group is designed to help our children understand about their sibling's diagnosis and meet friends in similar situations. It is an open forum that allows them to vent about things that may be frustrating to them and gain ideas and strategies to assist them in coping. I have come up with a lot of information as well as games and ideas that would be helpful in explaining the conditions and easy tools to use. Parents are encouraged to stay, but it is not a requirement. We meet the first Sunday of every month at 2:00 p.m. at Tilts Restaurant 4109 Bakerstown Rd. Gibsonia, PA. Any questions please feel free to call 724-351-2582 and ask for Tammie. We look forward to welcoming you!

CSIU-- DANVILLE AREA AUTISM SUPPORT GROUP

On February 27th our support group met to watch the DVD, "Loving Lampposts" as suggested by one of our parents. The documentary is evenhanded, and shows peo-

ple of various ages and varying degrees of difference. The DVD was a good starting point for discussion -- do we try to cure autism, challenge how people view people with autism, or how to mix both? Next month we will have a family roundtable meeting, so parents can bring their joys and concerns to share.

FAYETTE & GREENE COUNTY

P.A.K. (Parent's of Autistic Kids)

Our group meets on the first Tuesday of each month, except December, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. at the Behavioral Health Administration Bldg 215 Jacob Murphy Lane Uniontown, PA. For more information please call Carla Guthrie 724-880-6658 or Lisa Evans 724-736-2698.

Check out our new support group resource page on our new website:

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



Inclusive Story Time at Oakmont Carnegie Library

As a parent of three children on the autism spectrum, I know how isolating it can be to have a young child with special needs. Sometimes parents in a similar situation are reluctant to have their children participate in public library programs where they will have the expectation of sitting still or being quiet. We have many children with different abilities in our local community, and we wanted to create an atmosphere in our library where all families feel welcome.

In light of that, the Oakmont Carnegie Library launched our Inclusive Story Time for Special Needs Children in September of 2011. On the fourth Saturday of every month we offer snacks, a themed story, a craft, and toys such as Lego blocks, a large lock box, and Play Doh. Hand fidgets are available for those who want or need them.

Our story times are consistent and predictable, and the room is set up exactly the same way every time. We offer tactile, auditory, and visual learning opportunities, as well as resources for parents seeking more information about their children's diagnosis. No matter the level of ability of the child, we want all parents to regard this as an open invitation to come visit us.

This program welcomes siblings as well. Siblings often times feel left out when their brothers or sisters have special times with therapists or get to play with special toys. This is a chance for them to be together and even meet other siblings in the same situation. We encourage the whole family to come and relax together and meet other families.

Here are some things that we offer as a library to help children of all abilities feel welcome:

- We have a wide selection of books on Autism Spectrum Disorders, baby sign language, Down Syndrome, sensory integration disorders, etc. If parents cannot find the information that they are seeking, we can order it from another library.
- We bring professionals in throughout the year to spread awareness in our community. These professionals are available to our families during our Stay & Play sessions and to speak one-on-one with parents. In the past we have had ACHIEVA, Early Intervention Specialists Inc., and, in April, we will have a sign language professional visit us. This summer we are looking forward to a program with a therapy dog.
- We offer multi-sensory toys on our library main level in the children's area. This includes a rotating collection of puzzles, a play kitchen complete with mini shopping carts, a Thomas the Tank Engine train table, and stackable blocks. We also have computers exclusively for children's use.
- For alternatives to typical printed books, we have a selection of books on cd, books on MP3, children's graphic novels, and DVDs.
- Our building is handicapped-accessible with ramps leading up to our two entrances, as well as an elevator inside the building for ease of use.
- The Inclusive Story Time received a full support of the Library Board of Directors to launch our Inclusive Story Time program.

Our Inclusive Story Time for Special Needs Children is held on the fourth Saturday of every month at 10:30 am. No pre-registration is necessary and it's free to the public. Children must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver. Siblings are welcome and encouraged! Hope to see you there!

Karen Crowell

Youth Services Librarian
Oakmont Carnegie Library
Allegheny River Blvd.
Oakmont, PA 15139 (412)
828-9532
crowellk@einetwork.net



**PLEASE SHARE WITH
YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY!**



*Grounded in research...
Committed to education...
Driven by hope.
Together, we will find the answers.*

For more information on how our services can be of support to you please contact us at:

1-866-727-AERI
e-mail: support@aerionline.com
www.aerionline.com

OUR MISSION

It is the mission of AERI Behavioral Health Services (AERI BHS) to be a leader in providing access to research-based services in order to assist individuals in reaching their ultimate potential.



OUR SCOPE OF SERVICE

Assessment Training
Behavior Support Plans
Co-Teach Model
Home Consultation
Family Support Groups
Group Therapy
Crisis Prevention Intervention
Distinguished Speakers Bureau

Social Skills Groups
IEP Support
Certified Teacher
Tolerance Training
Individual Therapy
Trauma Services
Psychological Testing
Advocacy

Functional Behavior Assessments
Screening for Mental Health Diagnosis
Peer Mentor
Individualized Supports
Staff Training
Emotion / Coping Skill Training
Family Based Mental Health Services
Transition Supports



FAMILY BEHAVIORAL RESOURCES
FAMILY FOCUSED THERAPY



Family Behavioral Resources offers BHRS/Wraparound Services for children and adolescents with behavioral health needs. FBR is also proud to offer a specialized program and Autism Team, led by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst to treat children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in across Pennsylvania. FBR also offers:

- Psychological Evaluations
- Outpatient Therapy
- Social Skill/Play Groups
- Parent/Professional Workshops

- Trauma Services
- Family Support Groups
- Focus Groups
- Resource Packages for Families

- 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.

For general questions about services for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders, please contact us:
1-866-4-FBR-ASD; autismservices@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!



SUPERHERO SUMMER CAMP 2012

3 amazing sessions all in 1 camp!

Kids will rotate to each 40 Minute sessions:

(412) 767-5967
Register Today!

Children will be separated into three age groups

The Incredibles:
Ages 3-5

The Mighty Crusaders
Ages 6-9

The Avengers:
Ages 10-12

Superhero Sessions Include:
PT Boot Camp
Socialization
Handwriting

Time & Dates:
9:00 - 11:00AM
TUESDAY **June 19**
THURSDAY **June 21**
TUESDAY **June 26**
THURSDAY **June 28**

RIVER PEDIATRIC THERAPIES
www.RiverPediatric.com

Register your child (412) 767-5967 Today!

Camp will be held at: 3390 Saxonburg Blvd. Suite 250 Glenshaw, PA 15116

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Janice Nathan, M.S., CCC-SLP
Licensed Speech-Language Pathologist

ASD Specialist
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412-363-8388 nathanspeech@aol.com

**Pedal Pale Ale Keg Ride
To Benefit ABOARD's
Autism Connection of PA!**

**Saturday,
April 28, 2012
East End Brewery
Registration
@ 9:30am
Ride starts
@ 11:00am**

**Registration fee \$25
Children 5 and Under
FREE**

Save The Date!



**We thank East End
Brewing, Pittsburgh
Bikes and Venture
Outdoors for hosting
this event and
choosing ABOARD's
Autism Connection
of PA. Thank you to
all the volunteers for
arranging this
fundraiser for our
families.**

Benefits:

**ABOARD's Autism
Connections of PA**

St. Francis University Team Researches The Use of Percussion as an Effective Intervention for Children with Autism

The autism treatment field is rapidly evolving and there is a need for expanded and improved treatment options. We must find ways to assist individuals with ASD to communicate and control their environments for the purpose of improving their quality of life. In response to these needs, the Saint Francis University (SFU) Center of Excellence for Remote and Medically Under-Served Areas (CERMUSA) and the SFU Fine Arts and Occupational Therapy Departments collaborated with Camco Physical and Occupational Therapy, LLC. Through this collaboration, rural occupational therapy (OTs) practitioners were trained, using live interactive video conferencing, on how to use percussion instruments and rhythm in the therapy of children with ASD. Techniques learned were then implemented by the OTs in schools across Pennsylvania in an effort to improve attention-to-tasks (length of time during which a person can concentrate on a subject or idea) behaviors in children with ASD. CERMUSA chose to pursue this avenue of study based upon documented research and clinical outcomes of the positive effects of percussion on a variety of clinical, psychological, and social disorders.

Rhythm permeates the entire brain and is documented to



have a far more influential effect upon us than previously believed. "Drumming synchronizes the frontal and lower areas of the brain, integrating nonverbal information from lower brain structures into the frontal cortex, producing feelings of insight, understanding, integration, certainty, conviction, and truth, which surpass ordinary understandings and tend to persist long after the experience, often providing foundational insights for religious and cultural traditions." Also, "the ability to access unconscious information through symbols and imagery facilitates psychological integration and a reintegration of self." There is documented evidence that "the sound of drumming generates dynamic neuronal connections in all parts of the brain even where there is significant damage or impairment such as in traumatic brain injury, stroke, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer Disease, and Attention Deficit Disorder." (*) Furthermore,

drumming for even brief periods can actually change brain wave patterns, dramatically reducing stress.

Various studies have demonstrated that therapy which incorporates music can improve communication skills, imitation ability, and even social inclusion for children with autism.

According to the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function, music affects learning, language processing, emotional expression, memory, and physiological and motor responses. Music therapy has repeatedly been shown to improve the communication skills for children with autism. According to Mr. James Donovan, the percussion instructor and content developer for the project, "fundamental percussion is as natural for people as breathing. If you have a heartbeat you can play drums."

St. Francis University Team Researches The Use of Percussion as an Effective Intervention for Children with Autism - Continued



Drums, tambourines, bells, egg shakers, and other instruments can be used to promote social interaction, vocal responses, self-awareness, and fun. They can also be used to help children with disabilities to develop and expand retention, coordination, self-esteem, and physical and cognitive functioning. Drums and percussion can be employed to teach and enhance basic life skills such as maintaining focus, using memory, taking turns, developing leadership, using numbers, using prepositional concepts, following instructions, and modeling. Issues of spatial awareness, fine and gross motor skills, and speech can also be addressed. Many research findings confirm positive links between music, education, scholastic achievement, and social adaptability, especially among at-risk and special needs children.

For this study, OTs were trained in percussion tech-

niques that were then applied in clinical practice to increase attention-to-tasks in school-age children with ASD. The overall result for all the students was an impressive positive average percentage increase of 189.1% in attention-to-tasks. These results indicate that the use of percussion instruments may improve attention-to-tasks for children with autism. One may conclude that percussion, when used as a clinical intervention, positively impacts the length of time an individual with autism

will sustain attention-to-tasks, and that there is justification for using percussion as an intervention.

CERMUSA plans to expand this project and include families and children with autism in Western Pennsylvania, giving them the opportunity to participate in percussion training and interventions. Look for upcoming percussion sessions offered through ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA and this amazing team of therapists and researchers.

By Brenda L. Guzik, MA, RN; Kent Tonkin, MA, Jay B. Roberts, MA; and Barbara R. Demuth, MSN, RN

Saint Francis University has taken a lead in organizing and providing programs and services to individuals with disabilities both on campus and in the commu-

nity. It has established and maintains robust, dynamic, and accessible programs and partnerships that reflect the University's vision and values. Work continues at CERMUSA and throughout the campus on new and innovative ways to meet the needs of those served.

To learn more about the autism project and CERMUSA visit <http://www.cermusa.francis.edu/> "\t "_blank or visit www.cermusa.francis.edu. For additional information, call Brenda Guzik, Telehealth Research Specialist at 814-472-3389.

* Winkelman M, Shamanism: The Neural Ecology of Consciousness and Healing. Westport, Conn: Bergin & Garvey; 2000.

For a complete list of references used in this article please write to lapel@eparent.com



2012 PSO COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROGRAM

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA is once again honored to be part of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Community Partners Program



June 29, 2012.
The Special Guest Artist for the evening will be

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En Vogue is an American female R&B vocal group of the 1990's and have accumulated over 2,800 weeks on the *Billboard* charts. They have won seven *MTV Music Awards* – more than any other female group in history. *En Vogue* has won many other awards including four *Soul Train Awards*, six *American Music Awards*, and seven *Grammy* nominations.

Ticket proceeds benefit ABOARD please use code **30307 when ordering at 412.392.4900 or PITTSBURGHSYMPHONY.ORG**

Thank you for your support!

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA & Caste Family Fund Present Masquerade Bowl - Saturday, April 21, 2012



The Masquerade Bowl for Autism is an annual fundraiser at Princess Lanes to benefit ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA and the Caste Family Fund. Both work to help families in the Pittsburgh area with autism. Tickets are now on sale and include unlimited bowling, 2 drink tick-

ets, light appetizers, a chance to bid on various prizes and a 50/50 raffle.

Mask & Cocktail attire is suggested, but not required! Feel free to do up the masquerade theme or ignore it completely!

Tickets can be purchased directly through our website:

www.autismofpa.org

See you at the Bowl!

The auction at the Masquerade Bowl is a fun and important part of each year's fundraiser. Your donations are critical to it's success. Dinners, event tickets, jewelry, spa certificates, retail gift cards, or your other creative prize ideas are needed. Small things may be mailed to ABOARD's Autism of PA office. If you decide to put together a larger basket or other collection of gifts, we will arrange to pick them up from you.

Please mail or bring items to:

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA
35 Wilson Street, Suite 100, Pittsburgh, PA 15223.

Celebrating Our Gifts in Life: Maximizing the Potential of Our Children

In August of 2010, I published my dissertation on transition not knowing how completing this life-changing experience would help me to better serve student populations. Writing this article now for the many parents and loved ones that participate in and support ABOARD, I realized that this is not an end to a means, but a means to a new beginning.

My husband and I are the proud parents of two children with disabilities. This said, I was not sure until now how this might cause me to grow as a person and give me the knowledge that I am not able to get from a book, but may instead only glean from my life experiences with my children. We know as parents that our children do not come with an instruction guide, but what we have come to know over the years is how our children are best able to maximize their potential and learn from life experiences. We know that our approach may not be straightforward, but that when there is a will, there is a way. Yes, our experiences are much like puzzles, and we have to collect the correct data at just the right time in order to help our children gain their personal successes no matter how big or how small those individual achievements may be. The important part is that we have endured and we have never given up. This is how we may differ from the typical parent population. We all possess an ability to keep on going no

matter how many challenges we may meet.

We all have children to give them the best experiences and opportunities that are possible in life, however, not many of us consider the gifts that our children are able to bestow on us. Having children with disabilities causes many of us to pursue venues that we otherwise would have never considered previously. Yes, all children are gifts, but children with disabilities are gems. They cause us to explore the unexplored, walk uncharted territory, and to solve the unexpected. Thinking outside the box has caused me to become a better person. Our children have taught us how to live, how to enjoy the light hearted adventures, how to appreciate the small things in life, and how to cherish even minimal successes. Our children have the utmost potential because we allow them to be the people that God created them to be.

Our varied experiences with our children cause us to live and provide teaching moments to others. We have a responsibility in life to not only maximize the potential of our children, but to also help to develop and maximize the potential of other children. As soon as our children are birthed, it is our duty as parents to provide opportunities in which our children are able to share their gifts and maximize their potential. The provision of transition services through everyday

life experiences is this method through which all things are possible.

By Dr. Candace M. Robick

Dr. Candace Robick is an educator and a consultant specializing in Special Education, Reading, and Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. She was inspired by her children who have disabilities to pursue a Ph.D. so that she could best serve the needs of all students including her own. Her most recent research was published in 2010 and included a phenomenological study entitled: Parent/Guardian and Special Education Student Perceptions of Transition Beyond High School.

READING INSTRUCTION

*Helping Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders
Presented by Candace Robick*

**April 14, 2012
9 a.m.—12 p.m.**

**ABOARD's Autism
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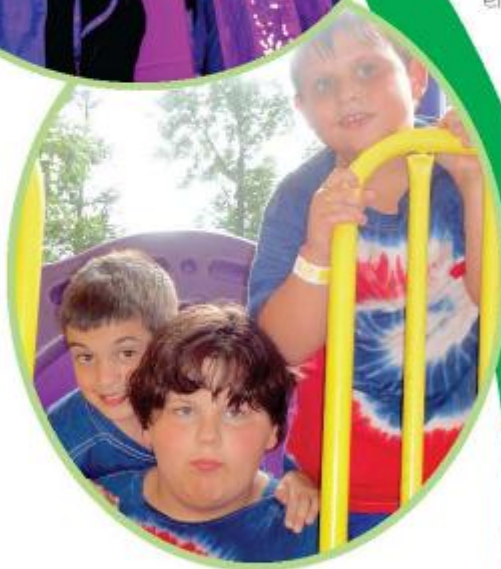


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pressleyridge.org/school-for-autism

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**Pressley Ridge
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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.



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

I Feel Mommy Guilt Almost Daily!

Guilt [gilt] *noun*

1. The fact or state of having committed an offense, crime, violation, or wrong, especially against moral or penal law; culpability.

2. A feeling of responsibility or remorse for some offense, crime, wrong, etc. whether real or imagined.

A parent wrote on Facebook: "So, how do you deal with mommy guilt? Realizing all that you held your child back from due to fear and the possibility of not being accepted? I have a very heavy heart as we are dealing with a lot of things right now and I just realized that I've held my son back from so much due to my own fears of rejection. His, and mine. I'm struggling."

I replied, "I feel mommy guilt almost daily!! I think it is my way of staying stuck in the past. I do know that every day, I wake up and do the best I can. Every day... so I try to just live for today. Today is what counts."

But who am I kidding? My son has autism, and the world is not the friendliest to people with disabilities. I'm leaving him alone on the earth when I die. I have to die. (All good reasons for me to feel guilt).

But who needs it? Guilt saps our energy and keeps us stuck in sadness about our self-perceived badness. We need all the strength we can find each and every day to work for productive, hopeful outcomes for our kids. Some days we need that strength just to put one foot in front of the other. So I want to lose the guilt in order to have the energy to be a better parent.

What I'm looking for is how to get rid of the guilt I have, and how to really accept what is and not feel guilty at all.

There are a few things that really help me. The Serenity Prayer is pretty powerful. If you are not religious or all that spiritual, you can see this as a poem:

"Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Also, I am getting older and wiser. A bit sad about the getting older, but age does bring wisdom.

And I am not a criminal, so why feel guilty at all? Maybe the next time I feel guilty about something I will confess to a policeman and see if it is chargeable!

I have a choice in managing most of my emotions. I did not pick autism for my child. It is not a sentence put upon him because of something I have done in the past. My logical brain tells my heart that all the time. It's up to me to embrace that way of thinking.

What if instead of guilt, I choose:

Innocence:

in·no·cense/'inəsəns/ *noun*:

1. The state, quality, or fact of being innocent of a crime or offense.
2. Lack of guilt or corruption, purity?

Give yourself a break. Let yourself off the hook. You are not a criminal, you are a good person; and anyway, autism is not a crime. Move in a more positive direction with hope. I tell people this all the

time. Maybe now that I've put this in writing, I can try to believe it a little bit more myself.

Parents feel free to contact me any time to talk about feelings of guilt or anything else that might be bothering you.

By
Marie Mambuca

For the past 12 years, Marie has been Family Service Coordinator for ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA. She received her BA in Psychology from La Roche College and hired in March 2000.

Marie helps families affected by an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis and the professionals who serve them. She provide them with information and resources about a variety of topics including therapies, services, support groups, and educational rights. She also manage our client database, as well as the support group network.

What Marie enjoys most about working at ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA is that she can be herself...a parent of a child with autism.

"When I'm on the phone with a new parent, I understand how they feel. I am able to provide an equal amount of empathy and strength for what lies ahead because I remember the day my son was diagnosed and how overwhelmed I felt."

Marie is a single parent of two children, one with and one without autism.. Her son Tony is 20 years old now. He's come such a long way and Marie is very proud of him. I'm also grateful to all the people who helped us. My goal is to continue to work hard to further make a place in this community for people with disabilities. Tony has a lot to offer, and I want to make sure he gets the chance.

Managing Medications at Home

Living with autism is a challenge. Handling medications while dealing with stress, challenging behaviors, siblings, crazy sleep schedules and other demands on your time can be a scary responsibility. Here are some tips that might help:

1. Use a paper checklist

Here is one example of a medicine management form you may want to try:

http://www.nextstepincare.org/uploads/File/Guides/Medication/Medication_Management_Form/Medication_Management_Form.pdf

Print a blank version or make changes to the form directly on your computer. Be sure to update the form each time a medication is added, removed or changed.

2. Keep copies on your fridge, in the car, at school, in case of emergency.

Get into the habit of taking the form to doctors' appointments or to any other setting where care is provided, including the dentist and emergency room. This will ensure that all health care providers stay on the same page (literally!) when it comes to medications.

2. Keep all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy so they can alert you to any possible interactions.

3. Request blister packs from your pharmacy.

Many pharmacists will group medications by the dose time and then package all the grouped pills in blister packs.

4. Do not split pills or mix capsules into other foods

unless your pharmacist says this is OK. Some pills are balanced 50/50 with the active ingredient equal in each half, others are not. Some capsules may be mixed into food, others should not be taken out of the capsule. Be sure you check on each drug, and if pills are splittable, buy an inexpensive pill splitter to keep things neat and even.

5. Need advice? Talk with your pharmacist about any questions you have regarding medication interactions between over the counter cold medications, prescriptions, or natural supplements.

6. Be aware of compulsive, nonalcoholic drinking. Alcohol is not the only "drinking problem" when it comes to medications. Any liquid consumed in large quantities has the potential to flush medications from the body. This can make them "wear off" earlier than anticipated, which is a big problem in case this leads your doctor to think the dosage should be raised. Caffeinated beverages have an added diuretic effect and can present the additional problem of the caffeine interact-



ing with some medications. Work with your child's doctor and treatment team if compulsive consumption of liquids is a problem.

7. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about what he or she means by "twice a day" or similar wording. Does this really mean "every 12 hours?" Or can you give the medication at other times. What if your child sleeps irregularly? Should you wake him or her to give the medication or is it OK to let them sleep? What do you do about directions that say "with meals?" if your child does not eat at regular times?

Write down all your questions and don't feel shy about asking these, and more. Your child's health, and your mental health, often depend on safe medication management.

By
Lu Randall, Executive Director
ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA

Living with autism is a challenge. Handling medications while dealing with stress, challenging behaviors, siblings, crazy sleep schedules and other demands on your time can be a scary responsibility.



Save the dates!

**Look for these
exciting events in
2012....**

Masquerade Bowl
April 21, 2012

**Highmark Walk
for a Healthy
Community**
May 19, 2012

**2nd Annual
Autism Outdoors**
TBD

PSO Event
June 29, 2012

**Autism Outside
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August 4, 2012

**And more to
come!!!!**

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new website for
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ABOARD'S Autism Connection of PA Organization/Corporate Partners

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| Associated Occupational Therapists, Inc. | The Integrated Care Corporation | Total Learning Centers |
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| The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh | New Story | The Watson Institute |
| Community Care Behavioral Health | NHS Human Services | Wesley Spectrum Services |
| Crossroads Speech & Hearing | PACE School | Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic |
| The Early Learning Institute | Pediatric Therapy Professionals, Inc. | Westmoreland CaseManagement and Supports |
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| Familylinks, Inc. | Rehabilitation Specialists | |
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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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Organization/Corporate Partners Membership Dues: \$400

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Send completed form with payment info. to:

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We are on the web!

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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



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