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Did you know in 2011 we did the following:

- Provided seven educational conferences and workshops for over 1,000 people
- Sent 52 autism e-blasts and four newsletters to over 8,000 readers each time.
- Sponsored 63 support groups in 47 counties.
- Introduced 150 people with autism and their families to kayaking, wall climbing, biking and geocaching on the North Side at Autism Outdoors.

Save the date for our Spring Conference!

“Applied Behavior Analytic Approaches to the Treatment of Autism”

Wayne W. Fisher, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Friday, March 23, 2012

8:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Doubletree Hotel by Hilton Pittsburgh

101 Mall Boulevard

Monroeville, PA 15146

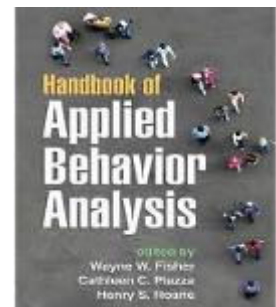


Some of Dr. Fisher's titles and accomplishments:

- Professor of Behavioral Research at the Department of Pediatrics at University of Nebraska
- Director of the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders at the Munroe-Meyer Institute
- An extensive history of clinical research programs in autism and developmental disabilities with a national reputation for excellence. His research includes the assessment and treatment of autism and severe behavior disorders.
- Noted for the creative use of concurrent schedules of reinforcement which have influenced much national clinical research
- Has authored over 130 peer-reviewed studies in 28 journals including: the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Psychological Reports*, *Pediatrics*, the *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, and *Lancet*.
- Co-author and editor of the recently published book: *Handbook of Applied Behavior Analysis*, Guilford Press, June 24, 2011

More conference information to come.

On-line registration will open by February 2012.



Executive Director Message



Lu Randall
Executive Director

"The Autism Connection of PA starts with you."

By the time you read this we will have wrapped up an "old" year that was full of new partnerships, friends, and activities. We have not taken a lot of time to reflect on the past as we sail across the "official" New Year mark into 2012, planning conferences in unique locations, expanding popular events, and starting new ones. Yet looking back has its merits.

We really need an entire THANK YOU department to come close to conveying the gratitude we have for our friends and supporters who got us through 2011 in good form. The minute I start listing key partners, professional advisors, board members, or excellent volunteers, I risk my unreliable memory leaving someone out. Additionally we have anonymous people who gave our name to new families, sent a

contribution, or recommended us to a writer who then covered our story. So please put your name, in capital letters, into the certificate below.

Show that to your kids, cut it out and hang it on your fridge or bulletin board as a reminder that you make a big difference.

We go to work every day never knowing who or what situation will greet us on the other end of the ringing phone. Each Autism Connection of PA employee and volunteer works hard to link those we talk with to the very best resources to suit their individual needs. The network of support we have to rely on is fairly large in our region, yet it still never seems to be quite enough due to the severe issues autism can create.

We will stretch our resources in 2012 to travel to new places, feature writers and speakers with fresh ideas, and create additional strategic partnerships. Please tell us what you need from us and help us connect to the people you will meet this year who face their own autism challenges. We love to work with new families and adults with autism and get them in our database so that the next time we come up with a conference, informational fair, or fun event, they can be included.

We are thankful that the Autism Connection of PA starts with you.

Sincerely,
Luciana Randall
Executive Director

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA, could not have been successful without _____'s contribution of moral support, networking, public relations, volunteer hours, article writing, public speaking, conference attending, event participation, resource sharing, and/or financial giving.



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8th Annual All Abilities Camp Fair

Saturday, February 4, 2012

**The Mall at Robinson
10:00 am – 3:00 pm**

**Come See
What Your
Child Can Do
This Summer!**



Camps and programs for typical children and those with disabilities

Inclusion friendly camps and programs

Full and half day programs

School and preschool age camps

Information regarding extended school year (ESY)

For more information contact:

**Jennifer Fulton at
412-781-4116 or
jennifer@autismofpa.org**

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!

Autism Support Group at Parents in Toto

We will be meeting the 4th Thursday of each month from noon to 2pm at Parents in Toto Autism Resource Center in Zelienople. Our next meeting is set for January 26, 2012. We will be having 2 people from Glade Run Services to talk about the summer camp there. They have added weeks in June. They have equestrian and horticultural camps. Contact Catherine Lalonde for more information about our support group.

clalonde@zoominternet.net

Indiana County Support Group

We meet the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 6-8pm at the Indiana County ARC building located at 120 North 5th Street, Indiana, PA 15701. We provide child care and a social skills group at the same time. Various speakers from the community are scheduled to provide family with information as well as we have an open forum to provide support to parents. Families can RSVP or get additional information by contacting Amy Flickinger, MA, BCBA at 724-463-3600.

Lancaster County Autism Mommies (LCAM)

Mission is to form an alliance of mothers dedicated to creating circles of support that embrace families touched by autism. United we are empow-

ered to promote growth and awareness, provide education and resources, and nurture relationships with each other, our children, our families and our community. We have monthly meetings, where we have time to socialize, provide support to one another, have topics of discussion, presenters on various resources and cover business needs. We are excited to have a support group portion of our meetings as well, which are facilitated by a clinical psychologist. We meet at Schreiber Pediatric Rehab Center. It is also important to us to contribute to our communities. We were blessed to have the opportunity to participate in a local "prom" for adults with disabilities, and the opening of the Lancaster County Library's autism resource center. This month our families made ornaments to give to a local nursing home. Our members try to participate in outreach to families trying to get connected or find resources.

lcamonline@yahoo.com

Central Susquehanna Autism Support Group

Our support group has taken a break from meetings. We are hoping to plan a meeting in February with a motivational speaker to help promote advocacy, inclusion and potential for our children. In the meantime, families are advised to attend the Local Task Force meetings for support. For more information: maryleuber@yahoo.com.

The Autism Spectrum Support Group of Lebanon County

Our group enjoyed a swimming party and a Christmas party this month. Both were well attended; we had 33 children enjoy a visit with Santa and receive a small gift. It was a fun time for all with lots of yummy treats. Our social director, Chad (age 9 with asperger's) for the past 3 years organized several rousing games of musical chairs, since we had no music for it, his brother with autism (6) sang jingle bells quite nicely. Next month we will host Jennifer Bradley for a presentation on behavior management. A trip to Bounce U is the family activity for January. Diane Grumbine.

Diane@LebanonAutism.com

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

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



Disability Legal Resource Fair



Facing Tough Issues, Together

Many families find themselves in uncharted waters when it comes to legal issues and disabilities. With this in mind we invited them to our first Disability Legal Resource Fair on November 6, 2011 to meet with a selection of attor-

neys and other specialists who listened to their concerns. Keynote speaker Dr. Larry Sutton spoke at length about problematic scenarios and possible solutions involving adults with disabilities.

Thanks very much to Tom Caste and his staff at Caste Village Shoppes for donating space and helping set up this event which happened at a critical time in the lives of many who listened and learned.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PARTICIPANTS:

Achieva Family Trust – “manages 3 types of special needs trusts for individuals with disabilities to preserve government benefits and supports”
<http://www.achieva.info/>

Caroselli Beachler McTiernan & Conboy, LLC – “helping individuals with disabilities get the benefits they deserve” www.cbmclaw.com

Elder Law Offices of Shields & Boris “protecting your family’s legacy”
<http://www.shieldsandboris.com/>

Jones Gregg Creehan & Gerace, LLP – “comprehensive estate planning & administration, with a particular emphasis on special needs trust”
www.jgcg.com

Metz Lewis Brodman Must O’Keefe, LLC – “complete estate, tax and business planning for the entire family with a focus on transitions for individuals with special needs” www.metzlewis.com

Pamela Berger – “successfully representing parents and children in special education matters and due process hearings”
www.berger-edlaw.com

Paula Rule – “specializing in supporting individuals with disabilities in their home, school and community” www.rule-law.vpweb.com

AND DR. LARRY SUTTON FOR PRESENTING!

COME WALK WITH US!

We are proud to represent Autism at the Walk for a Healthy Community presented by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield

The 2012 Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community Pittsburgh will be held **Saturday, May 19, 2012**, at a new walk location, Stage AE.



Registration begins February 1, 2012.

This annual walk is a fundraiser that benefits local health and human service agencies in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Since Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield underwrites the cost of the walk, **100% of the money raised by our walkers will directly fund family support services at ABOARD’s Autism Connection of PA.**

Questions?
events@autismofpa.org



**Saturday,
January 28, 2012**

**North Park,
Allison Park, PA**

Registration

@ 8:00am

Race starts

@ 10:00am

Registration fee \$25

**Children 5 and Under
FREE**

For additional information:

Call Race Organizer

TJ Burke

(412) 980-0085

or

**Email: autism_frostbite5k
@yahoo.com**

**Visit the website for more
information!**

www.valleylink1.com/frostbite5k



**We thank Race Organizer
TJ Burke and his
volunteers for arranging
this fundraiser for our
families.**

Benefits:

**ABOARD's Autism
Connections of PA**

ENCOURAGING PRE-SPEECH AND SPEECH DEVELOPMENT SKILLS AT HOME

Parents are always asking for tips and activities they can do to encourage speech development with their child at home. Here are some helpful hints to remember when working with your child at home.

- Choose contexts and situations that promote communication and language. Also, ALWAYS consider whether the activity is FUN and MOTIVATING to the child. A child is more willing to interact doing something that he enjoys and is of high interest to him. A child will often recognize when a language demand is being placed on him so it is important to play as naturally as possible with a "hidden" goal in mind. You can limit the amount of stress and frustration when working with your child by avoiding the use of stressful words. For example, "say." If a parent or therapist standing with a container of bubbles in front of a child states, "say bubbles" or "say more," it directly puts a demand on the child over and over again. A child is more willing to participate and possibly request bubbles if the speaking demand is hidden as a verbal model "bubbles", "more", "more bubbles", therefore encouraging the child to imitate that model.
- Provide A LOT of opportunities for the child to communicate within activities of your play activities. Young children are most likely to learn new skills if they have lots of opportunities to use these skills. For example, engage your child into play with bubbles. In this simple and fun activity, you and your child are provided continuous opportunities to target his language, motor planning, and oral motor skills.
- Select appropriate skills and vocabulary to target within the activity. Always try to choose words or things that he wants to communicate but can't do so effectively. Don't encourage him to sing a song if he doesn't like it or request a banana if he doesn't like eating them.
- Determine your child's cognitive and receptive language skills before selecting specific vocabulary to target before deciding whether your child would benefit from learning "core" versus "specific" vocabulary. "Core" vocabulary are high frequency words applicable to all environments. Core vocabulary will be more appropriate to use with a child with more significant cognitive and language deficits. For example, "more" is a core vocabulary word. This is a word that is often used to teach a child to request. Often times this word is chosen first to teach the skill of requesting but children often over-generalize this word to request EVERYTHING! If the child has the ability to understand and use specific vocabulary, then expect your child to use a word such as "bubbles" or "blow" to request bubbles, then "more" or "more bubbles" when they want you to blow MORE bubbles. If your child is not yet at the word level, then your expectations for his request may be with the gesture, with a production of /b/, /ba/, /buh-buh/ to approximate for "bubbles" or /m/, /mah/ to approximate for "more."
- Always accept approximations and praise any attempt that he makes to communicate!
- ALWAYS consider your child's skill level when selecting activities and placing demands on him. If your child has motor difficulties, then placing speaking demands on him during a game of bowling may not be beneficial to him or to you. His focus would be on the challenging motor component of the activity and it would not be motivating for him to communicate. For children with motor difficulties, choose a seated or supported activity when

ENCOURAGING PRE-SPEECH AND SPEECH DEVELOPMENT SKILLS AT HOME - Continued

focusing on communication.

What can we work on before your child is verbal? As therapists, we begin working on developing a child's pre-speech skills before expecting him to use words or phrases to communicate. What are pre-speech skills? Pre-speech skills are those skills acquired as a child before learning to speak to communicate to include respiration, oral and tactile sensation, imitation, motor planning, and speech sounds. We can implement pre-speech activities into our daily lives with our children, whether it is during play, at mealtime, or in the bathtub. As parents and therapists, one of the first things that we encourage our child to do is imitate our actions and words. For children who are not speaking, we need to teach them how to imitate us. Think of imitation as a hierarchy of skills. Typically an individual learns to imitate larger movements (gross motor) before imitating smaller movements (fine motor). Oral motor movements necessary for speech are also considered fine motor movements because they are small, precise movements and postures needed to produce specific speech sounds.

Hierarchy of Imitation skills

1. Gross motor with and without an object (jump, walk, rolling a ball, knocking over blocks)
2. Fine motor (clapping,

touching nose, waving, gesturing/signing)

3. Oral motor (kissy face, sticking tongue out, opening/closing mouth, licking lips)
4. Sounds (snoring, coughing, snorting)
5. Speech sounds (early developmental sounds in isolation p, b, m, n, t, d)
6. syllable strings (animal and vehicle sounds)
7. words

One of the most important things that I remind families of almost every day is to constantly MODEL language during play even if your child is non-verbal. It is easy for an activity to fall silent when a child is unable to provide a verbal response in language based activities. He is always listening, even if he isn't talking. Your demand or expectation in an activity may be for a physical or gross motor response, but he is still being exposed to the language involved. Using the bubbles activity as an example, your expectation may be for him to imitate you pointing to pop the bubbles or posturing his mouth to blow the bubbles, but the language should continue to be modeled ("pop, pop, pop" "uh-oh" "where bubbles?" "all gone" "more bubbles" "bubbles" "wow") throughout the activity even

though we are not expecting him to speak.

Here are some great activities to try at home with your children when encouraging both pre-speech and speech skills.

Nursery Rhymes/Finger Plays/music---Children absolutely love music and more importantly, this is a perfect way to disguise your demands on them. Wheels on the Bus, Ring Around a Rosie, Itsy Bitsy Spider, Patty Cake, Old McDonald, and Head Shoulders Knees and Toes are some of my favorites when encouraging both verbal and gesture responses. Once a child is verbal, the adult model fades and the child is encouraged to fill-in the words.

Play with vehicles/animals-- These are great play activities to use for vocabulary, sound play, and oral motor play. Children do not recognize the demand for posture imitation when making the vehicle and/or animal sounds. For example, lip pursing for "choo-choo" "woo woo" and "moo moo" "wuf wuf" and lip closure for "beep-beep" and "baa". It is fun for the child to imitate the vehicle and/or animal sounds, therefore not recognizing that speaking was the demand in the activity. This activity also provides a lot of opportunities to model vocabulary for the vehicle and/or animal names, incidental language (uh oh, wee, whoa), and location concepts (up, down, in, out).

Picture books and taking walks--Model, model, model. I always encourage families to read books and look at pictures even if they only get through one page. As a child becomes more familiar with reading activities, the longer and longer he will be able to sit and attend for a book. When I model language in a book, I always point to the picture and use one or two words to explain what I see and then I pause and give the child a chance to process the information and then respond. The response may be to imitate me pointing to the picture/object, to imitate my word, or to spontaneously point to another picture/object that he sees.

By

Stephanie M. Gomez, MA, CCC-SLP

Written by Stephenie M. Gomez, MA, CCC-SLP Early Intervention Speech Therapist for TEIS. TEIS provides therapeutic early intervention services to young children in Western PA. If you have concerns about your child's development (birth-3) and live in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, call the Alliance for Infants & Toddlers at 412-885-6000 to schedule an evaluation for your child and then be sure to choose TEIS as your child's service provider. TEIS also offers therapy services in Westmoreland County and Evaluations in Beaver County. To schedule an evaluation for your child in Beaver County, call the Beaver County Direct Services Unit (724) 891-2827 and request TEIS to complete your child's initial evaluation.

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*If you have not received
sponsorship information and
would like to please contact
Rebecca Thomas at 412-449-
0165 or
Rebecca@autismofpa.org*

***ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA
12th Annual Gala - February 18, 2012***



On **Saturday, February 18, 2012**, ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA will host our *12th Annual Gala* at the spectacular Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. We are so excited to share a fabulous evening with over 250 friends and guests in such

a beautiful and treasured location in Pittsburgh! Plus, we are very pleased to announce **Stan Hasselbusch, CEO of L.B. Foster Company**, as our Special Honoree. In his years as a Board Member and avid supporter, Stan has been dedicated to our mission

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

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

Our name has changed but our address remains the same! Please mail or bring items to: Autism Connection of PA, 35 Wilson Street, Suite 100, Pittsburgh, PA 15223.

Thank you in advance for your tax-deductible generosity!

Asperger's Syndrome and Martial Arts

I am going to make some observations about people with Asperger's. It doesn't pertain to all people with Asperger's, because it turns out that there is a spectrum. In fact, there is a saying: "When you have met one person with Asperger's, you've met one person with Asperger's."

One common characteristic that many Aspies struggle with is physical coordination. They may have a poor internal representation of their body in space. As the academic scholar and fellow Aspie, Caitlin Freeman, points out, medical research has discovered that the part of the brain that processes balance and spatial awareness—the cerebellum—can tend to develop differently in individuals who are on the spectrum. Hence the characteristic "Aspie clumsiness."

Without coordination, there may be little chance of successful social interaction via athletic activities; and without a good grasp of one's spatial orientation, there is the risk of missing the chair when sitting down to a social lunch. (I know—I've done that.) In school, the perception of one as physically inept can also lead to bullying.

So there's a whole component of "confidence" that can go un-nurtured since it derives from a comfort with one's physical ability.

The good news is that even though Aspies may not develop along the same lines as normal folks, they can still find their own path.

But consider the obstacles to overcoming this problem:

First, many Aspies do not like to be touched by others (or

touch others).

Second, social communication and interaction is difficult.

Third, there cannot be too much sensory distraction.

Fourth, and most important, like everyone else, Aspies need to be able to proceed at their own pace.

Now, it might occur to some readers, just as it occurred to me, that lessons in a structured movement activity like ballroom dancing would be perfect for teaching coordination. For many Aspies, however, this would be a poor choice. Why is this a bad idea? Well, look at the obstacles: Dance partners have to touch each other, and there has to be social communication in order to organize their motion. Further, more than one couple is on the floor at a time, which leads to an overload of sensory distraction. And lastly, the person with Asperger's may feel that he or she is holding the others back—he or she may simply wind up reliving their past frustration with coordination.

Still, ballroom dance is on the right track, because if there is one thing that Aspies are good at, it is routine. (If you've ever wondered how it is that so many Aspies can love computer coding, this is a big part of it). Aspies can really excel at following rules and repetition.

Well, what about Martial Arts? Aren't most Martial Arts a structured set of repeated routines? In fact, Aspies not only benefit from the structure of Martial Arts, they also learn how to move with balance, agility, and spatial awareness, which improves overall coordination

and fosters a greater sense of one's body in space.

Add to this the fact that, in contrast to ballroom dancing, Martial Arts are more about gaining independence from an embrace.

Plus, Martial Arts are not a "team sport," which is a good thing from the point of view of an Aspie. Tony Attwood has observed that some people with Asperger's can develop "ability in solitary rather than team sports," which may seem surprising when one considers the motor clumsiness. To achieve competence, however, these sports require "solitary practice, accuracy, timing and stoicism"—just the sorts of things that Aspies are good at.

Indeed, the study of the Martial Arts is an excellent discipline for cultivating in a calm and organized setting the areas of the brain responsible for movement and balance. Caitlin Freeman, a local consultant and college instructor with Aspergers states, "the first time I realized that I was more than just a brain being schlepped around by a disjointed collection of body parts."

My personal history is similar.

After I learned that I had Asperger's, I hypothesized that perhaps my clumsiness was not a permanent characteristic after all, but in fact could be worked around. I simply had to find the right tool. There were two very big arguments in favor of the Martial Arts Academy I finally chose: private lessons and sympathetic instructors.

One-on-one teaching is very important, because it allows me, a socially shy Aspie, to proceed

without embarrassment at my own pace. And since the classes are private, they bypass any sensory distraction from other students.

It also helps to have an instructor who is in tune with what this Aspie needs in order to learn. Like many people with Asperger's, I am a visual thinker. I am fortunate that my teacher is himself an artist, because it influences the way that he instructs. What I mean by this is how he peppers his lessons with visual metaphors that enable the Aspie in me to more easily grasp a picture of what is being taught. In addition, my teacher is outstandingly patient. He cares about the result, no matter how slow the teaching may have to be for me to get the motion.

Now, you have to understand that I am benefitting from the training at my Martial Arts Academy after discovering that I have Asperger's at the age of 50. But wouldn't it be awesome if young Aspies could obtain this type of movement and balance education along with the social skills lessons that they already receive? Just think of how much more likely it would be that they would achieve a successful career and well-rounded social life.

By David Katz

The author was diagnosed with Asperger's in 2011, is employed full-time as a web designer and studies a mixed discipline derived from the Filipino Martial Arts called the Counterpoint Tactical System. He has both a PhD in art history and a Masters Degree in web development. He would also like to thank Caitlin Freeman for her valuable contributions and significant help in preparing this article for publication.



*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.



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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!

Summer 2012 Programs

Inclusive camp experiences for children with autism ages 3-15 at various summer camps in southwestern PA and Erie, PA

Therapeutic summer camps for teens with autism ages 13-21 at our sites in Sewickley, Sharpsburg and Upper St. Clair

ACCLAIM summer program on local college campuses for high school juniors and seniors with autism who plan to attend college.



Learn more on our website or call:

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Reverse Keg Ride for Autism!



THANK YOU! Those are two small words that cannot convey the magnitude of our appreciation for East End Brewing’s successful leadership efforts to raise money for ABOARD at the Halloween edition of the Reverse Keg Ride. Owners Julie, Scott and Otis Smith donned their finest “Ho Ho Ho” - holiday apparel and went along for the (appropriately) snowy bike ride. Beginning at OTB Café on the South side (website: <http://www.otbbicyclecafe.com/>) which provided an excellent location and fabulous breakfast spread, costumed riders pedaled over the Hotmetal Bridge to the brewery’s current location at 6923 Susquehanna Street in the East End of Pittsburgh.

Read about East End Brewing in their latest press

coverage in Pittsburgh Magazine here: <http://www.pittsburghmagazine.com/Pittsburgh-Magazine/November-2011/East-End-Brewing-Pittsburgh/>



Their official website is www.eastendbrewing.com where you can find all the details about when you can visit and pick up a growler (glass jug) of your favorite brew. Don’t forget to try their awesome root beer with a nice cinnamon finish (not that we got completely HOOKED on that, mind you.)



Muchas Gracias, East End Brewing, Venture Outdoors, OTB Café and the many high-spirited cyclists, including Batman, Duffman, Thing One and Thing Two, the Penguin, Juan Valdez, and all their friends who supported local families with autism on a crazy, snowy, fun-filled day!



We want to thank our community partners for supporting us in continuing our mission of creating a community where people with autism achieve their maximum potential as they live, learn, and work.

Yoga for Autism

On November 15, 2011, BYS Yoga open their doors to our community by offering two classes. The first class was for entire families of children with autism to participate. Moms, dads, kids with autism, their Brothers and Sisters and even a Grandma took part in our family yoga class. Those that came in bouncing off the walls as the



saying goes, slowly calmed and relaxed as the families enjoyed this time together. Following the family class, BYS Yoga offered a class for teens and adults. It was a great social get together for our teens and adults with autism as several had already known each other. The group came together, talked, and then settled in to a

relaxing class together.

We want to thank BYS Yoga for offering this to our families and individuals for free. During both classes, we had two exceptional teachers, Cara Bessko and Paul Richards, that were knowledgeable and able to deal with our very diverse groups!



THANK YOU TO BYS YOGA AND THEIR STAFF FOR PROVIDING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO OUR FAMILIES!



The 2nd Annual Moxham Street Hockey Turkey Cup Reunion Game that was played on Thanksgiving morning at Johnstown's Roxbury Park would like to thank the participants, volunteers as well as our sponsors. With your generosity, we will be donating over \$3,500 dollars to support the local Autism Community through ABOARD (Advisory Board on Autism and Related Disorders).

Sponsors of the 2nd Annual Moxham Street Hockey Turkey Cup Reunion Game:

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- Actively involves parents and other caregivers
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Early Intervention in Pennsylvania is a system of services & supports designed to help families with children who have or who are at risk of developmental delays. In Allegheny County, coordination of services for children between ages birth to 3 years is provided by The Alliance for Infants and Toddlers, Inc.

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Learn more about us.

Take a virtual tour, call or come visit.

pressleyridge.org/school-for-autism

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Pressley Ridge
School for Autism
The Path to Full Potential™

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!](mailto:support@autismofpa.org)

I'm overwhelmed! Where do I begin? An Attorney (and Parent) Guide to Getting Started with Your Special Needs Planning

We hear other parents talking, “you need to set up a trust.” You hear terms like guardian, trustee, will and power of attorney. These terms swim around in your head and you know you should learn more, take some action. Yet, when your child needs to get to speech therapy, you are getting the third call of the week from school or you land another large assignment at work, the needs of what seems like the future are pushed back and realities of the present take the forefront. There is no doubt that all of these legal questions are difficult, so it appears natural to push them off to handle the daily crisis. But as a parent and a lawyer, I am here to tell you these difficult decisions need to be made. Rest assured, you will feel much better when everything is thought through, planned and established.

So how do you get started? Here are my tips on breaking it down:

1. **Gather your information.** Get together all of the IEPs, doctors reports, psychiatric evaluations, report cards, test results as well as books and articles that have been helpful. This list is just a starting point based on your individual situation. There maybe other things to add. Put these items together. Organize them if you can, or if you need to just get

some sleep like me, put them all in a giant plastic waterproof container, label and seal it! Oh, and tell someone else where it is located.

2. **Make lists.** Write down all of the important plays and players in your child's life. Here are just a few that come to mind: doctors, family friends, medications now and in the past, tests with results, diet restrictions and allergies. Write down your dreams for your child and how will you get there. What are your child's living options and who can step into your shoes, even if for a day. When you think of any information, write it down. I carry a notebook in my purse because there isn't a week that goes by that I don't meet another parent or professional that has a great tidbit of information. Gather these notes and organize them or, just like mentioned above, go out and get another plastic bin. Know that you are now two steps further in planning for the future of your family. The important step you have taken is putting those thoughts in your head down on paper.
3. **Compose a formal letter of your wishes.** They come with all different names like letter of intent or summary of your

wishes, but the basic outlines are the same. This is where all those lists come in, and you detail all of the important information about your child and family. Samples can be found online, or you can get an outline from your qualified professional discussed next.

4. **Find an attorney and a financial planner.** First and foremost, both of these individuals should understand the unique planning that accompanies working with a family who has a member with special needs. This is a specialized field that requires knowledge in the area of tax law, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability, Medicaid and Medicare, waivers and laws regarding guardianship. Why do I say that you need the financial planner and the attorney? Simply, you can set up the best estate plan, but if you have not properly funded it, it may not provide for your loved one at times of need. Also, you can do top-rate financial planning, but if it all goes to your child in your will or by beneficiary designation, the loss of government benefits and medical insurance can be devastating.

My tip, interview both the attorney and financial planner

I'm overwhelmed! Where do I begin? An Attorney (and Parent) Guide to Getting Started with Your Special Needs Planning - Continued

before you choose them. Gauge whether he or she has sufficient knowledge of special needs planning before proceeding. Also make sure it is a good fit. This will be a person or team with whom you will have a long-term relationship. You never know when State and Federal laws and funding will change and your plan will require modifications or updates. Life happens, and your team will be there through the changes.

I could go into more details about all of the legal and financial terms; but once you find the proper professional, they will walk you through the process. Each step of the way they should explain what needs to be done and what decisions you will have to make at that time. It is nice to know someone is taking a little off your plate, if even for the moment.

By
Jillian F. Zacks, Esq.

Jillian Zacks is an associate in the Personal Client Services Group at Metz Lewis Brodman Must O'Keefe, LLC and the parent of twins on the autistic spectrum. She can be reached at jjzacks@metzlewis.com or 412-918-1100

This document is intended to provide information of general interest and is not intended to offer any legal advice about specific situations or problems. Metz

Lewis Brodman Must O'Keefe LLC does not intend to create an attorney-client relationship by offering this information, and anyone's review of the information shall not be deemed to create such a relationship. You should consult a lawyer if you have a legal matter requiring attention.

Santa's Autism Connections: More than Meets the Eye



Santa heard about our ongoing efforts to provide great autism-friendly experiences for you, and set aside special time to listen to kids' wishes in November. We realize not everybody celebrates Christmas. But beyond recognizing traditions for some, our special Santa visits were important for many other reasons.

Autism Connection of PA staff contacted and met with mall management, photographers, security guards, public relations people, and of course Santa, to discuss what "autism friendly" means. This left a lasting impression and instilled autism information they would not have otherwise had, and that they can use in their day-to-day work. Visiting journalists

and press photographers spent hours with our families – great training! – and were then able to convey what is special about our population to over 525,000 readers (yes, over half a million!) Autism awareness is about much more than statistics, and their words and photos really helped educate the public last month.



We met 80 new families who in turn will receive lasting support, information and referrals from us. Finding like-minded people with similar concerns is probably the second best part of the Santa visits, and we were glad to over-

hear people exchanging pediatrician names and their own cell phone numbers, starting new friendships.

Of course, what you see sometimes is what you get, so reading notes that said "Thanks, that was the first time we have ever had a photo of all our kids together with Santa," or "We appreciated this so much, especially the siblings who could finally go somewhere in public without worrying about being stared at" told us we made a difference.

We are here for you as well, so if you passed on these events, please call to inquire about providing autism-friendly support for your traditions, hobbies, or anything else that will help make a special Autism Connection in PA for families in our region.

Thank you to the following malls, management and staff that work hard after hours when the mall was closed to provide our families with this opportunity.

Thank you !
Monroeville Mall
Monroeville, PA
Photos with Santa by
Cherry Hill

And

Ross Park Mall
Pittsburgh, PA
Photos with Santa by
Nozrr



Save the dates!

Look for these exciting events in 2012....

- Autism Frostbite 5K
January 28, 2012
- All Abilities Camp Fair
February 4, 2012
- 12th Annual Gala
February 18, 2012
- Pottery Class for Autism
March 4, 2012
- Spring Conference
March 23, 2012
- Masquerade Bowl
April 21, 2012
- Spring Fling for Autism
April 28, 2012
- Highmark Walk for a
Healthy Community
May 19, 2012
- 2nd Annual
Autism Outdoors
TBD
- PSO Event
June 29, 2012
- Autism Outside Classroom
August 4, 2012

And more to come!!!!

**Remember to check out
our new website for
event details!**

*Thank you for your support in 2011!
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| The Early Learning Institute | Pressley Ridge School for Autism | |
| Easter Seals Western PA | Rehabilitation Specialists, Inc. | |
| Emmaus Community of Pittsburgh | River Speech & Educational Services, Inc. | |
| | Sensory Link Pediatric Therapy | |



2012 Organization/Corporate Partners Membership Form

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.

Members will be acknowledged in our quarterly newsletter for year of 2012, a link on our website to yours, and discounted exhibitor rates at our conferences.

Organization/Corporate Partners Membership Dues: \$400

Please complete the following:

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MISSION:

ABOARD's Autism Connection of PA provide 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.

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

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