Finding the Way Back Home
A visual tool
La bonne route a chez moi
Un outil visuel
From our Executive Director...

The apparently gentle touch reflected in the image on the cover of this issue of The Autism Newslink captures only one aspect of the enormous bronze sculpture by artist Linda Brunker, recently photographed near a canal in Waterford, Ireland. What one cannot see of the artist’s work are the long bronze ribbons of the arms stretching out determinedly from either side in order to make that connection. Touch is one of those topics in autism that generates conversations about hopes, myths, and moments of clarity about the experience of shared humanity, but which rarely permits indifference. Ask any parent or teacher of a child with autism about the experience of fleeting touch, hand over hand prompting, a painful pinch received or about trying to physically assist a child whose hands seem incapable of putting on a shoe or who can hold onto a crumpled plastic straw as if his life depended on it. From the child’s perspective at that moment, perhaps it does. From the educator’s perspective, it lengthens the list of considerations for IEP goals.

So we try to understand, to negotiate—sometimes with words, other times with gestures or pictures—she nature or necessity of contact between these individuals in relationship to learning. There is the dad who knows that his son with autism cannot tolerate a firmly clasped hand, but allows a certain connection through the gentle linking of curled finger tips which direct the child in the way he might go. There are so many things to be worked out. This is good enough for now. There is the teacher whose student cannot go from one part of the school to another without holding firmly to her hand because he might bolt. They are slowly working on greater independence. The non-verbal student who firmly pulls a teacher’s forehead to press it to her own challenges the teacher’s understanding of touch and its relationship to communication in autism. And there is the student with Asperger’s who exceeds academically, wishes fervently to be included with peers but who finds it difficult to be in a room where unintentional touch from the people around him prompts him to push back in order to feel safe, because surprise touch produces tremendous anxiety for him.

Even when the connection for learning between us and children on the spectrum seems at times elusive, it is our hope that some of the tools in this issue will assist our readers to understand their own responses better as well as the responses of their students. Along the way, parents and educators do well to have regular and positive contacts in order to increase the likelihood that the students will be firmly supported in their learning.

Margaret Spoelstra, Executive Director

Putting a Face on the ASO Provincial Office

How many times do you make a phone call and talk to a faceless voice? Often, you think it would be nice to “know” to whom you were talking. Below are the main “family members” of the ASO provincial staff.

From left to right: Ethel Berry (Manager, Information, Member and Donor Services), Margaret Spoelstra (Executive Director), Barbara Worrall (Administrative Staff), Bonnie McPhail (Treasurer for Autism Day Co-Chair), Ron Harrison (Treasurer for Autism Day Co-Chair), Esther Zhou (Bookkeeper), Jean Woolford (Special Projects), Yao Jie (Bookkeeping Assistant).

Although our family is constantly changing and growing, here are a few more you should know: Board of Directors: Myhnan Grohobro, Nancy Blake, Leslie Brown, Lynda Clark, Christine Dade, Cidelo Du Da (President), Linda Gibson, Jane Houlden (Chair, President’s Council), Deborah Kitchen, Ginny Pearce, Monica Richardson, Jason Smith, Lonnie Zwagenshain. Regional Support Leaders: Lynda Bretham, Liz Cohen, Robin Frikovic, Jane McLaren, Anne Wittich. Others: Anna Donato (Treasurer for Autism Day Manager), Patricia Gullin (ASO Program Support Coordinator) Bruce McIntosh (Consultant).

Autism Society Ontario is a registered charitable non-profit organization (701179 E580053). Our mission is to ensure that the province of Ontario has the resources to provide support and services to all affected, including all Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Our promise is to ensure that each and every person with autism is well informed and connected to vital services. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a term used to describe a collection of neurodevelopmental conditions. Subscribers to The Autism Newslink are entitled with ASD Connect, The Autism Network, a virtual community that provides a platform for people with autism to connect to each other and to relevant information or resources. The Autism Newslink is also available online at www.autismsociety.on.ca or at www.thesocietysource.ca.

Attention Members/Subscribers: We often reference websites or e-mail address in articles to obtain additional information. We recognize that not everyone has the ability to make connections through the internet. If you require additional information regarding a particular article or advertisement, please contact your local ASO chapter for assistance. Autism Newslink Editor

Other features

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Finding the Way Back Home: A flow-chart created by Steve and Wynn Anne Siibald

Using RESPs for Children with Developmental Disabilities, by Alison McQuillen

Dealing with Stress and Anxiety, by Sheila Bell

Disability Tax Credits, by Lois Melrose

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Toonie for Autism Day 2004

Four pages of photos and responses from enthusiastic participants

Photos. All photos used with permission.

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To top it off he got back his perfect spelling grade. I am the parent of an 11-year-old son with severe autism. He is extremely challenged and has a great day! This definitely makes up for the fact that it’s really not so bad and they plug along again. He can do that!

I want to hear about people going out with their autistic children as a family only to have strangers stare, or rudely comment because the child is loud due to an uncontrollable vocal tic? Do other families have their furniture reinforced, doors with re-verse locks, fences locked, and do 40 loads of laundry per week because of their child? Do they wonder why they have been dealt this hand only to have their autistic child then do something to make them laugh so hard that they decide it’s really not bad and they plug along again until the next time? Do other families give up trying to relate to the editor to make them laugh so hard that they decide it’s really not so bad and they plug along again until the next time? Do other families have trouble coming up with and applying strategies, find it difficult to imagine abstract or multiple solutions to a problem, get stuck on one way of solving a problem, can be impulsive, have a hard time controlling their emotions and have trouble monitoring or regulating their behaviour. At school, difficulty with any of these skills can pose a serious impediment to learning and academic achievement. No matter how good a student’s knowledge might be in a particular subject, their performance can be negatively affected if they have trouble with executive skills. For example, in the classroom, students who are not able to concentrate, inhibit distractions and manage their thoughts, have trouble following the teacher and processing information. While solving a math problem, children may know their facts well, but still not be able to come up with a solution if they have trouble organizing their ideas, have trouble coming up with a strategy, and find it difficult to mentally integrate information to solve the problem. Children with executive deficits also tend to show socially inappropriate behaviour and poor interpersonal skills. It is not surprising that problems with various aspects of adaptive behaviour such as communication, play and social relationships have been associated with executive dysfunction (Gillotty, Kenworthy, Stratam, Black, & Wagner, 2002). In summary, difficulties with executive function extend to the home and other environments, affecting not only academic but everyday functioning as well. Moreover, due to the covert nature of executive impairments, they are often missed or overlooked, or mistaken for lack of motivation, laziness or impulsivity. Although there have been studies to look at executive dysfunction and autism, few studies have formally tested executive skills in children with Asperger’s Syndrome (AS). Numerous symptoms of executive function deficits are reminiscent of the typical features of AS such as the need for sameness, lack of planning, impulsivity and circumscribed interests. Since executive function is important for and related to virtually all other domains of cognition—learning, memory, higher-order information processing, manipulating information, organizing behaviour, language and visual processing—their impact on learning and academic functioning can have severe consequences for those affected. Thus it is important to recognize these deficits early and apply appropriate training.

Send letters to the editor at:
mall@autismsociety.on.ca

4: The Autism Newslink Fall 2004

Executive Functions and the Brain by Valerie Salimpour

When Someone “Gets” It

Rowan’s great day came down to the genius of a phenominal and determined Educational Assistant (EA). Although Rowan has had to hold hands when moving from place to place. His phenomenal and determined Educational Assistant (EA) has been working hard on independent walking at school. Each day after school I take him to shops, pharmacies, etc.—just a quick trip to pick up one or two items—to help generalize the skill. For a few weeks he’d been doing a fantastic job and while I thought “mission accomplished,” his ingenious EA had bigger and better plans. To be honest, I was terrified when she told me, but I nervously and excitedly thought, “He can do that!”

One morning she brought her walkie-talkies to school, gave one to the librarian and kept one in the classroom. She then radioed the librarian to let her know Rowan was on his way by himself. When he arrived, the librarian let his EA know he’d made it there. They read a book together and she sent him back to class. I happened to be on lunchroom hot dog duty that day so she brought me a walkie-talkie and then sent him down to “see Mom.” I peeked around the corner to see him walking up the empty hallway all on his own—head up, hands down at his sides—he had never looked so grown up or so gorgeous!

To top it off he got back his perfect spelling test (the sixth in a row!), and when we went to the pharmacy after school he said, “Hi Angie!” to the pharmacist assistant—his first spontaneous greeting ever in his whole life! An all-round great day! This definitely makes up for the fact that he coated the living-room window in black shoe polish the day before.

Michelle Murdoch-Gibson

trying to relate

I am the parent of an 11-year-old son with severe autism. He is extremely challenged and his life revolves around him and his needs 100 percent of the time.

Although I enjoy reading The Newslink when it arrives, I have noticed that there aren’t usually any articles that pertain to the lifestyle my family and I have because of our son’s autism.

I would like to read about other families and how they cope with extreme challenges. Are there other parents out there who panic with each of their birthdays because they realize that they are again one year closer to becoming a senior citizen who will have to care for a toddler? Are there other families like us who cannot have any respite because their child will not (no matter what strategies have been tried) tolerate a babysitter—whether it’s a male or female or even one of each at the same time? Are other people going out with their autistic children as a family only to have strange are rudely comment because the child is loud due to an uncontrollable vocal tic? Do other families have their furniture reinforced, doors with reverse locks, fences locked, and do 40 loads of laundry per week because of their child? Do they wonder why they have been dealt this hand only to have their autistic child then do something to make them laugh so hard that they decide it’s really not so bad and they plug along again until the next time? Do other families give up trying to relate to the editor to make them laugh so hard that they decide it’s really not so bad and they plug along again until the next time? Do other families have trouble coming up with and applying strategies, find it difficult to imagine abstract or multiple solutions to a problem, get stuck on one way of solving a problem, can be impulsive, have a hard time controlling their emotions and have trouble monitoring or regulating their behaviour. At school, difficulty with any of these skills can pose a serious impediment to learning and academic achievement. No matter how good a student’s knowledge might be in a particular subject, their performance can be negatively affected if they have trouble with executive skills. For example, in the classroom, students who are not able to concentrate, inhibit distractions and manage their thoughts, have trouble following the teacher and processing information. While solving a math problem, children may know their facts well, but still not be able to come up with a solution if they have trouble organizing their ideas, have trouble coming up with a strategy, and find it difficult to mentally integrate information to solve the problem. Children with executive deficits also tend to show socially inappropriate behaviour and poor interpersonal skills. It is not surprising that problems with various aspects of adaptive behaviour such as communication, play and social relationships have been associated with executive dysfunction (Gillotty, Kenworthy, Stratam, Black, & Wagner, 2002). In summary, difficulties with executive function extend to the home and other environments, affecting not only academic but everyday functioning as well. Moreover, due to the covert nature of executive impairments, they are often missed or overlooked, or mistaken for lack of motivation, laziness or impulsivity. Although there have been studies to look at executive dysfunction and autism, few studies have formally tested executive skills in children with Asperger’s Syndrome (AS). Numerous symptoms of executive function deficits are reminiscent of the typical features of AS such as the need for sameness, lack of planning, impulsivity and circumscribed interests. Since executive function is important for and related to virtually all other domains of cognition—learning, memory, higher-order information processing, manipulating information, organizing behaviour, language and visual processing—their impact on learning and academic functioning can have severe consequences for those affected. Thus it is important to recognize these deficits early and apply appropriate training.

send letters to the editor at:
mall@autismsociety.on.ca

Valerie Salimpour is a research student at York University, Toronto.

Teaching Students with ASD: Dealing with Stress and Anxiety

by Sheila Bell, Speech and Language Pathologist

I

dividuals with Autism and Asperger’s Syn-
drome (AS) experience stress and anxiety on a daily basis. This high stress/anxiety level usually becomes obvious as loud and difficult behavior. Your challenge as a teacher is to read the small signs of “anxiety rising,” before you reach the stage of load disruptive behavior that will disorganize your entire classroom.

Here are some of the common sources of stress for ASD individuals:

- Weak language skills (inability to follow verbal interactions “at speed” misunderstanding of what people say has said, inability to quickly and clearly express needs and wants)
- Weak social interaction skills (inability to follow a social interaction “at speed” inability to read subtle social cues such as tone of voice and facial expression, misunderstanding of motivation of another person, negative association with previous social interactions gone wrong)
- Academic work which is above the student’s level but they may be able to do “the form” but not understand the “content” may be overwhelmed by the total amount of work or the speed of presentation of new material
- Homework (see Tony Attwood’s article, Should children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder be exempted from homework? available on his website at www.tonyattwood.com under “Papers”)
- Measurement of performance (eg. making mistakes, winning and losing, being first in line; being ranked in class). This can cause stress even if the child is first because they fear falling from that position. For these individuals, perfection and winning seem to represent “safety.” They do not strive for the top for the same reasons as other high achievers.
- Change in routine or schedule (especially if the change is not anticipated and is explained verbally)
- Sensory overload (may be hypersensitive to noise, light, touch, smell)
- “Missing things” This seems to be a focus of anxiety for some individuals with ASD (maybe because these individuals frequently “miss” pieces of information in the course of everyday events and expend a lot of “thinking energy” trying to fill in the gaps in their knowledge; to miss an entire event may seem like too much to catch up on)
- Seasonal disintegration Some individuals with AS experience heightened anxiety during certain seasons of the year. This may correspond to seasonal allergies (some have conventional allergies to ragweed, pollens, asthma and itchy eyes, as well as display- ing frustration, inattention, emotional lability and other difficult behaviours)

What are the “small signs” of stress rising? These will vary depending on the student. It is important to identify these subtle behavior changes in your ASD student in order to intervene before more spectacular negative behaviors occur. Here are some behaviors you might see:

- Small “tics” and repetitive behaviors (eg. eye blinks, facial grimaces, nose or throat noises, head movements, arm or hand movements)
- Language scripting (eg. reciting language from a movie or book, apparently unrelated to the situation, but which may reliably indicate stress (eg. “Do I have to do it?”)
- Distressed or angry facial expression
- Body movement (eg. getting up from desk and pacing, rocking, throwing things)
- Inappropriate laughter
- Rising volume and/or tone of voice

What can I do to reduce stress and anxiety in the classroom?

1. Identify the sources of stress
- Look at the context of the behaviour (what happened just before, at the same time, just after). This will help you make a “best guess” about the source, then make changes based on that guess (eg. if the level of the work is too hard, try modifying the academic materials; if the noise level in the classroom is too high, try to create a quiet working space for the student)
- If signs of stress lessen with the changes you make, you’re on the right track; if stress level remains the same or rises, you need to look at the situation again, and see what else might be causing the student’s distress.

2. Structure and routine in the classroom
- Many teaching approaches advocated for ASD students take advantage of the calming effect of structure, routine and predictability (eg. TEACCH)
- Typically developing students constantly take in auditory and visual information that helps them predict, with a fair degree of certainty, what will happen next; they depend on their language skills to help them figure out what’s happening if suddenly the situation is unfolding in an unplanned way. ASD students do not take in this information and life is often a series of unpleasant surprises. The more you can remove the element of surprise from the classroom situation, the calmer your student will be.
- Establish a routine early in the school year. Write it out in social story format, using visual cues from the story (eg. reminder cards) to help the student connect the real-life situation to the one described in the story.

3. Use visual supports to back-up verbal language
- It’s a good rule of thumb to back up all verbal information with written (and/or picture) support
- Individual written/picture information sheets at the student’s desk (make sure if you have a large visual for the entire class)
- Visual supports can decrease the general anxiety about missing information

4. Visual written schedules
- Students with AS should work from a visual/ written schedule
- Large schedules can include all of the day’s events; need to be readily available for checking throughout the day (maybe in the classroom, or at the student’s desk)
- Anxiety over changes and transitions in sched- ule are reduced when the schedule is written down (student needs to count on the information being correct and the “last word” on what is happening)
- Smaller “task schedules” can help students to manage academic work independently; they can see how much there is to be done, and when their breaks will be.
- It may be useful to teach the student how to read a digital clock and connect their personal schedules to observable time displays (ASD individuals tend to have a poor inner sense of the passage of time)

5. Modified academic work
- Focus on the language level of the academic tasks. This is frequently the stress-inducing piece (eg. student may be strong in math, but may not understand the language used to de- scribe new concepts)
- Instructions should use simple language struc- tures and vocabulary
- Make use of visual instructions and demonstration
- Report student’s learning of new vocabulary (have appropriate level dictionary available at workplace, demonstrate how to use the dic- tionary, perhaps begin a personal dictionary of new words learned in the context of school topics)
- Intersperse “language-intense” tasks with activities that are more visual, to allow “thinking breaks”

6. Use of favourite topics
- You can get an anxious child to approach new concepts by presenting them in the context of favourite topics. Use your imagination (eg. if child likes maps, and your math topic is mea-
The student with ASD should have identifiable “safety people” within the school, available at all times during the school day (adults, not peers). These “safety people” are known to have answers to difficult social questions and are able to help the ASD student find workable solutions to everyday problems. All identified helpers should have a working understanding of this particular student’s difficulties.

Exercising Restraint

by Ed Mahony, Special Education Resource Teacher

Dangero us restraint is a little spoken of yet all too serious reality in Ontario schools. Often euphemistically called Physical Intemperance, the use of force to limit an individual’s movement. It is permitted in virtually every educational jurisdiction as a means to prevent self-harm, acting-out behavior and those around him when they pose a direct and immediate serious threat. Unfortunately, the use of outdated and dangerous restraints can result in injury and even death. In 1998 a 13-year-old, Stephanie Jobin, died as a result of being restrained in a Toronto area group home. In 2001, 13-year-old William Edgar also died as a result of being held on the floor on his stomach by group home staff. Both children had special needs. In fact, the vast majority of physical restraint used in schools involves students with special needs such as autism, Tourette Syndrome or other disorders. The circumstances surrounding the deaths of these two children can teach us life-saving lessons.

Prone Restraints

Prone, or floor restraints place an individual on their chest and hold them by applying pressure in some way. They are cited by experts as dangerous. Steve Darby, a special needs crisis prevention consultant, explains that placing force on a person’s chest hinders breathing. “Try lying on your stomach and lift your arms off the ground as high as you can. Now try to talk. Imagine how hard it would be to breathe if considerable force was placed on your back,” he warns. Darby stresses that the muscles that control the lungs and in an extreme situation places considerable stress on the heart’s ability to pump blood.

The coroners’ inquests into the deaths of both Stephanie Jobin and William Edgar add weight to the use of prone restraints. The Crisis Prevention Institute, the providers of the training program Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, used by boards throughout the province, also warns against the use of prone restraints, agreeing that they interfere with one’s ability to breathe. Yet there is at present no consistent provincial prohibition against such dangerous practices in schools. Steve Darby warns that unsafe methods are still used. “My travels teaching crisis prevention throughout the province have taught me that Ontario schools and their patchwork of good and bad practices.” Though the vast majority of programs employ the most up-to-date crisis prevention management methods, he admits that he frequently confronts unsafe situations.

Children are in grave danger when such strategies are used. A further concern is the use of what can best be termed improvised mechanical restraints in classrooms. However, as does Dr. Steve Darby, the use of prone restraints is the least of their problems. Mechanical restraint could range from the use of a belt to prevent a child from exiting from a chair, to the misuse of Velcro straps or handcuffs. “Some schools have special rooms set up for students for instance, to prevent a child from striking themselves in frustration or from leaving a classroom. Whatever the motive however, such improvised devices are not supported by any approved crisis management course and are dangerous. A major factor in Stephanie Jobin’s death, for example, was the use of a beanbag chair as a restraint device.

Prevention is the Key

The best way to keep everyone safe is to understand that no form of physical restraint is completely safe. “Dr. Steve McGloin-Rankin, Special Education Department Head at St. Mary’s Catholic Secondary School in Hamilton stresses that he believes is essential to limit the use of restraint. “We know that all restraint, even when necessary, is risky. Confronted by a difficult situation we always ask ourselves the question, ‘Is this situation so serious that I am willing to risk the safety of a student by attempting to use restraint? Almost always, the answer is no.’ Dr. McGloin adds that by modifying elements in a student’s environment, he will find that he is almost always able to avoid the need for restraint altogether. In the unfortunate event that some form of physical intervention is required, it is also essential that staff be adequately trained in approved crisis prevention and management methods that respect and safety and focus on least intrusive methods.

Dave Sadonjo, an educational assistant and manager of a high need autism summer respite program adds, “When we work with a child with challenging behaviours we ask ourselves, what would we have to modify in this student’s day to avoid physical crisis? Then, whatever it is, we do it.” He stresses that the ever-present dangers associated with crisis behaviour and restraint demand that staff be very flexible with programming. “To the extent that the crisis behaviour is an issue, absolutely no part of the child’s environment is exempt from change.”

The death of children with special needs like Stephanie is a tragedy. However, by using their unfortunate death as a call to educate everyone on the dangers of restraint, we can reduce the possibility that there will be future restraint-related tragedies.

Ed Mahony is a Special Education Resource Teacher for the Hamilton District Catholic School Board and an associate instructor at Conestoga College. He presents to groups regarding restraint issues throughout the province and can be reached at edmahony@alumni.uwaterloo.ca. Steve Darby is a crisis prevention consultant and Teaches “Rethinking Restraint” a crisis prevention program focusing on individuals and other special needs. He can be reached at stevedarby@exceptional-needs.ca

DANGEROUS RESTRAINT PRACTICES

Do not hold a student on the floor or place pressure in any way that restricts their ability to breathe.
Do not impose mechanical restraints.

WAYS TO AVOID RESTRAINT

• Become trained in approved Crisis Prevention Courses.
• Imagine what you would have to do to have a crisis-free day and do it.
• Make everyone aware of the dangers of restraint.
• Celebrate crisis-free times.
• Learn about ways to modify environments.
• Remember that to the extent that crisis behaviour is an issue, every aspect of a student’s day must be open to change.

Further reading

Fall 2004
Steve and Wynn Anne Sibbald of Ottawa have created this visual tool which could be adapted to help any child to cope with getting lost. “We’ve had so many close calls with our son Peter (getting lost and not knowing what to do next), that we finally made up a flow chart for him,” says Wynn Anne. “As a supremely logical fellow, he really appreciated the linearity and logic of it. Our 11-year-old daughter also appreciated the chart, and made suggestions to improve it. It’s easy to visualize lots of applications for a flowchart like this.”

“E.T. phone home!”

Follow these steps:
You are not where you should be, when you should be.
You do not recognize where you are.
You got on the wrong bus.
You got off at the wrong stop.
You are scared or nervous.

Start here
Do you have a cell phone?

Yes
No

Can you find a pay phone?

Yes
No

Do you see an open store or library?

Yes
No

Keep calling the following numbers until you reach a person.
If there is no answer, leave a message saying what time it is and how we can find you.

Leave the cell phone turned on!

1. Call home __________________
2. Call Mom’s office ____________
3. Call Mom’s cell ______________
4. Call Dad’s office _____________
5. Other ______________________
6. Other _____________________

Name, address and phone number of family:
__________________________________________________

“E.T. phone home!”

Suivez ces étapes si :
Vous n’êtes pas là où vous devriez être, ou quand vous devriez être quelque part.
Vous n’avez pas de téléphone.
Vous êtes monté dans le mauvais autobus.
Vous êtes descendu à l’arrêt incorrect.
Vous vous sentez effrayé ou nerveux.

Début
Avez-vous un téléphone cellulaire ?

Oui
Non

Avez-vous de l’argent ou une carte d’appel ?

Oui
Non

Entrez et trouvez quelqu’un qui travaille là.
Dites lui que vous êtes perdu et devez appeler la maison.

Restez près de la route où nous pouvons vous voir quand nous conduisons par là.
Maman, Papa, et la police viendront vous rechercher.

Ne montez pas dans une voiture avec n’importe qui autre que Maman, Papa, votre garde-manger, un parent ou la police.

Continuez à composer les numéros suivants jusqu’à ce que vous atteignez une personne.
S’il n’y a aucune réponse, laissez un message indiquant l’heure de votre appel, et comment nous pouvons vous trouver.

Gardez le téléphone cellulaire ouvert !

1. La maison __________________
2. Maman au bureau ______________
3. Téléphone cellulaire de Maman ________
4. Papa au bureau ________________
5. Autre _______________________
6. Autre _____________________

Nom, adresse et numéro de téléphone de la famille:
__________________________________________________

« E.T. phone home! »
wide variety of participants again accept-
ed our 3rd annual TOONIE FOR Autism Day campaign challenge. This speaks highly of the dedication of educators and parents who realize the value of this endeavour. This year’s campaign involved 71 school boards and over 505 public and separate schools, including 32 French schools. Private schools, nursery schools and daycare facilities also came on board as well as three universi-
ties and colleges, 27 health care facilities, 44 corporations, organizations and clubs, as well as many personal donations. The committee received overwhelming feedback on our new video A Chance to Be Me which is geared to-
wards older students (grades 6 and up), as well as Meet My Brother from our previous campaign. The video was created by Jeff Dobbin and Parashoot Productions for another outstand-
ing view of life within the autism spectrum! The 2003 campaign attracted more than 121 new participants. Besides the new level of awareness of autism, to date more than $225,000 has been raised for autism research. More than 365,600 students and staff and over 1,279,600 families across Ontario participated.

A grade one student and his Educational Assistant traveled to each class and promoted classroom discussions and presented the video Meet My Brother. Staff and students learned why this type of learning environment is im-
portant for students with autism and other special needs. BRECHIN P.S. in Brechin

We understand first hand the
need for research and greater sup-
port for individuals with autism.
CARDINAL CARTER CATHOLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOL in Leam-
ington

Last year CHERRYTREE P.S. in Brampton raised just over $454,000. So you can imagine how app-y we were by almost double that amount this year. We realize the fundraising is im-
portant, but so is the increased awareness of autism within our school community.

We would like to express our sincere thanks for the efforts of our 3rd annual TOONIE FOR Autism Day campaign. Without your help this campaign would not be as successful as it is.

Thank you for your continued excellent ov-
erall cooperation. What a difference a year makes! The support and donations raised just over $400, so you can imagine how app-y we were by almost double that amount this year. We realize the fundraising is im-
portant, but so is the increased awareness of autism within our school community.

On behalf of the committee we would like to express our sincere thanks to all who assisted with this year’s TOONIE FOR Autism Day campaign. Without your help this campaign would not be as successful as it is.

Next year’s official TOONIE FOR Autism Day is set for Friday, April 29, 2005. Please note that another day may be more appropriate for some schools and we will do our utmost to accommodate. Just insert the date of your event upon registering. We look forward to working together once again to raise autism awareness throughout Ontario.

History Wood P.S., Brampton

Material on these pages
collected and provided by
TOONIE FOR AUTISM DAY
co-chairs Ron Harrison and
Bonnie McPhail

Grade 4 students at ADAMSDALE P.S. in
Stouffville shared information they learned
about autism from their website, during mini-
workshops at their school. They also created
a sign that was on display throughout the day.

The Autism Newslink

Central Park P.S., Dundas

The Autism Newslink

Edna Thompson CMNcure, Bowmanville

History Wood P.S., Brampton

A Chance to Be Me

BRIARDALE P.S. in St. Catharines kicked off our

TOONIE FOR Autism Day in April by showing the video Meet My Brother and A Chance to Be Me. There were a lot of good questions from the students. An autism information wall in the hall gave a brief overview of autism and some of the difficulties people with autism face. The students now understand a little more about why do what they do and how they can help them.

A grade one student and his Educational Assistant traveled to each class and promoted classroom discussions and presented the video Meet My Brother. Staff and students learned why this type of learning environment is im-
portant for students with autism and other special needs. BRECHIN P.S. in Brechin

We understand first hand the
need for research and greater sup-
port for individuals with autism.
CARDINAL CARTER CATHOLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOL in Leam-
ington

Last year CHERRYTREE P.S. in Brampton raised just over $454,000. So you can imagine how app-y we were by almost double that amount this year. We realize the fundraising is im-
portant, but so is the increased awareness of autism within our school community.

On behalf of the committee we would like to express our sincere thanks to all who assisted with this year’s TOONIE FOR Autism Day campaign. Without your help this campaign would not be as successful as it is.

Next year’s official TOONIE FOR Autism Day is set for Friday, April 29, 2005. Please note that another day may be more appropriate for some schools and we will do our utmost to accommodate. Just insert the date of your event upon registering. We look forward to working together once again to raise autism awareness throughout Ontario.

History Wood P.S., Brampton

Material on these pages
collected and provided by
TOONIE FOR AUTISM DAY
co-chairs Ron Harrison and
Bonnie McPhail

Grade 4 students at ADAMSDALE P.S. in
Stouffville shared information they learned
about autism from their website, during mini-
workshops at their school. They also created
a sign that was on display throughout the day.

The Autism Newslink

Central Park P.S., Dundas

The Autism Newslink

Edna Thompson CMNcure, Bowmanville

History Wood P.S., Brampton

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The 2004 Toonie for Autism Day campaign had a total of 71 boards with schools participating (out of approximately 100 school boards and school authorities in Ontario.) Participating boards are listed below, with the number of schools represented in parenthesis beside each name.

- Algoma District (4)
- Algonguı̈ & Lakeshore Catholic (3)
- Algoure-Gorrie District Authority (1)
- Avon Maitland District (4)
- Blackburn District (5)
- Bruce-Norfolk Catholic (1)
- Bruce Grey Catholic (2)
- Catholic D.S.B. of Eastern Ontario (6)
- CSD Centre-Sud-Ouest (6)
- CSD Grand Nord de l’Ontario (1)
- CSDC Franco-Nord (9)
- CSDC Centre Est de l’Ontario (5)
- CSD List de l’Ontario (2)
- CSD Nord-Est de l’Ontario (1)
- CSDC Centre-Sud (1)
- CSD des Grandes Rivières (3)
- CSD Sud-Ouest (1)
- CSDC Nord-Ouest-Ontario (1)
- District School Board of Niagara (3)
- District School Board of Ontario North East (4)
- Dufferin-Peel Catholic (11)
- Durham Catholic (16)
- Durham District (37)
- Grand Erie District (6)
- Grater Essex County District (5)
- Halton Catholic (4)
- Halton District (4)
- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic (4)
- Hamilton-Wentworth District (7)
- Hanting Prince Edward District (6)
- Huron Perth Catholic (2)
- Huron Superior Catholic (2)
- Kawartha Pine Ridge District (6)
- Kenora-Finnish District (3)
- Kenora Catholic (1)
- Lakehead District (13)

Lambton Kent District (2)
Limestone District (8)
London Catholic District (5)
Mizu Centre DSAB (1)
Near North District (7)
Nagano Catholic (4)
Napanee Perry Sound Catholic (3)
Northwest Catholic (1)
Northeastern Catholic (2)
Ottawa-Carleton Catholic (13)
Ottawa Catholic District (11)
Peel District (28)
Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Catholic (14)
Rainbow District (3)
Rainy River District (1)
Ride Lake Area & Combined (1)
Rainy River Catholic District (4)
Rainy River County (4)
Simcoe County District (7)
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic (16)
St Clair Catholic (3)
Superior-Greenstone Catholic (1)
Superior North Catholic (2)
Thames Valley District (26)
Thunder Bay Catholic (4)
Toronto Catholic (6)
Toronto District (33)
Triúmphant Catholic District (16)
Upper Canada District (9)
Upper Grand District (4)
Windsor Essex Region (7)
Wellington Catholic (1)
Windsor Essex Catholic (4)
York Catholic (5)
York District (17)

Is your school board in this list?

The students at MARY IMMACULATE COMMUNITY SCHOOL in Cheshwotog are accustomed to this disorder as we have a child with autism enrolled in our school. He is a very unique young man and we are proud of the accomplishments that he has made with his E.A. Teacher. The Autism Day was great! All of the classes at QUEENSVILLE P.S. in Queensville came into our class to play and visit our new sensory integration room. I also went into all the other classrooms and showed videos and read the book Amazingly Alphie. It has been a wonderful week.

QUINTE DAY TREATMENT in Belleville has a small group of students with big hearts and great friends who have been diagnosed with ASD. This private school of 21 students dedicated many hours of preparation time towards fundraising for this event. Thank you for the opportunity for our students to surpass their own expectations of giving!

Our motto is: Living, Learning and Laughing. We are glad we were able to help you, which in turn will help all of us make a difference in the lives of children with autism. RIVERVIEW P.S. in Cumberland

The Jr. Kindergarten student with autism that I work with as an A.A. in SHAKTOON P.S. in Kitchener had not been “Special Me” during the year, so this opportunity spread the day over a weekend period. A chart filled out by his parent helped his classmates get to know him much better. We highlighted his great strengths and uniqueness and demonstrated the many similarities between all children. We received comments and several thank yous for increasing awareness on the matter. It gives me such pleasure to see what great gains are made with such little effort.

To prepare for TOONIE FOR AUTISM DAY, we went to each class explaining autism and showing the videos. Hands-on experiments helped students realize what it would be like to be autistic. We touched them with sand paper, looked through baby food jars and had them write with really small pencils while wearing oven mitts. Some students wondered why the unfinished puzzle wall in our front hall was no edge. I told them that until there is a sure there would be no edge. ST. ANDREW’S CATHOLIC SCHOOL in St. Andrew’s West

This inspiring 20-minute video focuses on three teenagers with varying degrees of ASD.

Share a day in the life of Chelsea, Sean and Brian. What makes these three unique is not that they have ASD, but that they have close friendships and acceptance in their school community. Join them at school, at home and in their communities learning what their daily life is all about.

ASD developed “A Chance to Be Me” as an interactive video to teach awareness to students and staff and to promote further in-class discussion. It’s an excellent opportunity for young people in Grades 6 to 12 to become more informed and be encouraged to interact with students who have unique challenges. With this awareness, comes empathy for all students with special needs and differences. This wonderful resource is available for a great price of $25 and it’s all Canadian content.

In the video, Sean Rogers of Orchard Park in Stoney Creek demonstrates one of his tasks at work.

Alicia McPhail, narrator of A Chance to Be Me, attends Brock University in Child and Youth Studies and Linguistics.

Brian Piccini from St. Mary’s Catholic S. S., Hamilton

Students from Durham region were the panel participants in the video.

For this and other resources, contact the ASO (Autism Society of Ontario) at www.autismsociety.on.ca

Parent volunteers, St. Timothy’s P.S.
Using RESPs for a Child with Developmental Disabilities

As parents, we do our best to help open doors that will provide our children with opportunities to continue learning. Children with developmental difficulties may not be interested in or able to attend university or college; however, this does not preclude their ability to develop other interests and skills through post-secondary education opportunities.

What is an RESP?
A Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) facilitates a method of saving for post-secondary education purposes by allowing you to earn investment income in a tax-deferred environment. Individual plans can be set up for the benefit of one beneficiary while family plans accept contributions for more than one beneficiary. The maximum annual contribution to an RESP is $4,000 for each beneficiary. These contributions are not tax deductible. The federal government provides a grant of 20 cents for each dollar contributed, up to a maximum of $400 each year and a lifetime limit of $7,200. Recently they have announced that there will be an additional grant for families with an income below $70,000. The grant on the first $50,000 contributed will be 40 percent for families with incomes below $90,000 and 30 percent for families with incomes between $95,000 and $70,000. Contributions may be made for a period of 21 years and the maximum contribution for each beneficiary is limited to $42,000. An RESP must be terminated by the end of the year that includes the 25th anniversary of the plan.

What if my child can't make use of the RESP 25 years from now?
Parents have always had the assurance that if their child decides not to pursue post-secondary education, their capital contributions to the savings plan would be returned to them tax free. They now have the additional assurance that up to $50,000 of the income that accumulates in the RESP can be transferred into their RRSPs, to the extent that they have unused contribution room available.

Alternatively, parents can withdraw the RESP income and pay tax at their marginal rate plus an additional 20 percent, to offset the interest earned on the grant. The grant portion is returned to the RESP.

It is now possible to roll over the educational assistance payments, without tax implications, to another RESP, to the extent that they have unused contribution room available.

Once the money from the RESP has been distributed to the beneficiary, the income earned in the plan, plus the amount of federal assistance payments can be paid out to another family member as long as the same qualifying criteria are followed.

How can the money be used?
To disburse the funds from the RESP, the education facility must be a "designated educational institution," with a "qualifying educational program." The school must qualify under the Canadian Scholarship Loan program or be certified by the Minister of Human Resources as an educational institution that will develop or improve skills in an occupation or vocation.

A "qualifying educational program" is not limited to the course or program of study that provides that each student spend not less than 10 hours per week on courses or work in the program. The in-class portion of a recognized apprenticeship can also be included. There are a variety of courses offered at post-secondary schools which meet these qualifications.

In order to make post-secondary studies more affordable, students with disabilities now have the option to attend school on a part-time basis. They can access distance education courses by participating in online learning opportunities, or they can learn through a variety of apprenticeship programs.

Disability Tax Credits

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You can help by lobbyist ing the government to extend the deadline. If you read their website www.disabilitytax.ca, they make no mention that at the end of this year they will be taking thousands of dollars of tax credits away from people with disabilities, and yet this is confirmed in budget documents. Although the government has extended the credit adjustment deadline for families with disabilities by at least one year. Fax 613-943-5597, E-mail info@disabilitytax.ca, Mail c/o Charles Smyth, Technical Advisory Committee on Tax Measures for People with Disabilities, 140 O’Connor Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G5. For further information, contact dowson@rogers.com or www.life-trust.com.
Memory Strategy Use in Autism

by Kerry Wells, York University

M
emory affects nearly every aspect of our lives. Most of life’s tasks rely on information that we have memorized. It is no surprise, then, that the term “memory” suggests, but actually consists of a variety of different and often independent skills. For example, one sets vocabulary lists or learns past birthday parties as a different skill from the ability to recognize a person whom you have previously met. Both of these skills, however, are considered a type of memory.

Children and adults with autism often have deficiencies in certain aspects of memory ability, but strengths in other areas. Ben Shalom (2005) notes that most of the literature has shown that individuals with autism demonstrate in- mory performance in the areas of rote memory and the recall of facts. In contrast, impaired performance has often been seen in the areas of source memory and memory for the sequence of events.

Another memory-related difficulty in autism is the inability to use strategies to improve recall (Bebko & Ricciuti, 2000), a critical skill needed for development and knowledge acquisition. When a student learns a phone number, for example, does the student simply repeat the digits until the number is recalled, or does the student use strategies to improve recall? When a student learns a phone number, for example, does the student simply repeat the digits until the number is recalled, or does the student use strategies to improve recall?

Strategy use may be delayed by several years in children with autism, and may emerge even later in those individuals. For example, research indicates that children with autism frequently fail to use memory strategies, even though they have the cognitive and social abilities to do so. This delay has serious implications for their cognitive development, and may have long-term effects on their memory skills.

Recently we have explored the effectiveness of memory training for children with autism, seeking to teach young children with autism how to use cumulative rehearsal, which is one of the earliest and most fundamental forms of memory development (p. 54, 2001). We have found that children with autism can effectively use cumulative rehearsal, even though they may need to be taught valuable memory skills. Improvement of memory strategies, are generally more popular than traditional games that emphasize particular types of memory strategies, such as visual schedules, cues and reminders may be beneficial to these children.

Children with autism, however, fail to de- velop strategy utilization in the same manner as typically developing children. Several years researchers have believed that children with autism simply failed to use memory strat- egies of any kind. However, they were rarely directly studied (Bebko & Ricciuti, 2000). Our research indicates that children with autism do develop the ability to use memory strat- egies. Despite this, the percentage of children with autism who use memory strategies is much lower than what is expected from their cognitive level (Beeke, 2004). In other words, when compared to a group of children who do not have autism, people who are at the same level of verbal and cognitive maturity, there are sig- nificantly fewer researchers among children with autism.

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For more information on Dr. Bebko’s memory studies or any of his other projects, or if you would like information on par- ticipating in a project, contact the Bebko lab at bebko@yorku.ca or 416-736-2100 Ext. 20706.

Word Problems in Mathematics

by Leslie Broun, ASD Consultant, Peel Board of Education

M any students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) experience difficulty with word problems in mathematics. This difficulty can cause many problems, including delays in their learning process and, ultimately, a decrease in their achievement. Many students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) experience difficulty with word problems in mathematics. This difficulty can cause many problems, including delays in their learning process and, ultimately, a decrease in their achievement.

There are several methods that can be used to help students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) with word problems in mathematics. These methods include using visual aids, such as delivering messages, or using commercial software programs, such as MathMates or Math-U-See. Many students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) experience difficulty with word problems in mathematics. This difficulty can cause many problems, including delays in their learning process and, ultimately, a decrease in their achievement.

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Mary has 2 apples. John has 3 apples. How many apples do they have?

• In the process of varying the problems, change the components in a sequential manner:
• Change names:
  Susie has 2 apples.
  Billy has 3 apples.
  How many apples do they have?
  Change quantity:
  Susie has 5 apples.
  Billy has 5 apples.
  How many apples do they have?
  Change items:
  Susie has 5 apples.
  Billy has 3 cookies.
  How many cookies do they have?
  Change verb:
  Susie picked 5 apples.
  Billy picked 5 cookies.
  How many apples do they have?

• As the student experiences success, these problem structures can be lengthened and made more complex. More variation can be added incrementally.
• This kind of sequence can also be followed for subtraction, multiplication and division. When it comes to subtraction, multiplication and division, the problem structure can be lengthened and made more complex. More variation can be added incrementally.

If it is deemed that solving word problems with confidence, do not assign them as homework.


Bebko, J.M. (2004). The effectiveness of memory training...

Shalom, B. (2005). Memory, Memory-Strategies, and Memory-Strategies in children with autism...
Developing a new behavioural outcome measure

by Tamarat Kagan-Kaspari, MD, FRCPC – recipient of ASO’s Stimulus Grant 2004

Many exciting advances have happened in the field of autism in recent years, with improved and earlier diagnosis being one of the most notable. New diagnostic tools have helped professionals recognize and diagnose children earlier and more accurately. Unfortunately, tools that rigorously assess whether treatments are effective for individuals with autism are lacking.

Behavioural difficulties are common in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). They often create significant problems for the child as well as their family, teachers and therapists. Behaviour problems are a frequent reason why parents seek assistance from professionals, and difficult behaviours are often a target of intervention.

Our ability to assess whether a treatment works, as well as to develop interventions for specific, distressing behaviour, is currently hampered by a lack of appropriate tools to detect changes in behaviour. There are many behavioural questionnaires available, but few have been designed specifically for autistic children and as such are often inappropriate. Of those that were designed with autistic children in mind, some do not reflect recent advances in our understanding of ASDs. Others were designed for diagnostic purposes, and not to assess treatment efficacy. Parents have not been consulted in the development of any of these tools. As primary care givers, parents are experts in their children’s behaviour, and ultimately are the ones who will decide if interventions are working.

Developing a new tool or outcome measure that can detect changes in behaviour, is the focus of my research. The measure will be a parent questionnaire designed to be completed on successive occasions. The project has multiple phases. The first stage, already underway, involves small focus groups of parents and professionals—people with first-hand knowledge about autistic behaviours and their impact on day-to-day functioning for the individual and their caregivers. The aim is to learn which behaviours pose difficulties or are a concern, so that these can be appropriately captured in the measure. Consulting with those who will use the tool will help to make it relevant.

The second part of the study focuses on gathering the list of behaviours generated and narrowing it to the most relevant and important. Additional focus groups and statistical methods will assist this process.

The measure will then be tested to make sure that it is user-friendly, captures behaviours accurately, and is statistically sound. Future research will be done to assess how well it measures change in behaviour.

Autism Society Ontario’s Stimulus Grant will help fund this research project, which I hope will improve our knowledge about what works best in treating autism. I am grateful to all the children who supported this grant through the TOONIE FOR AUTISM DAY camp and the families who have participated in my study so far, generously sharing their experiences, expertise and time.

With everyone in high spirits, Autism Society Ontario took to Ashbridges Bay in Toronto for our first annual Raising Awareness About Autism! (RAAA!) Beach Volleyball Tournament. It was a beautiful day for our 11 participating teams who had worked very hard raising pledges for ASO. Everyone had lots of fun and team spirit was high as balls were bumped, set and volleied in support of ASD. Participants were kept hydrated, well fed and treated by our many sponsors. Our thanks and appreciation go out to our winners who participated. Congratulations to our winners: recreational 6’s Nice Set and competitive 4’s Sandy Obedas. Every player walked away with a wonderful gift pack filled with donated goodies.

Our tournament could not have happened without the very generous support from our sponsors. We would like to thank:

- Mastercard Mosaic
- Pizza Pizza
- Hershey Canada
- Coca-Cola Limited
- Sanford Canada - Papermate
- 3M Canada
- Liberty Village BIA
- Ah-Shi Acupuncture and Complementary Medicine Inc.
- D. Scott Campbell & Associates Inc.
- Toronto Carpet Factory
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- Hawaiian Tropic
- West Toronto Sport and Social Club
- Toronto East Sport and Social Club

The event raised $6,100 to support the work done by ASO to support children with ASD and their families. Stay tuned for details for RAAA! 2005. If you would like to be involved with RAAA! 2005 contact Claire Woolford at raaa_tournament@yahoo.com or call 416-618-1319.

Go Jays! Go!

July 26 was a great evening of baseball and autism awareness in Toronto. Over 30,000 fans showed up for the Toronto Blue Jays/NY Yankees game at Skydome. Thanks to Kathy Deschenes and Blue Jays Baseball Club (Ben and Cindy) who helped make this family day a reality. ASO staffers Ethel Berry and Esther Zhou handled ticket sales most of the day.

ASO and various autism groups distributed 150 free tickets to parents, children and adults with ASD. Kim and Sara of Kikara <http://heartfeltmusic.ca/kisaraindex.htm> sang beautiful renditions of the US and Canadian national anthems (lots of appreciative cheering fans). ASO had an information booth where we talked with Canadians and lots of Americans about ASD.

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend the game, who promoted ticket sales among friends, family and colleagues or who let us know they heard the radio ads on the FAN or saw the big electronic display board in downtown Toronto.

The 2nd annual [Wasaga] Beach Bunnies Ladies Golf Tournament, held on June 26 at Woodbridge Golf and Country Club, was a highly successful day. Event organizers, who want to make a difference in the lives of children with ASD, were thrilled to have doubled what they raised the year before. They are already making plans for next year’s event.

New Name! New Release! New Price!

The video/CD, Growing Up with Autism or Asperger’s is getting a makeover. It will be re-released under the title, In Our Own Words (same as the booklet). It is a collection of heartfelt stories that provide some insight and understanding into the lives of five adults on the autism spectrum, selling at an incredible price of $20. Contact ASO at mail@autismsociety.on.ca or 416-246-9592 for purchase information.

ASO summer activities

- Kim and daughter Sara, better known as KSant, singing the national anthems
- Luc VanderMeeren, ASO (Metro Toronto Chapter President and cross-Canada Cycle for Autism) takes the first pitch of the game
- Margaret Sproule (left), ASO Executive Director and Ethel Berry (Manager) receives cheque for a portion of 3JS ticket sales from Blue Jays’ Orlando Hudson

Get There Early!

The Toronto Blue Jays were on the field by 6:30 pm to greet the national anthems (lots of Americans talking with Canadians and lots of Canadians making a difference in the lives of children with ASD). Kim and Sara of Kikara performed the national anthems (lots of Americans talking with Canadians and lots of Canadians making a difference in the lives of children with ASD). Kim and Sara of Kikara performed
ASD and Issues in Adulthood

The bright spot this year amidst the usual grayness of November will be the release of ASO’s latest Manual: ASD and Issues in Adulthood. This manual represents a collaboration of individuals and agencies committed to identifying and highlighting issues which adults with ASD in Ontario struggle with. The chapters within this manual provide examples of working programs across the province. Our partners in producing the manual are the Geneve Centre for Autism and Surrey Place Centre. Other contributors include Dennis Debbaudt, Liz Cohen, Elizabeth Bloomsfield, Natalie Whalley and numerous others. Additional authors from Kerry’s Place Autism Services are Kevin Stoddart and Gail Hawkins.

Contents include Person Centred Planning, Living Options, Recreational and Leisure Opportunities, Employment Issues, Post Secondary School, Social Skills, Safety in the Community and Financial Planning for the Future. Examples of working programs in Hamilton and Toronto are included as well as personal accounts of individuals with ASD and their families.

Our hope is that families and individuals will be motivated to partner with government and non-government agencies to take the creative examples within these pages and adapt them to your own community needs. We also hope that this manual will help parents of younger children prepare for the years ahead.

The manual’s theme is the ASO Vision—Acceptance and Opportunity for all individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. In November we will launch this amazing effort formally. Look for announcements regarding this special event.

Funding partially provided by The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, which receives $100 million in government funding annually, generated through Ontario’s charity casino initiatives.

In 2003, ASO established these scholarships to commemorate our 30th year as a province-wide organization. These awards are financially supported by our chapters and individual donations. If you would like to contribute to either of these scholarships, please send a cheque payable to Autism Society Ontario, 1179A King St. W. Suite 004, Toronto, ON M6K 3C5.

Eleanor Ritchie Post-Secondary Education Entrance Scholarship Recipients

This award is in recognition of the achievements of students with ASD in finishing their secondary education and enrolling in post-secondary education in Ontario.

Recipients of the Jeanette Holden Post-Secondary Education Entrance Scholarships for Siblings of Students with ASD

This is in recognition of the role and contributions of the siblings to the welfare of individuals with ASD.

Matthew Holland
attending McMaster University in the Engineering program.

Jessica Boufford
(with her brother Jordan) is registered in the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Western and plans to pursue her Masters in Speech Pathology.

Steven Waywanko, getting some welding tips from his brother Evan, is attending Confederation College in the Mechanical Techniques – Metals/Welding program.

Mike Gignac
(with his sister Danielle) is taking his Bachelor of Science program, specializing in Computer Science at the University of Windsor.

Andrew Scott, pictured with sister Cassandra, is attending Algonquin College in the General Arts and Science Pre-Animation program.

John Pyckton has chosen to attend Seneca College to take the Library Technician Course.

Ian Scriver is taking Multimedia Design at Durham College.

Jenna Morris, with her parents and brother Terry, is taking Palos Foundations at Algonquin College.

ASO Ontario Undergraduate Summer Student Scholarships

ASO is pleased to announce the names of recipients of the Undergraduate Summer Student Scholarship. This scholarship provides supplementary funds to individuals conducting research in any field related to ASD. Funds for these scholarships are provided through the Toronto for Autism Don campaign.

Dinh La is pursuing a BScH degree in life sciences at Queen’s University, studying genetic influences in autism by testing DNAs from a large number of individuals with ASD (and their family members) in the Autism Research Program at Ongwanada Resource Centre in Kingston.

Colleen Mousseaus is enrolled in a Psychology degree program in Social Science at the University of Western Ontario, working at the Offord Centre of Child Studies and researching the relationship between family stress and challenging behaviours exhibited by children with ASD.

A Mind Apart

by Denise Copeland

I am pleased to have been privileged to review the book: A Mind Apart, written by Peter Szatmari, MC. Besides being written by someone very knowledgeable about the subject of Autism Spectrum Disorders, it was also a very humble, well-written book. I was intrigued at how willing and open Dr. Szatmari was to admit that he still had much to learn and how intrigued at how willing and open Dr. Szatmari was to admit that he still had much to learn and how grateful he was to his patients who provided him with his knowledge. His concern and caring for his patients is genuine and shines through in his words; he clearly wants to find out why autistic children think and feel the way they do. I found this to be a very inviting book, filled with interesting and helpful information. Having a child with Asperger’s Syndrome myself, I found many similarities between the children mentioned in the book and my own son.

While this book contained a lot of useful information, it read like a novel and not a textbook, making it easy to keep the readers’ interest. In one of the stories there was a little boy who was obsessed with death. I was touched by the way Dr. Szatmari used his knowledge, passion and resolve to figure out that the little boy was indeed concerned about the “change” that death brings, the possibility that he may need to get used to a new person when she dies, not death itself. It’s this different way of looking at things that sets this doctor apart in my eyes. His evident caring seems to enable him, on some level, to think and feel like the children he is treating. As a result of reading this book, I feel that I now understand my child better, why he always asks questions that he knows the answers to and why he feels compelled to stay in the hallway at his sister’s apartment building and listen to the hum of the elevator motor.

A poem from the book: Messy Room

In my room, I must confess
My room is a terrible mess!
Two banana peels, a plastic bag,
Stinky shoes, my dad’s old rag.
An old poster, an apple core,
A wrapper, trust me, there’s more.
A twenty-five cent coin, a CN tower pass,
A math test, my teddy bear
And a pair of my old underwear.
A twenty-five cent coin, a CN tower pass,
A book report that’s due to class.
My pencil, a pen, a pack of cards,
A collection of pins that measures two yards.
Cookie crumbs, another pencil,
And one pack of four stencils.
Last but not least I must confess
A note from parents, “CLEAN UP THIS MESS!”

Matthew, an 11 year-old with Asperger’s Syndrome, lives in Cavan.
Autism Spectrum Disorder – Student Development  EDUC10001

This course provides educational staff with the tools needed to work successfully with children diagnosed with this complex condition. It is delivered by a team of professionals from the local school boards & Hamilton Health Sciences Corp., including international autism authority Dr. Peter Szatmari. A strong emphasis will be placed on communication, social skills, behavioural challenges, family, sensory & educational issues. Students will be expected to attend a seminar at HHSC-Chedoke location.

New: In the Mohawk College Continuing Education, Learning for Life Calendar, the following course is offered. The course is fully subscribed and there is an extensive waiting list. Our thanks to the Hamilton-Wentworth ASO chapter for being an integral part of the implementation of this course. Watch for other courses offered around the province.

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