

CARD



CENTER FOR AUTISM & RELATED DISABILITIES

at The University of South Florida

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Department of Child & Family Studies — Volume 13, Issue 2 • August 2010 - Jan 2011

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Executive Director's Message: *Legislation Update*

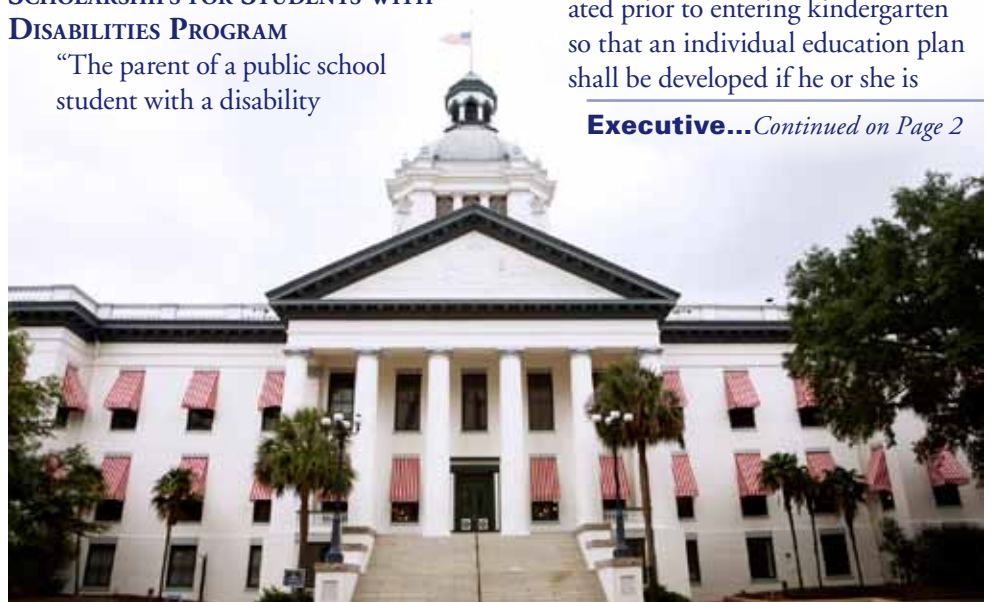
I want to take this opportunity to provide our readers with updates on a variety of things that have taken place for our state. This legislative session, there were several bills that were proposed that focused on individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Of the proposed bills, there are two that passed that I want to let you know about.

HB 1505 — JOHN M. MCKAY SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAM

“The parent of a public school student with a disability

who is dissatisfied with the student's progress may request and receive from the state a John M. McKay Scholarship for the child to enroll in and attend a private school if: (a) **The student: 1. Is eligible to enter kindergarten.** A child identified with a developmental delay who has received early intervention services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program must be reevaluated prior to entering kindergarten so that an individual education plan shall be developed if he or she is

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Our Mission

The mission of the Center for Autism & Related Disabilities (CARD) at the University of South Florida is to provide support and assistance that optimizes the potential of people with autism and related disabilities. Our effort to achieve this mission is exemplified in the four “components for caring” that are the focus of our work:

- Direct Assistance – Providing individualized support for people with autism and related disabilities, and their families, in natural community settings.
- Technical Assistance & Consultation – Undertaking activities on behalf of programs (e.g., classroom, supported living residence, supported employment site, etc.) that serve people with autism and related disabilities.
- Professional Training – Providing instruction on autism and related disabilities through our workshops, conferences, in-service training, and college courses.
- Public Education and Awareness – Developing and disseminating information about people with autism and related disabilities.

As one of seven regional, university-based CARD sites, CARD-USF provides its services to individuals with autism and related disabilities, their families, related professionals, and the general public throughout a fourteen county catchment area in west, central, and southwest Florida.

Endorsement Policy

As a policy, CARD will not lend its name to the endorsement of any specific program, practice, or model that is offered for service to people with autism and related disabilities. However, the sharing of information and training opportunities are key functions of the CARD program.

Events, activities, programs, and facilities of the University of South Florida are available to all without regard to race, color, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability, age, Vietnam or disabled veteran status as provided by law and in accordance with the University's respect for personal dignity.

Executive Continued from Front Cover

deemed eligible for the exceptional student education program; or 2. **Has attended a Florida public school or the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.** The parent must obtain acceptance for admission of the student to a private school that is eligible for the program and has to request a scholarship from the department at least 60 days prior to the date of the first scholarship payment. The request must be through a communication directly to the department in a manner that creates a written or electronic record of the request and the date of receipt of the request.

The Department of Education must notify the district of the parent's intent upon receipt of the parent's request. For purposes of continuity of educational choice, a John M. McKay Scholarship shall remain in force until the student enrolls in a public school, graduates from high school, or reaches the age of 22, whichever occurs first.”

Please note that the previous requirement to attend school for an entire year with an IEP in place has changed to the highlighted statement above.

SB 1073 - PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT, EDUCATOR AND EARLY CHILD CARE TRAINING)

This bill took several issues and combined them into one document. There are now rules and requirements in place for the school district around the use of and documentation of the seclusion and restraint of children.

“This act relates to persons with disabilities. It revises provisions relating to licensure and standards for facilities and programs for persons with developmental disabilities; requires minimum training for child care personnel to include the identification and care of children with developmental disabilities; requires

that each school prepare an incident report within a specified period after each occasion of student restraint or seclusion; specifying the contents of such report; requiring that each school notify a student's parent or guardian if manual physical restraint or seclusion is used; requiring certain reporting and monitoring; requiring that each school district develop and revise policies and procedures governing the incident reports, data collection, and the monitoring and reporting of such data; prohibiting school personnel from using a mechanical restraint or a manual physical restraint that restricts a student's breathing; prohibiting



*Dr. Karen Berkman,
CARD Executive Director*

school personnel from closing, locking, or physically blocking a student in a room that is unlit and does not meet the rules of the State Fire Marshal for seclusion time-out rooms; requires regional autism centers (CARD centers) to provide certain support for serving children with developmental disabilities; requiring the Commissioner of Education to develop recom-

mendations to incorporate instruction relating to developmental disabilities into continuing education or inservice training requirements for instructional personnel; requiring the Department of Education to incorporate the course curricula into existing requirements for such education or training; authorizing the State Board of Education to adopt rules; providing an effective date.”

For more information on legislative activities, go to <http://www.myflorida.com/>.

On another note, the Governor's Autism Task Force has submitted its report that defines priority areas for consideration based on issues across the life span. This will be a guiding document for what we hope will be an overseeing body that will implement the recommendations in this report. More to come as the Task Force completes its work by January, 2011.

—Karen Berkman, Ph.D.

The Learning Academy and Vocational Rehabilitation

We are very happy to announce that the Learning Academy at USF has been approved as a certified vocational rehabilitation vendor in the state of Florida. This means that any individual receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the state and who meets the eligibility criteria for the Learning Academy program, may be able to attend and have the tuition and related costs paid for by DVR. Applicants can also pay privately as well.

Upon graduation from high school, individuals with autism spectrum disorders don't have access to many services

to assist them in preparing for and seeking employment or continuing their education. Vocational Rehabilitation Services traditionally has been unable to meet the needs of this population and has had few resources available to them to help with these individuals. Students on the autism spectrum can now look to the Learning Academy for a comprehensive program that provides the skills needed to obtain a job or be successful in a post secondary education setting.

Twenty students will be accepted into the program. The program is set to start in September, 2010.

The first group of Learning Academy students funded through a grant from Autism Speaks will be graduating in August 2010. These students will continue to have a relationship with CARD as we follow and support them in implementing their action plans. Some students will be pursuing jobs in the area of their choosing while others will go on to college. To ensure ongoing success, the Learning Academy will provide information, technical assistance and training to agencies and employers involved with our students.

Update: CARD Families Building Resiliency

Last fall, CARD and the USF Psychological and Social Foundations Department collaborated to offer co-parents of

children with ASD a training experience that focused on building resiliency among the parents themselves. Some of the results

from the final evaluation indicated there was a positive impact on co-parenting; the level of stress did not show a significant decrease but the participants indicated that they were more optimistic. Additional factors shared with the facilitators was the importance of hearing from other families, knowing there were other families going through similar stressful events, and some co-parents were able to create friendships and support systems through the experience. Parent comments included:

"It gave me many tools to add to my tool box. I can use those to build a stronger relationship with my spouse."

"It was enlightening to hear input from the other parents on how they carried their values into everyday life and better clarified the traits we would like to pass on to our children."

The families produced prescriptions to share with other families which we are passing on to you.

The original scheduling for this training to occur in Ft Myers was delayed in order to restructure the training to focus on the most meaningful activities as per the feedback from the participants. We intend to run the Building Resiliency training in late fall through both the Tampa and Ft. Myers offices; so please look for the announcement through the CARD online news blasts!

Rx

BUILDING RESILIENCY IN FAMILIES—FALL 2009

The University of South Florida
13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33612

For: Families who have children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

From: Fellow families

Date: February 13, 2010

- First thing is sign up to CARD, always be in contact with your CARD coordinator.
- Be consistent with the therapy that your child is having, if it's possible go with him to every session and apply all that you learned at home.
- Be a team with your partner, follow your instinct, never give up, you are the best advocate for your children.
- Take time for you and your spouse. :) (No talking about the kids!)
- Be as informed as you can. (Take a workshop once a year).
- Join community groups.
- Celebrate ANY successes.
- Laugh and make new friends. :)

• Don't expect anyone to offer help and assistance. You MUST ask! You MUST be persistent, and you MUST be the advocate for your child.
- You will hear all kinds of advice on what to do to "fix" your child. Remember that your child is unique and there's no "one size fits all" solution out there. Consistency, persistence, and high expectations are the best tools you have—use them!
- Have high expectations. If you expect nothing, that may be what you get! Above all, understand that your child with autism is normal inside. Look beyond the behaviors to see who they truly are.
- **SENSE OF HUMOR**
Dispense: Lifetime supply.
Sig: Apply frequently and liberally.
- **FLEXIBILITY**
Dispense: Willingly
Sig: For use when your child is rigid in demands or when the day isn't quite what you thought it would be.
- **THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE**
Dispense: Infinite amount.
Sig: Daily, never stop learning, researching, educating.
- **FAITH**
Dispense: generously, in the moments of doubt.
Sig: Believe in hope above all else.
- **Refill: x's 1 Lifetime**

ACT (All Community Theatre Project): *Parent's Perspective*

ACT (All Community Theatre Project) is an arts and performance program for children and teens diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders and other special needs. The program is directed by Loretta Gallo-Lopez, a licensed mental health counselor and registered drama therapist. Lisa Powers, an instructor from USF Theater, student interns, and a registered drama therapist collaborated with Loretta to enhance the arts and therapeutic experience.

BEVERLY

My daughter Erica is 15 years old. She was diagnosed with moderate autism at age 4. Today, by many, she is considered to have Asperger's Disorder because of her high level of verbal skills. She likes engaging others in conversation about the things that are of interest to her. The issue is that she has extreme anxiety when in crowds or put in unfamiliar situations. She is the type of child who is quite content sitting in front of a computer, or video game, and blocking out the rest of the world.

When I heard about ACT (The All Community Theater Project) I thought this would be a great way for Erica to meet other children and possibly work on her social skills as well. She was very reluctant and at one point refused to even attend. I gave her an option of either going or staying home and cleaning; NO COMPUTER.



Anna interacts with co-star Erica.

Upon entering the theater, she immediately had a meltdown refusing to participate. The great thing was no one looked at us strangely or made remarks under their breath, they all understood. They gave her the time she needed to adjust



ACT participants thrive centerstage.

and then slowly started engaging her with things that were interesting to her (Sonic the Hedgehog and writing).

Loretta and Lisa took Erica's strengths and basically molded her role in the final production. She was dressed in a trench coat with a hat that covered most of face making her feel protected from the eyes of the audience. She had very few lines and sat at a table for most of the production. They also allowed Sonic the Hedgehog to have a major role along side of her. The best part was she wrote, with the help of student volunteers, most of the production.

JEAN

My daughter Anna is 20 years old. She is verbal, if not conversational, and loves everything to do with drama, music, dance, and arts of all kinds. The issue is, and always has been, one of intentionality. If she has an interest in doing something, as well as intent to do it, she is unstoppable.

When Anna first began singing, it was only to and for herself, rarely a complete song, rarely in front of other people, and never with another person. We never dreamed the day would come when she was interested in performance of any sort, but in high school she has played in a hand bell chorus, danced as an extra in a play, sung in a chorus in another, and performed solo pieces in talent shows. Each new production in which she has participated has increased her willingness to collaborate and interact... each event

has been cause for a huge celebration. For Anna, these are huge steps forward.

Anna's involvement in ACT has been remarkable. By closely observing each participant, Loretta and Lisa are able to draw each person into the group's project through his or her strengths, as well as interests. For Anna, a role based on one of her favorite Disney characters was the key to her sustained interest in the lengthy process of developing the production and rehearsing for several months. It was also the magic ingredient in her willingness to sing duets with another participant in the production.

The student volunteers are an essential part of the success of this experience. They never give up, regardless of how little social reward they receive from the participants. Their enthusiasm for the project brings an amazing energy to the group each week.

In the car and at home, if I attempt a duet or sing-along with any of Anna's favorite songs, I still receive a firm command to "stop singing." Onstage, however, Anna transforms into a different being, more than happy to engage in interactive dialogue, collaborative singing and choreographed movement.

For more information or how to get involved in this project please contact:

ACT Project Director

Loretta Gallo-Lopez, MA

Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Registered Drama Therapist - Board Certified Trainer
Registered Play Therapist and Supervisor
813-231-2520
lgallolopez@yahoo.com

SAVE THE DATE



ASDnet

at the University of South Florida

Innovations in Autism Spectrum Disorders

September 24, 2010 • 8am-5pm
Wyndham Hotel Westshore, Tampa

This one-day conference for professionals and families will showcase the work of the ASDnet faculty across the USF system.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

<http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu/ASDnet/ASDnet.asp>

For more information, please contact Donna Casella
813-974-6168 • Dcasella@fmhi.usf.edu



Spotlight Student: *William Gregory*

William Gregory is a 23-year-old student graduating from the Learning Academy at USF. He has just completed his internship in the after school program at Stepping Stones School located in



Tampa. While his main interest is the art program at the school, he enjoys working with the staff and kids. William is hoping to be involved in the development of an animation class that he can be a part of.

William's love of art started when he was very young. He created his first comic book at the age of 13. After graduating from high school, he enrolled at the Ringling College Art School in Sarasota. William is hoping to have a career in illustrations or voice acting. He has created and maintained many websites attributed to illustrations. Check out one of his sites (PG-13 rated): www.fishquarry.com. He is currently submitting works to a website that is responsible for getting many unknown illustrators published. A goal for William is to be published.

Another future possibility is voice acting. William has a distinct voice. It is deep and rich. He currently is putting

together an audio voice portfolio. There are current websites that assist in the marketing of a person's voice acting portfolio. William is in the process of using these resources. The next time you hear an animated character on a TV show or a commercial voiceover, it may be William!

William describes having Asperger's Disorder as an "invisible wheelchair." He heard the quote from an article about Asperger's Disorder. The quote was from Ken Fisher, member of an Asperger's support group. It was sometimes difficult in school and people did not realize his learning style needed some supports that were not readily recognized. He hopes everyone will become more knowledgeable about Asperger's Disorder. William is eager to pursue his dreams of working in art and the voice acting field. There is no doubt he is a success today and in the future!

Event Updates: *CARD Events are a Success!*

5th Annual Fiesta by the Bay

CARD celebrated another successful and fun event with our 5th annual Fiesta by the Bay fundraiser on Friday, April 23rd at Gaspar's Grotto in Ybor City which raised over \$11,000! There were over 250 guests that enjoyed D.J. Deb and a dance contest, "So you think you can salsa", along with



Fiesta guest enjoyed a fun atmosphere of music, dancing, and conga lines.

balloon animals and great food by the Tijuana Flats located on Fowler Ave. The silent auction is always a highlight of the evening and this year's auction tipped the scales with over 50 items bringing in \$4,500!

1st Annual Health & Wellness Symposium

The 1st Annual Autism Health & Wellness Symposium was a huge success. "Rocky the Bull" kept spirits high as more than 200 families and vendors enjoyed breakout training sessions on a variety of health related topics such as difficult sleeping habits, feeding challenges, dental care, and general nutrition. The event was held on March 27, 2010 at the C.W. Young Joint Military Leadership Center at USF. We would like to extend special thanks to all our sponsors and special guest Charlie Bradley.



Rocky poses with special guest Charlie Bradley, former USF basketball star.

Girls' Retreat

The girls' retreat was a huge success! For the 16 young ladies, the weekend was filled with new experiences and new friends and for their caregivers, a chance to reflect upon the present and look to the future in a supportive environment. We are thankful to everyone who participated and talks of a reunion abound.

Hair Cut-a-Thon

Think one person can't make a difference? Well, \$844 makes a difference! One person had a vision and a plan and her co-workers at Swank Hair Lounge helped raised \$844 in hours with a few pairs of scissors and some nail polish. Nydia Caraman, a local hair stylist and mom of a recent high school graduate with autism, wanted to support CARD's activities and suggested a Hair Cut-a-Thon. She got the support of Swank's owner and about a dozen stylists and nail techs. Hand-made posters were waved at cars passing on Brandon Blvd. and customers starting rolling in. Several families with children with autism made appointments with Nydia and their children got the royal treatment. (Two of the children had never been to a salon or gotten a haircut before.) The stylists donated their tips and one stylist, Vanessa, strongly suggested donations so the customer's bangs would not be cut too short! She got 100% participation and her customers all left with regular bangs and a smile! Thank you Nydia and the whole Swank Hair Lounge team!



Above and Right: Swank Hair Lounge stylists hard at work trimming tresses and raising funds to support CARD.



Save the Date! Upcoming Events and Activities

AUGUST 11TH, 2010
Autism Friendly Pajama
Party, *Gymboree Play and
Music North Tampa*

**SEPTEMBER
8TH, 2010**
Chili's Fundraiser for
CARD, *Chili's Restaurant,
Ft. Myers*

**SEPTEMBER
24TH, 2010**
ASDnet Conference,
Tampa

**OCTOBER
22 & 23, 2010**
Autism Friendly Haunted
Barn, *Hillsborough River
State Park*

**JANUARY
13-16TH, 2011**
18th Annual CARD
Conference, *Lake Mary, Fl.*

APRIL 29, 2011
6th Annual Fiesta by
the Bay, *Gaspar's Grotto,
Tampa*

CARD's Autism Services Fund: Your donations stay in your community!


CARD-USF established the Autism Services Fund at the USF Foundation (a 501c3 organization) to support the work



of CARD. Donations and fundraising dollars go into this account and can be used for special projects and activities for families and professionals. There are no administrative costs taken from this account so all donations go directly back to the community we serve here in southwest Florida.

If you or your company is interested in hosting or sponsoring a fundraiser or making a donation, please contact Christine Rover at crover@fmhi.usf.edu or 813-974-9264.

REUNION HISPANA *Get Involved!*



Reunión Anual de Familias Hispanas: *Involúcrate!*

Last year's Reunion Hispana allowed CARD to partner with Central Florida Parent Center and HOT DOCS to speak with families about community resources. The event was led by a steering committee of family members and it is time to reunite those families and more to plan another event. If you are interested in getting involved please contact Vivian Herrero at 813-974-2297. We encourage our families who share Hispanic lineage and traditions to network with one another through the Hispanic American Autism Group at <http://www.meetup.com/autismtampa/>.

En la Reunión Hispana del año pasado tuvimos la oportunidad de trabajar en conjunto con el Centro de Padres del Centro de la Florida y con la organización HOT DOCS para proveer información acerca de los recursos disponibles en nuestra comunidad. Este evento fue dirigido por un comité de padres y familiares y ha llegado el momento de comenzar a planificar el evento una vez más. Si estás interesado en contribuir en la planificación de la Reunión Hispana de este año, por favor, comunícate con Vivian Herrero al 813-974-2297. Exhortamos a nuestras familias que comparten la cultura hispana a unirse con otras familias a través del Grupo Hispano Americano de Autismo siguiendo el enlace en la internet: <http://www.meetup.com/autismtampa/>.

**Autism Society of America
(National Organization)**
Website: <http://www.autism-society.org/>

**Autism Society of Florida, Inc.
Florida State Chapter #131**
E-mail: webmast@autismfl.com
Website: <http://www.autismfl.com>

COLLIER COUNTY

Collier County Autism Support Group
Meetings: 3rd Thursday of the month
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Location: North Naples United Methodist Church
Founder's Hall • 6000 Goodlette Rd N • Naples, FL
Contact: Robin King
E-mail: CollierAutism@gmail.com

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Asperger's Support for Men
Meetings: Every other Thursday
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location: 2901 Swann Ave • Tampa, FL
Cost: \$20-\$29 per session
Contact: Jason Tompkins, LCSW
Phone: 813-784-0153
Males, at least 18 years old, with a confirmed diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome.

Concerned Parents of Autistic Children
Meetings: Last Sunday of the month
Time: 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Location: 9631 Raiden Ln • Riverview, FL
Contact: Jim Evans
E-mail: jim.evans@sqldbhelp.com

Easter Seals THRIVE Program
Location: Thrive Office
10335 Cross Creek Blvd, Suite E • Tampa, FL
Contact: Tori
Phone: 813-988-7633 x-15119
Website: http://fl.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=FLDR_TBThrive
Parents of children with autism.

Parenting with Special Needs
Meetings: Every other Wednesday
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Location: Kid Pro Therapy
16546 N Dale Mabry Hwy • Tampa, FL
Cost: \$10.00 per person per session
Contact: Erica DuPont, LCSW
Phone: 813-966-7064
E-mail: Erica.DuPont@hotmail.com
Parents and caregivers of "special needs" children.

**Parents of Autism and Asperger's
Syndrome Support Group (PASS)**
Meetings: 1st Friday of the month September to May
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Location: Campo Family YMCA
3414 Culbreath Road • Valrico, FL
Website: <http://geocities.com/thePASSgroup/>
Contact: Lisa Neumann
Phone: 813-765-8644

**STAND (Statewide Advocacy Network
on Disabilities)**
Meetings: 3rd Thursday of the month
Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Location: Children's Board of Hillsborough County
1002 E Palm Ave • Tampa, FL
E-mail: advocate@standonline.info
Hillsborough monthly chapter meetings (all disabilities).

LEE COUNTY
If you are aware of any support groups in Lee County, please let CARD know.

PASCO COUNTY

AWARE 4 Autism – East Pasco
Meetings: 1st Saturday of the month
Time: 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Location: First Congregational Church
7900 Fort King Rd • Zephyrhills, FL
Contact: Johanna
Phone: 813-782-9431
E-mail: aware4autism@gmail.com
Caregivers of persons with an autism spectrum disorder.

**Koolkidz Social Skills Group for
Children with ASD**
Meetings: Activities each Wednesday. See website for current events.
Contact: Suzette
E-mail: suzette@koolkidz.mysite.com
Website: <http://www.koolkidz.mysite.com>
Children with Asperger's Syndrome and high functioning autism.

**NAMI Adult Mental Health
Peer-Support Group**
Meetings: 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Location: Community Hospital of New Port Richey
Conference Room • New Port Richey, FL

PINELLAS COUNTY

**American Asperger's Association Support
Group – Autism and Asperger's Disorder**
Time: 6:45 to 8:15 pm
Location: Pinellas Park Library
7770 52nd St • Pinellas Park, FL
Contact: Kim
Phone: 727-586-0577
E-mail: fapprez@msn.com
Website: <http://www.americanaspergersassociation.net>

**SINC (Sensory Integration: Networking
for our Children)**
Parent-Only Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of every month
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Jason's Deli • Clearwater, FL
Open Meetings: 2nd & 4th Friday of every month
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Location: Panera Bread, Countryside • Clearwater, FL
(across from Country Side Mall)
Contact: Heather Stevens
Phone: 727-543-2859
Website: http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Pinellas_SPD_Support/
During open meetins, parents responsible for own children. Online support group also available.

POLK COUNTY

**A Differently Abled Parent Support
Group (ADAPS)**
Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Location: Family Fundamentals Building
1021 Lakeland Blvd. • Lakeland, FL
Contact: Kim Ellis at 863-701-1151 ext 152 or
Nicole at 863-686-1221 ext 228
Families and caregivers of children with disabilities, ages birth to 21 years.

Circle of Friends Support Group
Meetings: Every other Thursday of the month.
Location: Alternate between Winter Haven Hospital and Circle Building, Stuart Avenue • Winter Haven, FL
Contact: Mertice Fehringer
Phone: 863-679-2507

**Parental Education for Autism in
Children Everywhere (PEACE)**
Meetings: 1st Tuesday of the month
Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Family Fundamentals Building
1021 Lakeland Blvd • Lakeland, FL
Contact: Nicole
Phone: 863-686-1221 ext 228
E-mail: Nikki73170@aol.com
Website: <http://www.peacelakeland.com/>

SARASOTA COUNTY

**Families Helping Families – Family
Support Group**
Meetings: 1st & 3rd Thursday of the month
Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Location: Venice Bible Church
2395 W Shamrock Drive • Venice, FL
Contact: Vicki
Phone: 941-544-0167
Family with a child age birth to 22 years with any behavioral or emotional difficulties.

Parent Support Group
Meetings: 4th Tuesday of the month
Time: 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.
Location: Jacaranda Public Library
4143 Woodmere Park Blvd • Venice, FL
Contact: Susie Tromley
Phone: 941-400-4568
Parents of children with autism/ASD or sensory processing disorders.

Please contact CARD-USF via email at card-usf@fmhi.usf.edu with changes or additions. Support Group listings are provided as a service and are not an endorsement by CARD-USF. Our website has the latest list at http://cardusf.fmhi.usf.edu/MK/support_groups.html.

Story Sharing Success!

In the previous CARD Connection, several reasons why literacy is important for learners with autism spectrum disorders were discussed. But once the foundation for literacy has been presented, parents often wonder how to make it happen, especially when their child may not be particularly interested in books or stories, have a hard time sitting and listening or has very limited language skills. The good news is that like any other skill your child needs to learn, developing an interest and a better understanding of printed symbols can be addressed with a systematic approach. To get off to a good start, here a few tips that will make for an enjoyable and educational story sharing experience with your child:

- **CHOOSE THE RIGHT BOOK** — try to choose a book that suits your child's level of understanding, language abilities and attention span. Also, make it appealing to your children, by selecting a book with bold, vivid illustrations and a topic your child will find interesting.
- **CREATE A STORYTIME ROUTINE** — building a predictable, familiar routine around the experience of sharing a story together will allow your child to anticipate and learn from the experience more easily. Many parents

find reading stories before bedtime a good opportunity. You may find other reading times throughout the day are easy to establish as a routine for story sharing. Have a "special" reading place like a favorite comfy chair or snuggled together under a soft quilt. Also, using routine words in a sing-a-song manner such as "Turn the page" provides a familiar element to sharing a story together.

- **FOCUS ON PREDICTION** — begin with the book's outer cover, making predictions based on illustrations. Also, use repeated predictable questions or comments - "I wonder what is next?" or "Let's see what happens now!" When you've finished the story, confirm or alter predictions and compare the story to previous ones.
- **MAKE IT MOTIVATING** — one of the most important messages to convey to your child through story sharing is that reading is fun and worthwhile. Try to relate book content to children's interests and experiences. This will also



help you express your own excitement and enthusiasm for the story. Ending on a positive note, even if it means skipping through some of the pages, allows the child to feel success with the story sharing experience.

- **TEACH VOCABULARY** — As your child becomes more familiar with story sharing, you'll also want to begin exposing them to new words and vocabulary. This is important, because it will increase their understanding of the story content, which in turn broadens comprehension with new stories.
- **USE A VARIETY OF PROMPTS** — for children who are not familiar, comfortable or interested in story sharing, simply exposing them to the experience and ending on a positive note is a good beginning. But as children become more familiar with the routine, using a variety of prompts will increase their understanding and participation from start to finish. Try shifting gradually from commenting on pictures or story events to asking questions. This can be done in a graduated manner, beginning with simple "who, what, and where" questions before the more complex "when and why." Adapting the book or using an additional visual support may also be helpful.
- **MAKE FUTURE PLANS** — when the story is finished, be sure to talk about what books you would like to read next time and allow children to choose new books. This sets up their anticipation of the next story sharing and builds in another element of predictability.

Learning about Autism in USF Teacher Education

The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities has been invited as a guest lecturer at USF for a teacher pre-service class, Integrating Exceptional Students in General Education. For the last five semesters, CARD Consultant Ellie Weber has presented an overview of autism to elementary education teacher candidates. The class exposes future elementary school general educators to basic identification techniques and strategies to promote academic and social integration and interaction of exceptional students included in the general education curriculum. CARD is excited to be given the opportunity

from the USF Education Department to allow us to introduce ourselves to groups of teachers that will know they can contact any of the CARD sites as they become professionals in the state of Florida. Every new cohort of general education teachers from USF now have the opportunity to be informed of Exceptional Student Education, and for our constituents' benefit, an awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders. CARD will be able to provide technical assistance, training and support upon their request when they encounter a student with autism in their classroom.

Project: Rock for Autism

By Steve Toth, USF Class of 2014

My volunteer activity was called Project: Rock for Autism and I have earned hundreds of volunteer hours from it, staging three benefit concerts for autism. In each instance, I booked the stadium at Gulf High School, stages from Tampa Bay Staging, five local bands from the first two concerts, fourteen bands this past May, and food vendors for the events. I am part of one of the bands that played and one of my friends who also volunteered time on this project has a brother diagnosed with autism.

The idea for such an event came up when we wanted to combine our talent and a cause, to really make a difference

at a community level. My goal for the event was connecting to ordinary people, getting them involved, and using this connection to make donating a fun occasion and I feel this goal was thoroughly achieved with this project.

During the concert planning experiences, I established several business contacts, including owners and corporate managers of many local businesses, food vendors, local bands, newspapers, leaders of the district school board, police and fire marshals, and many other people who helped me along the way.

The most obvious benefit from the event was over \$10,000 that was raised in the three years. Another benefit was the fact that about 200-400

people came and had a good time at each show. Most people don't like to just donate their money, they want something in return. We definitely gave them something back with a good time, some high energy acts, good food, and all in all a pretty high quality outdoor venue.

Overall, it was a fun event and project to embark, and good experience with planning larger scale events. I feel this project had a real effect on the local community, making it into local newspapers, a feature story on News Channel 8, spreading by word of mouth, raising awareness of autism and raising the level of charitable spirit and fervor among our local community.

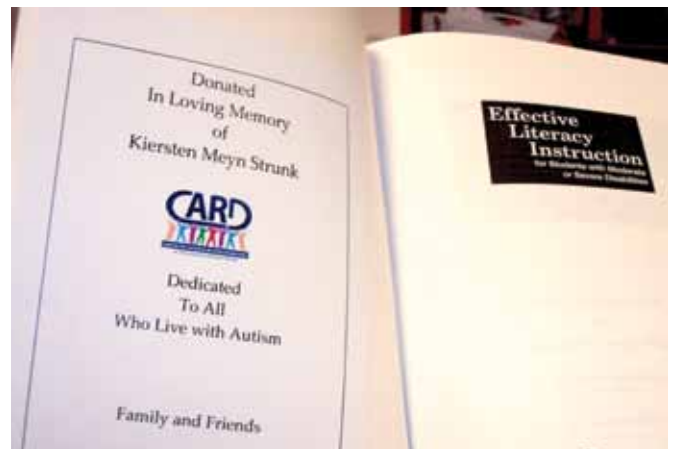
Strunk Memorial Library Collection

A library collection of books was purchased through donations to the Autism Services Fund USF Foundation in memory of Kiersten Meyn Strunk. Kiersten has a son with autism and had lived in the Tampa Bay area. Donations were sent to the Autism Services Fund USF Foundation and CARD USF determined that library resources could be purchased. Many families and teachers who have an experience with someone with autism don't always have the resources to learn about additional aspects of autism spectrum disorders. CARD USF sought to purchase books that would have an impact and be readily accessible to families and teachers who may not otherwise have access to these resources. The collection of books is available for parents and teachers to access. The topics include visual supports, social skills, behavior, homeschooling, employment, and much, much more.

The books are located in Louis de la Parte Florida Mental

Health Institute Research Library on the campus of USF Tampa. If you are not affiliated with USF or cannot travel to view the books, you may become a "special borrower." This will allow you to check out the books. Please call 813-974-4471 for any questions.

<http://library.fmhi.usf.edu/>



Above: The books in the Strunk collection are dedicated to the memory of Kiersten Meyn Strunk.
Below: CARD USF staff pose with Strunk Memorial Library collection.



Father's Day at the Newly "Autism Friendly" Lowry Park Zoo

We are proud to announce that Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is Autism Friendly! CARD conducted trainings for



all of their staff, created visual supports, and modified existing materials to make the zoo a more autism friendly site. We capped off the process with a "Father's Day" event.

CARD provided breakfast for families which included gluten-free products, made especially by the zoo's Executive Chef. A parent, had called prior to the event asking the food service staff at the zoo if she could bring a gluten-free breakfast in a cooler for her son or talk to the chef about preparing options. The chef, Chad Lusk, began to develop food options based on the conversation.

The chef did a great job with the buffet and offerings throughout the park all day, including gluten-free cupcakes at the Sweet Shoppe and a gluten-free lunch menu at several restaurants. The zoo offered our families discounts on ticket pricing. The zoo opened the park up two hours early and the families were treated to having the park all to themselves. Their docents and volunteers had "father" animal facts along the pathway leading to the Safari Lodge where the breakfast was held. Some animals were



Above: Signs direct visitors to the Safari Lodge for a special breakfast.
Below: Two Lowry Park Zoo employees show off the zoo's new 'Autism Friendly' status.



brought out for a closer look! The zoo's CEO, Craig Pugh, was on hand to meet and greet the families. It was a wonderful event for the families.

One parent sent CARD a note of appreciation. "I just want to say thank you for the Father's Day at the Lowry Park Zoo that CARD sponsored with the breakfast. It was at such a great price we could take advantage of it. My husband brought one of my daughters and my son and they all enjoyed it very much. They brought back some great pictures to share with us."

Autism Friendly Business Update!

Our autism friendly initiative has really taken off! We have been contacted by several businesses wanting to learn more about becoming autism friendly. The following businesses are now autism friendly:

- BOUNCE U, Sarasota
- BOUNCE U, Wesley Chapel
- FIFTH THIRD BANK, Estero & Ft. Myers
- FOWLER WHITE BOGGS ATTORNEYS AT LAW, Tampa
- KALEISIA TEA LOUNGE, Tampa
- NEW TAMPA YMCA, Tampa
- TAMPA'S LOWRY PARK ZOO, Tampa
- WYNDHAM TAMPA WESTSHORE HOTEL, Tampa



We have other businesses going through the final stages of the process including The Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg and Crossfit Revolution Gym in Brandon. Please visit our website to view all the businesses that are autism friendly. This process is family driven. If you know of a business interested in becoming autism friendly, have the manager contact Dr. Karen Berkman at 813-974-2532.

<http://card-usf.fmbi.usf.edu/business.asp>



CENTER FOR AUTISM & RELATED DISABILITIES
at The University of South Florida

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