

Letter from the CARD-USF Constituency Board

Dear CARD-USF Constituent:

We are the CARD-USF Constituency Board. We are your representatives to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida in Tampa serving a 14 county region. As individuals or family members of individuals with autism, we understand the problems and concerns you are dealing with because we are dealing with them too.

We can all still remember how lost and lonely we felt during the process of getting this diagnosis, and afterwards trying to understand how to meet the needs of our children. Having opportunities to meet and talk with other parents of children with autism and related disabilities was like opening a door to a whole new world.

The Board's members are not just from the Tampa area. We live in Lee, Charlotte, Pasco, Pinellas, Sarasota and Manatee Counties. The Board is always looking for new members to join us. Our group meets four times a year with the director and executive director of CARD-USF. We have set goals for this year, and work quarterly as a group to develop ways to meet those goals. This year, we want to communicate with the constituents from all areas that CARD-USF serves to hear what your needs are. We will then advise the administration at CARD-USF on these issues of importance. Our role is to listen to you, be your voice and to coordinate efforts that meet the community needs.

We want to hear from you. We want your input. We want to hear your ideas, concerns and suggestions. Please contact us through the CARD's e-mail at card-usf@fmhi.usf.edu and a Board member will respond to you directly.



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CARD-USF Constituency Board Members



Ann Reynolds
Sarasota County

A member since 1998, Ann decided to join the Board to develop awareness of needs. Ann's main priorities for the autism community are legislator

awareness, community awareness and acceptance, social skills development, employment opportunities for individuals with autism, community inclusion opportunities. As a parent of a 16-year-old with autism, Ann can offer understanding and support to CARD-USF families. She encourages parents to contact their legislators with a unified message—the need to improve life outcomes for individuals with autism.



Barry Cohen
Pasco County

He has served on the CARD Constituency Board from 2000 to the present, although he has been involved with CARD-USF for more than a dozen years, going

back to when CARD was known as The Florida Autism Program. Barry says he wanted to become a Board member to get involved and make a difference in the lives of persons with autism. His priorities for the autism community include increasing awareness and offering better services and opportunities. Barry offers a wealth of experience to CARD constituents, including working with school system, community, and legislators. Barry and his wife, Paula, co-founded Pasco Association for Challenged Kids (PACK), a summer camp for kids with disabilities in New Port Richey.



Nicole Torres
Polk County

Nicole Torres is a parent of a 5 yr old son diagnosed with Autism/ADHD. She is currently serving as Vice Chair for the CARD constituency board.

Nicole works as a Family Resource Specialist for Infants and Young Children of West Central Florida and the Early Steps Program. She also is the founder of the PEACE support group in Lakeland (www.peacelakeland.com).



Michael McCroskery
Hillsborough County

Michael graduated from the University of Tampa with a degree in Communications in 1992. He is currently working towards a degree in Early Childhood Education at

The University of South Florida and is serving a 2nd year as a substitute teacher for Hillsborough County schools.

Michael serves on the Constituency Board because he feels that he can be a voice for Asperger's Disorder within CARD. He would like to help people with Asperger's Disorder access available services. He would also like to help bring about change in this state in how people with Asperger Syndrome are treated in comparison to those with autism.

Michael has much to contribute as a board member. He has experience as a volunteer with Special Education children at Monmouth Elementary in Illinois. He can also offer his writing experience, as evidenced by the already published letters to the editors at The Tampa Tribune and The Lakeland Ledger. He has an article on Asperger Syndrome which is available on most AS websites, at the CARD library, and is now being used as a reflection piece for the course Working with Special Needs at Hillsborough Community College.



Sarina Adeni
Lee County

Sarina decided to serve because she wanted to make a difference in the lives of people with autism. Her goals for the autism community include increasing

autism awareness, obtaining earlier diagnoses from physicians, funding, community inclusion, including inclusion in schools, and insurance reimbursements for treatment. Sarina is highly knowledgeable about developmental disabilities as a board-certified internist and gerontologist. She is particularly interested in dementia in individuals with developmental disability, and is an advocate for the study and improved diagnosis of dementia in patients with developmental disability.



Chandra Robinson Williams
Manatee County

Chandra is our current Board Secretary. A pediatrician and parent of a 16-year-old son with autism, Chandra has joined the Board to learn about resources available

for parents. Chandra seeks to heighten awareness of autism in the community and improve educational opportunities and curricula available to individuals with autism of all ages. Chandra says: "Everyone knows about "Jerry's Kids," although few people may know a family who has a child with muscular dystrophy. Far more people know families of children with autism, yet people are still not sure exactly what autism is." In addition to her 15 years experience as a parent of a child with autism and 17 years experience as a pediatrician, Chandra can offer CARD-USF families a willingness to listen and act.



Julie Sneed
Hillsborough County

Julie is our current Board Chair. Julie is a lawyer at Fowler White Boggs Banker, P.A. in Tampa and the parent of a five-year-old lively and charming son with autism. Julie joined the Board

to help parents become aware of autistic spectrum disorders and to educate the public concerning the prevalence of autism. According to Julie, "The public needs to be able to associate the label of autism with real people they know. I want to help personalize autism for those who have only heard about it on the news." She is also interested in increasing the funding for CARD and other services, therapies and research for a cure for autism. Julie is excited about contributing, sharing, learning from others and helping to develop strategies to better the lives of those in our autism community.