

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

CENTER FOR AUTISM & RELATED DISABILITIES

at The University of South Florida

Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Department of Child & Family Studies — Volume 12, Issue 1 • February 2009 - July 2009

CARD STAFF

Karen Berkman, CARD Executive Director

Mary-Kay Bunton-Pierce, Data Coordinator Jean Caldicott, Resource Specialist Donna Casella, Training Coordinator Vivian Herrero, Spanish Translator/Intakes Krystal McFee, Program Assistant Christine Rover, Community Inclusion Coordinator Bobbie Vaughn, UCEDD Diversity Coordinator

Neill Broderick, CARD Consultant Beverly King, CARD Consultant Shelton Gilyard, CARD Consultant Susan Richmond, CARD Consultant Mary Reed, CARD Consultant Mindy Stevens, CARD Consultant Tammy Smith, CARD Consultant Ellie Weber, CARD Consultant

Ft. Myers Staff

Ft. Myers Branch Office Connie Philbrook, Senior Secretary Anne Allen, CARD Consultant Leigh Anna Nowak, CARD Consultant

CONSTITUENCY BOARD

Julie Sneed, Chair Nicole Torres, Vice Chair Annette Christy Ann Reynolds Chandra Williams



Executive Director's Message



Dr. Karen Berkman, CARD Executive Director

Happy New Year to all our CARD friends and families. Let us look forward to better economic times in this new year. We have all certainly struggled this past year with budget cuts, job losses, and

the economy teetering on the brink of collapse. However, as a glass half full type of person, I have to believe in the possibilities that exist for our future.

That being said, I reviewed the incredible number of activities, collaborations and partnerships that resulted from the hard work of the CARD staff over this past year. We have been considering all the ways to work smarter, not harder, especially in light of gas prices, the number of constituents we serve (over 2300), the number of consultants we employ (10) and the driving distance across 14 counties (we drove over 53,562 miles in 2007-8).

Some other statistics of interest are:

- In 2007-2008, we provided
 - ✓ 6879 direct assistance contacts to over 11,000 individuals
 - ✓ 2678 technical assistance contacts to

over 4800 individuals

- ✓ 148 trainings to over 4800 individuals
- ✓ 37 public awareness events to over 6000 individuals
- During this year our project created 120 new partnerships in the communities we serve
- We maintain a library of over 1200 professional books, CDs, DVDs, and articles
- We hosted the following events:
 - ✓ 2nd Autism and Mental Health Conference
 - ✓ 3rd Fiesta By the Bay Fundraiser
 - ✓ 6th Annual Summer Institute for Teachers
 - ✓ 3rd Annual Community Leadership Award
 - ✓ 1st Annual Spring Egg Hunt
 - ✓ 1st Annual Literacy for All event
 - ✓ 2nd Annual Hispanic event

I am also excited that we have Beverly King and Dr. Tammy Smith on board with our team who will add their expertise to our work. In spite of budget limitations, we will continue to impact change and build a welcoming community through our partnerships. We have much to look ahead to and we appreciate your confidence and support.

-Karen Berkman, Ph.D.

Highlights In This Issue

Executive Director's Message	1
Tampa's ACT Projectp. 2	2
Project Lifesaver Coming to Hillsborough	
County and Tampap. 2	2
Inclusive Communities: Autism and the Hospital	
Emergency Roomp. 3	3
Emergency Roomp)

Book Review: Simple Strategies That Work!p.	
The Tampa Connection Projectp.	
Community Support for CARDp.	
Idea for Help with Social Communication Turns Into	
Spreading Autism Awareness and Educating Peers p.	-
Adult Services at CARDp.	

So What Happens When You Ask? p. 9
2 nd Annual Reading for ALL: Autism Literacy & Learning p. 9
Autism Supportp. 10
Save the Date: Fiesta By The Bayp. 11
CARD Awarded Autism Speaks 2008 Family
Services Community Grantp. 12



Center for Autism & Related Disabilities University of South Florida Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute Department of Child & Family Studies Division of Applied Research & Educational Support 13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd. Tampa, FL 33612-3899

Phone: 813-974-2532 Florida only: 1-800-333-4530 FAX: 813-974-6115 E-mail: card-usf@fmhi.usf.edu http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu

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.

Tampa's ACT Project

Tampa has its own "Autism the Musical" endeavor, The All Community Theatre (ACT) Project! CARD has been collaborating with a local therapist, Loretta Gallo-Lopez, in bringing her vision to fruition. Loretta's vision last spring was to begin two weekly therapeutic theatre and creative arts programs for children with Autism, one in Hillsborough County and one in Pinellas County. The basis of the groups is to incorporate drama and play strategies to promote and enhance communication and social skill development.

Loretta is also a certified play therapist and is working with Dr Jennifer Baggerly from the College of Education at USF on pre and post outcomes for children and families participating in the project. A specific age group, 8 to 12 year olds, is targeted for this pilot.

CARD is helping with the project through training, technical assistance and community collaboration. CARD was able to recruit both undergraduate and graduate students throughout the University to volunteer for the project. The volunteers are representatives from School of Performing Arts, Educational Counseling, Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling, and the Physical Education Department. The volunteers had an introductory workshop and

plenty of on the job training. There
are many amazing parents
who are dedicated to
bringing their children
every week to ACT. While
they gather during the session,
CARD staff meets with them once
a month to facilitate a workshop

based on parent suggestions. This has been a great opportunity for CARD staff to hear the direct concerns from parents and for the parents to learn from one another through their shared experiences.

All of the families, friends and staff involved in ACT were very excited to see the December In –Studio performances. There will be a final performance in May...so look for the announcements on the CARD website.

Project Lifesaver Coming to Hillsborough County and Tampa

CARD is pleased to collaborate with and partially fund a project coming to Tampa in February 2009. From the Project Lifesaver International website: "Project Lifesaver relies on proven radio technology and a specially trained search and rescue team. Clients that are enrolled in the Project Lifesaver program wear a personalized wristband that emits a tracking signal. When caregivers notify the local Project Lifesaver agency that the person is missing, a search and rescue team responds to the wanderer's area and starts searching with the mobile locater tracking system. Search times have been reduced from hours and days to minutes. In over 1,500 searches, there have been no reported serious injuries or deaths. Recovery times average less than 30 minutes."

Interested residents of Hillsborough County or the City of Tampa are encouraged to contact Officer King for more information on eligibility and registration:

> Gene King, MPO Tampa Police Department Special Services Division 411 N. Franklin Street Tampa, FL 33602 813 276-3436 – Office

www.projectlifesaver.org

Check the CARD website in the Spring for updates on Project Lifesaver and strategies to reduce wandering.

Inclusive Communities: Autism and the Hospital Emergency Room

Parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders learn early how to anticipate and manage a crisis. But when the crisis involves emergency medical services (EMS) or a trip to a hospital emergency room (ER), it often takes a well-informed treatment team to keep the situation under control. The sights, sounds, smells and accelerated pace of hospital emergency departments can overwhelm the senses of an individual with Autism. In anticipation of Autism Awareness Month, CARD-USF is busy developing community awareness materials to help hospital emergency room personnel understand Autism and meet the special needs of their patients.

The following suggestions were prepared for emergency treatment teams, hospital clinicians, and the parents of individuals with autism during an emergency situation:

MINIMIZE WAIT TIME, WHENEVER POSSIBLE

- Recognize that simply entering a noisy, crowded waiting room may trigger acute anxiety and challenging behaviors in children with Autism
- If the triage nurse determines the child will need to wait to see a physician, provide a quiet room or non-crowded waiting area, whenever possible
- Assess child and perform procedures immediately to minimize or eliminate wait time
- Utilize hospital resources; some ER departments employ a play therapist whose job it is to help put young patients at ease to reduce anxiety or distract child's attention during a procedure

USE PARENT'S APPROACH AS A GUIDE

Always ask about the child's primary form of communication

- Ask a parent what works best and what to avoid
- Ask about sensitivities to light, sound, touch, and smell
- Inquire about previous emergency situations and what worked to minimize anxiety and calm the individual
- Many parents are trained in holding techniques and will know what techniques will work best with their child
- Remember, parents of children with Autism are under tremendous stress in daily life; monitor the parent's stress level and respect individual methods of coping

ADJUST THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Dim the lights if the patient is light sensitive
- Lower the volume on overhead page speaker, if possible
- Provide a cloth sheet on the exam table, in place of paper
- Remove the white lab coat whenever possible
- Arrange exam room to minimize escape
- Monitor the patient continuously for sensory overload

Model a Caring Attitude for the Treatment Team

- Move to the patient's level to communicate
- Whenever possible, prepare the team to work from the floor, the parent's lap or wherever the individual feels comfortable
- Use a quiet, calm voice and minimize words and touch
- Simplify requests or commands and wait before giving next request
- Expect no eye contact
- Allow individual to touch and hold equipment whenever possible

- If the patient is a child, use a toy doll, stuffed animal or pictures to demonstrate a medical procedure, whenever possible
- If the patient is an adult, remember the individual may not be able to understand direct questions or give informed consent for treatment

FOCUS ON COOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR

- Praise all cooperative behavior
- Ignore behaviors that appear unusual (unusual body movements, or vocalizations)
- Use pictures to redirect attention; show what will happen, and what is expected

BE PREPARED; BE PROACTIVE

- When senses are overloaded and anxiety escalates, an individual with Autism may respond with aggressive behaviors toward others, hospital equipment, or themselves
- Tantrums can include prolonged screaming, biting, scratching, dropping to the floor and kicking, etc.
- Encourage parents to help redirect and restore calm to an escalating situation
- Notify the treatment team to be prepared and gently and compassionately assist as needed

CARD consultants provide training and consultation on how to work effectively with individuals with Autism and related developmental disabilities. The team frequently collaborates in the community to form partnerships to improve access to services and supports community inclusion.

To arrange training and technical assistance, call (800)333-4530 or (813)974-2532.

Autism Awareness Month is April 2009. CARD-USF will be distributing information on meeting the special needs of individuals with Autism in hospital emergency rooms, airports, airplanes, churches and synagogues.

Book Review: Simple Strategies That Work!

Title: Simple Strategies That Work! Helpful Hints for All Educators of Students With Asperger Syndrome, High-Functioning Autism, and Related Disabilities

Authors: Brenda Smith Myles, Diane Adreon, Dena Gitlitz

First Copyright Date: 2006

Publisher: Autism Asperger Publishing Company **Type of Book:** Parenting/Teaching Children with ASD **General Subject Matter:** Education-Handbooks, Manuals

Special Features: The content of the book is divided into 10 useful simple strategies. Each strategy is presented with examples and the reasons why it is

important to use them.

Price: \$19.95 **ISBN:** 1931282994

Purpose:

Children and youth with Asperger Syndrome (AS), high-functioning autism (HFA), and pervasive developmental disorders-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), and related exceptionalities have great potential, but all too often their abilities are not realized. Simple Strategies that Work! provides ideas and suggestions that teachers can use to help a student with AS/HFA on the road to success. The book discusses problems that arise in the classroom and how teachers can adjust the classroom to accommodate, while not interfering with normal classroom routines. Not boggled down with jargon, the book includes tables and boxes for quick reference and clear meaning. Also included is information on what can cause anxiety for the AS/HFA student, how this can lead to decreased academic and social performance, decreased attention to task, and potential increases in behavior problems, and what the teacher can do to assist.

THESIS:

The authors state that students with AS/HFA have many attributes that tend to cloud the fact that they do not understand aspects of the school environment that other students pick up automatically without direct instruction. Because of this complex range of difficulties and challenges, definitive steps must be taken to implement interventions that match

individual needs and empower students to be successful.

EVALUATION:

This book is filled with great strategies that are easy to implement and will assist in reducing stress for students diagnosed with AS/HFA. The secret is in its simplicity. It seems to have culminated many of the larger works into a smaller how-to manual that is easily read in less than an hour. Each strategy is introduced, with a clever title, and brief and easy-to-understand explanations of why it is important to use that given strategy.

- Operate on Asperger Time twice as much time, half as much done
- 2. Manage the Environment establish and teach routines
- Create a Balanced Agenda that Conserves Energy monitor demands
- 4. Share the Agenda use visual supports
- 5. Simplify Language assure comprehension
- **6. Set a Calm, Positive Tone** a calm teacher results in a calm student
- 7. **Live out Loud** verbalize your actions
- **8. Be Generous with Praise** provide specific praise often
- 9. Listen to the Words seek and offer clarification
- **10. Provide Reassurance** reduce uncertainty



The ideas are appropriate for all educational environments and are laid out in a user-friendly way so as to be easily understood by special education as well as mainstream personnel.

An excerpt from the book: "The strategies can be applied to students of all ages – preschool through high school. In addition, they can be applied in all settings – in the classroom, on the playground, in the hallways at school, during lunch, physical education, recess, and specials, as well as on field trips.

"...the strategies, while effective, are simple enough for everyone to use."

Besides, the strategies, while effective, are simple enough for everyone to use. That is, in addition to teachers and related support personnel, administrators, office staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals will find that these supports lay the groundwork for more successful experiences for students with AS/HFA. In many cases, they are helpful for all students!"

AUTHORS:

Brenda Smith Myles, Ph.D., writes and speaks internationally on Asperger Syndrome and autism. The author and co-author of numerous publications, Myles' recent books include Children and Youth with Asperger Syndrome: Strategies for Success in Inclusive Settings, The Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations, One-A-Day Calendar: Hidden Curriculum - Items for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations, Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence: Practical Solutions for School Success, Asperger Syndrome and Sensory Issues, Practical Solutions for Making Sense of the World, This is Asperger Syndrome, and Asperger Syndrome and Difficult Moments: Practical Solutions for Tantrums, Rage, and Meltdowns.

Diane Adreon, M.A., is associate director of the University of Miami/

Nova Southeastern University Center for Autism & Related Disabilities. Ms. Adreon has presented nationally and internationally on high-functioning autism and Asperger Syndrome. Ms. Adreon is the co-author (with Myles) of Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence: Practical Solutions for School Success (2001 winner of the Autism Society of American Literary Achievement Award). She serves on the editorial boards of Focus on Autism & Developmental Disorders and Intervention in School & Clinic.

Dena Gitlitz, a woman with autism, is a writer, artist, and speaker, who presents nationally on autism and Asperger Syndrome. Her unique perspective addresses thought processes, sensory sensitivities, common challenges, and support strategies. She serves on the professional advisory board of MAAP Services Inc., and the Autism Society of the Palm Beaches.

The Tampa Connection Project

We are very proud to announce that CARD was selected from many applicants to partner with The Tampa Connection, a leadership group of executives from Tampa Bay businesses and professional organizations. The Tampa Connection prepares its members to become active volunteers and leaders in the Tampa Bay community. They offer their time to assist on projects submitted by non-profit agencies. These groups of professionals take responsibility for planning and implementing accepted projects.

CARD-USF submitted a project that targets developing a marketing plan for us to utilize with local businesses. Our goal is to create welcoming community environments for families of children with autism. Our vision is to offer local establishments the opportunity to receive training and strategies for no cost or low cost supports that will create an environment where our families could

enjoy a shopping, dining or entertainment activity. We know how difficult these experiences can be, so in an effort to improve access to community resources for families, we are pleased to work with Tampa Connection on this project. We also plan to host a luncheon for business leaders in our community to educate them about CARD services and collaborative opportunities. The luncheon will take place in April during Autism Awareness Month.

Members of The Tampa Connection team met with our staff, attended events such as our Fall Open House, and attended a fundraiser at BJ's Restaurant in order to learn more about CARD-USF. Their enthusiasm and dedication has been exciting. They are eager to create a successful project; one that is able to expand over time and have a lasting impact.

Once this project is completed in May 2009, we will report our outcomes in our next newsletter.

Community Support for CARD

As a new year begins we are reminded of the many individuals, businesses and organizations that supported CARD during the past 12 months. Support comes in many forms: donations, fundraising event participation, hosting events, sponsorships, and memorials just to name a few. Check out our Support CARD link on the website for additional ideas and to see how we use the funds right here in Southwest Florida to support families and professionals.

Thank you to Kaleisia Tea Lounge for selecting CARD for the last two years as the beneficiary of their Gifts of Love Celebration and Auction. The owners of Kaleisia, Kim and Lan, have donated over \$7,000 and we're using these funds to support families to attend workshops and conferences.

CrossRoads Community UMC hit another hole in one "fore" CARD for the 2nd year raising additional funds for the Autism Services Fund.

The Junior League of Tampa selected CARD as the recipient of a community literacy initiative and provided volunteers and funds for the 2nd year for CARD's Literacy for ALL: Autism, Literacy and Learning Workshop.

With a generous memorial gift, CARD has purchased autism resources for the Florida Mental Health Library which is accessible to the general public.

And sponsors from last year's Fiesta by the Bay fundraising event hope you will join us again this year at Gaspar's Grotto in Ybor City on April 17th, 2009. Gracias to our 2008 sponsors: Gaspar's Grotto, Tijuana Flats, News Channel 8, Fowler White Boggs Banker, Lindamood-Bell Learning Centers, TECO Energy, Palace Pizza and Pro-Copy.

Idea for Help with Social Communication Turns Into

Reno Williams is 11 years old and attends Trafalgar Middle School in Cape Coral as a 6th grader this year. He moved to Florida with his family in July 2006. Reno has Asperger's Syndrome in addition to a visual impairment and other diagnoses. He received early intervention starting at age 2 for vision services, sensory integration, and behavioral issues.

He has always attended general education classrooms, implementing supports and services incorporated within his IEP to maintain academic success. Reno has been an avid reader since the age of 4. Last year he read both the Lemony Snicket and Harry Potter series of books. His mother Tuesday Williams estimates that he spends an average of 20-30 hours a week reading.

Reno describes his Asperger's in this way "I do some things that other kids might not do, like, when I get really excited I jump up and down sometimes, my hands do this flapping thing like I'm

about to fly off into space. Sometimes, I scream or make loud noises when I get really mad, sad, or happy. Sometimes, I can't even believe what I'm doing, but it still happens. I have no control over it and half the time I don't realize it until someone says... RENO. Another thing that is very hard for me to do is change my routine, I have to know exactly what is coming next. I hate not knowing what is next."

Despite his challenges, Reno has set himself on a course of discovery and mission. Here is his story.

Reno writes, "My goal is to start educating children in elementary schools about autism and autism related disabilities to reduce the stigma that children have about disabilities and reduce bullying in schools and throughout the community. I hope to reach as many students, teachers and community members as I can by public speaking and spreading awareness."

A reporter from the local newspaper attended one of Reno's presentations

and wanted to interview him later that day for a newspaper article about him. Reno wrote a press statement for the reporter because he was nervous that he might not be able to answer questions for her. When she e-mailed back asking why he was more comfortable writing his information than speaking it, his response was "I have a communication disorder." This article was written using much of that press statement released by Reno.

"Last year I attended Hector A. Cafferata, Jr. Elementary School and was in the 5th grade. My teacher told our class we HAD to enter the Thomas A. Edison Regional Inventors Fair on January 26, 2008. I was petrified; I didn't know of any or even could think of an invention. Well, I had attended a school dance just prior to this announcement about entering the inventors fair and I had an idea! Hmm...I know I felt kind of awkward at the dance, and it is hard for me to start a conversation with others or read their body language or expressions so instead of feeling excited I was feeling very anxious at social events. I finally knew what I would do. I will come up with a way that will help me communicate with others during social events for my invention. Well I came up with PARTY MATCH - Presenting Autism and Related disabilities To Youth -Marking Awareness Together Children can Help children. I presented my idea at the fair. I didn't get any award but what I did get was the understanding that people including myself just don't get autism. I am so glad my teacher pushed our class to enter the fair; if she did not encourage us to come up with a new invention I am not sure if I would be doing what I am doing today with spreading awareness and educating my peers. I am just a regular kid who sees the world around me a little differently and may sometimes need a little help from my friends, family, peers and teachers. The inventors fair was the



Reno attending to the CARD table at the Desoto County Back to School Health & Safety Community Event

Spreading Autism Awareness and Educating Peers

start of all my ideas, my research and my future goals."

"I didn't get any award but what I did get was the understanding that people including myself just don't get autism."

Reno continues, "I always knew that I did a few things differently than other kids I wanted to know why. I was told by my doctors and family that I have an autism spectrum disorder called Asperger's Syndrome. I didn't know what that meant so I started researching it. I didn't even know it was a disability. My mom never told me I had a disability only ABILITIES she even wrote a poem for me about my abilities. I still didn't understand it because of the terminology that was used. It took me months but I looked up every word I didn't understand and decided to make a brochure that everyone including me and my peers could understand. Then one thing led to another, well, I thought maybe I can write up something about how to be a good friend to kids with autism to explain that sometimes kids with autism may act a little different than some other kids. I now just finished writing bullies be gone. Bullying occurs everyday even with typical developing children but children with disabilities are more likely to have others make fun of them so I thought maybe if we explain about bullying and how hurtful it can be to students at an early age then maybe someday no child will become a victim of bullying."

"Reno until he was asked to attend the inventors fair, never really knew about his diagnoses and what they meant. After coming up with PARTY MATCH, for his invention, Reno became extremely involved in research about autism - Asperger's and his other diagnoses. He wanted to learn all he could, researching for hours a day" says his mom, Tuesday.

"With the help of Leigh Anna Nowak from CARD, I have been able to get my information into power points, brochures, bookmarks, and flyers. I have been given the opportunity to accompany her to resource fairs to hand out my literature and give power point presentations within the community. Leigh Anna has helped me put all my hard work and dreams in to reality. I hope to continue to help educate and bring awareness to my community about autism and autism related disabilities."

CARD began working with Reno in February of 2008. We have developed together a flexible presentation that can be used for adults or children. It is comprised of three components:

- · Reno's introductory statement
- A PowerPoint presentation called, Autism: Truth or Myth
- A PowerPoint presentation called, How to Be a Good Friend to Kids with Autism

I assist by setting up, doing an introductory statement, running the computer for him and helping with the question and answer session at the end. We insert transition sentences between components of his presentation that change a little bit for each audience. Sometimes we present together.

RENO HAS DONE THE FOLLOWING PRESENTATIONS:

- Lely Elementary School (60 faculty)
- Lely Elementary School (5 presentations to 229 4th and 5th grade students)
- Trafalgar Middle School (85 faculty)
- Villas Elementary School (2 presentations to 150 4th and 5th grader students)
- Skyline Elementary School (50 faculty)
- Therapeutic Horseback Riding Camp (11 volunteers)

- Early Learning Coalition of SWFL (early childhood providers and parents)
- 16th Annual CARD conference, Pre-conference Day for Educators
- Hancock Creek Elementary (4 presentations to 240 4th and 5th grade students)

He has attended the following fairs, distributing his brochures and bookmarks:

- Desoto County Back to School Health & Safety Community Event (500 attendees)
- Glades County Agency Fair (30 attendees)
- DeSoto County Parent Resource Fair (200 attendees)

Reno has more plans for his future. "I would like to start an organization that implements programs such as youth groups, (to include kids with and without disabilities in the community) support groups for children who have autism and their family, like a brother, sister, or friend and a reading club to involve children with and without disabilities in the community. I also have some fund raising ideas to help me because I eventually would like to be able to give money to autism research, help families in crisis, and go to college to be a research scientist so I can help come up with a cure for autism." Reno has begun his fundraising. This past fall, he, his mother, father and sister all participated in the Walk NOW for Autism walk sponsored by Autism Speaks to raise money for research.

Tuesday has this to say about Reno's experiences, "I think Reno has grown so much more verbal and social, he understands now what having autism means and has dedicated himself to sharing his story with others with education and awareness." This past summer Reno won a Do the Right Thing Award from the Cape Coral Police Department for his role in promoting autism awareness and education.

Adult Services at CARD

The Adult Services Team is fully staffed and up and running at CARD. Team consultants Susan Richmond, Tammy Jorgensen-Smith, and Leigh Anna Nowak have been working hard developing ideas, reviewing existing material and creating new resources to enhance the services available for young adults, adults, their families and the individuals who work with them.

The team plans to develop groups in Sarasota, Manatee and Pasco Counties in 2009.

In August, the first meeting of the Hillsborough County Adult Discussion Group took place. Constituents sixteen and over and their families were invited to meet the team and discuss what issues and topics they were interested in hearing more about. Based on their input information sessions on Social Security Benefits, the Economics of Disability and Guardianship have taken place. The group has developed a list of

topics that will be addressed throughout the year. The team plans to develop groups in Sarasota, Manatee and Pasco Counties in 2009.

CARD's new website now features an adult section with fact sheets on transition and guardianship. Plans include providing informative relevant information on numerous areas of concern and interest to individuals experiencing transition and entering the world of post-secondary education or employment. A catalog of the team's favorite transition websites and information on what is contained on each site has been posted. Websites are categorized according to the target audience with a brief explanation of what viewers can find on each site.

The adult team is reviewing and revamping all of the core trainings for adults. In early 2009, the Adult Core Training package will be completed and offered to interested school districts, provider organizations and parent groups.

The staff is also working on the creation of materials for the Independence Notebook Project. This resource



Adult Services Team consultant Leigh Ann Nowak

will provide individuals with a handy binder where all pertinent information can be kept in one place. Forms documenting important information such as personal information, medical information, individual and agency contact information, benefits and financial resources and much more will be part of the binder. All of the forms will be available online so that individuals can download the forms they desire and create their binders at home. The aim is to allow for more independence by having this information in one convenient location and empower individuals to be in better control of their personal information and less reliant on others to provide it for them when necessary.

2009 promises to be a productive year for the Adult Team at CARD.

Please feel free to contact any of the adult team members with your thoughts and suggestions.

Susan Richmond srichmond@fmhi.usf.edu

Tammy Jorgensen-Smith tjsmith@fmhi.usf.edu

Toll Free (800)333-4530 or (813)974-2532



Left to Right: Adult Services Team consultants Tammy Jorgensen-Smith and Susan Richmond.

So What Happens When You Ask?

By Kourtney Millard, ASD Teacher

It just starts with a question....can we? Is it possible? That's how the movie day for families with children with Autism at Citrus Park Regal Cinemas got started. Is it possible? I was actually trying to set up a CBI (Community Based Instruction Trip) for my class of children with Autism and was unable to do it because of school hours and movie times. I had recently gotten an article from my sister up north about a theater showing a sensory-friendly movie and wondered is it possible that we could do it here in Tampa. So.....I asked. I asked the manager of Regal cinemas at Citrus Park if this was something she thought they could do and she said she was not sure and would pass the information onto the district manager, Christine White. We played phone tag for a few days and the last message I got before we finally connected was "Kourtney, I

already asked corporate and they said YES!!!! Call me!!!" That's when I knew that it was possible.



Our first movie day was April 19, 2008 and the film was "Horton Hears a Who". We had 124 seats filled, no previews before the film, the lights turned up and the sound turned down. After the film was over, each child got a Horton poster. The staff at Regal used the picture menus we made so the children could order their food at the concession area. It was a successful day. The best part for me was when all the kids cheered when Horton saved Whoville.

Our second movie day was November 8, 2008 and this time the film was "Madagascar 2." We had a phenomenal turnout. One hundred ninety four strong, and again each child got a poster to commemorate this day. Everyone had a ball at both movie days and if the children hummed or had to walk around during the movie, it was OK. Everyone was able to sit back, relax and enjoy the movie in an atmosphere that was welcoming to all.

The staff at Regal, led by Christine White, should be commended for their hard work. Everyone was welcoming to our children and their families. The light and sound guy was a nervous wreck because he wanted everything to be perfect, which it was. We really appreciate everything he did to make a great day for our kids.

So what happens when you ask? You find out that people are willing to go out on a limb and that the answer you get is...anything is possible!

2nd Annual Reading for ALL: Autism Literacy & Learning

CARD and the Junior League of Tampa hosted the 2nd Annual Reading for ALL: Autism Literacy & Learning event on January 10, 2009. The occasion provided the second installment in the Junior League of Tampa and CARD collaboration to facilitate literacy development by emphasizing "Learning Literacy Wherever the Road Takes You."

Reading and literacy skills are integral to successful participation and membership in one's community. Workshop attendees enjoyed an enrichment opportunity that entailed training, technical assistance, and the development of materials to promote the literacy skills required for interacting successfully with print and language symbols in any setting. Families and professionals gained knowledge of strategies and tools easily utilized at home and in the community.

Dr. Sylvia Diehl, faculty member of the USF Communication Sciences and Disorders department, offered a lead presentation on the values of literacy activities for the development of language and reading abilities in all settings.

Developing literacy solutions that facilitate independence, community

inclusion, academic success and social enrichment significantly enhances the quality of life for many of the children and families whose lives are impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorders.



Workshop participants assemble activity booklets.



Autism Society of America (National Organization)

Website: http://www.autism-society.org/

Autism Society of Florida, Inc. • Chapter #131

Mail: PO Box 970646 • Coconut Creek, FL 33097

Phone: 954-349-2820 Fax: 954-571-2136

E-mail: webmaster@autismfl.com Website: http://www.autismfl.com

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Autism Speaks • Southwest Florida Branch

Location: Port Charlotte, FL

Contact: Sharon Boyd or Krista Rosado for meeting dates and times or to be added to their mailing list for upcoming events.

Phone: 941-697-9772

E-mail: swflorida@autismspeaks.org

COLLIER COUNTY

Naples Spectrum Support Group

Meetings: 3rd Wednesday of the month, at 7:00p.m. Location: Therapeutic Integration Services offices 2960 Immokalee Rd #3 • Naples, FL 34110

Contact: Angie Rue Phone: 239-514-5010 E-mail: ruesugar@aol.com

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Concerned Parents of Autistic Children

Meetings: Last Sunday of the month, 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Location: 9631 Raiden Lane • Riverview FL 33569

Contact: Dr. Moursi Phone: 813-643-9393

STAND (Statewide Advocacy Network on Disabilities)

Hillsborough Monthly Chapter Meetings (All disabilities) Meetings: 3rd Thursday of the month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Location: Children's Board of Hillsborough County 1002 E. Palm Avenue • Tampa, FL E-mail: advocate@standonline.info

Asperger's Support for Men

Meetings: Every other Thursday, 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Location: 2901 Swann Avenue • Tampa, FL

Cost: \$20-\$29 per session Contact: Jason Tompkins, LCSW

Phone: 813-784-0153

Jason Tompkins facilitates a support group for men with Asperger's Syndrome. The group focuses on building new relationships as well as enhancing current relationships, job issues, and family struggles. Ideal group members are at least 18 years old, male and have a confirmed diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome. Group costs \$25 per session and is partially subsidized by Dr. Steven Kreitzer.

The Parents of Autism and Asperger's Syndrome Support Group (PASS)

Meetings: First Friday of the month September through May Time: 9:30 am - 11:30 am Location: Campo Family YMCA 3414 Culbreath Road • Valrico, FL Cost: Meetings are free and open to the public. Website: http://geocities.com/thepassgroup/ PASS also hosts an online group for families at http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/pass_tampa/

LEE COUNTY

Adonis Autism Center of Southwest Florida

Meetings: 2nd Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m. Location: Covenant Presbyterian Church

Room 206 • Ft. Myers, FL Contact: Beth Bashaw Cameron Phone: 239-995-1794

Website: http://www.adonisautismflorida.com

PASCO (NORTH)/HERNANDO COUNTY

Hernando Autism Parenting & Personal Experience Network (HAPPEN)

Meetings: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Location: Pediatric Therapy Works Contact: Leslie Bolen for directions

Phone: 352-683-0209

Pasco County

AWARE 4 Autism - West Pasco

(Are We Awake Ready & Educated for Autism?) Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.

Location: Holiday Recreation Complex 2830 Gulf Trace Blvd. • Holiday FL 34691

Contact: Monica Bice Phone: 727-945-0947

E-mail: AWARE4Autism@msn.com

AWARE 4 Autism – East Pasco

Support group for caregivers of individuals with an autism

spectrum disorder

Meetings: 1st Saturday of the month, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Location: First Congregational Church 7900 Fort King Road • Zephyrhills, FL

Contact: Johanna Phone: 813-782-9431

E-mail: AWARE4Autism@gmail.com

Koolkidz Social Skills Group for Children with ASD

Social Skills Group for Children with Asperger's Syndrome and high functioning autism.

Meetings: Activities each Wednesday to facilitate relationship building and friendships.

Cost: Free!

Contact: Suzette

E-mail: suzette@koolkidz.mysite.com

Website: http://www.koolkidz.mysite.com for current events.

NAMI Adult Mental Health Peer-Support Group

Meetings: 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Location: Community Hospital of New Port Richey Conference Room

POLK COUNTY

Circle of Friends Support Group
Meetings: Every other Thursday of the month.
Location: Alternate between the Winter-Haven Hospital and the Circle Building on Stuart Avenue in Winter Haven Contact: Mertice Fehringer for dates and location.

Phone: 863-679-2507

Parental Education for Autism in Children Everywhere (PEACE)

Meetings: 1st Tuesday of the month, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Location: Family Fundamentals Bldg. 1021 Lakeland Blvd. • Lakeland, FL

Contact: Nicole

Phone: 863-686-1221 ext 228 E-mail: Nikki73170@aol.com

Website: http://www.peacelakeland.com/

A Differently Abled Parent Support Group (ADAPS)

ADAPS is a support network for families and caregivers of children with disabilities, ages birth to 21 years. Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. Location: Family Fundamentals Bldg. 1021 Lakeland Blvd. • Lakeland, FL Contact: Kim Ellis at 863-701-1151 ext 152 or Nicole at

863-686-1221 ext 228

Please contact CARD-USF with changes or additions. Support Group listings are provided as a service and are not an endorsement by CARD-USF.



BY THE BAY

Plan to join us for great music, food and drinks, salsa dance lessons and prizes while supporting the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at USF!

For more information please contact Christine Rover E-mail: crover@fmhi.usf.edu or Phone: 813-974-9264

CARD Awarded Autism Speaks 2008 Family Services Community Grant

CARD is pleased to announce the receipt of a 2008 Family Services Community Grant from Autism Speaks. The purpose of these grants is to help community organizations across the country expand existing programs to serve more individuals with autism, and create new programs that demonstrate true innovation in providing services to improve and enrich the lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

CARD-USF was one of twenty one organizations in the country to receive this grant. The funds will be utilized to create the Learning Academy at USF.

The Academy will be a two year, four semester transitional experience designed to help students with ASD achieve a life of opportunity, independence and success. The intent of the

program is to build and enhance skills that will prepare students for the world of work or to further their education in a college or university setting. Each course will be structured to prepare students for the future in an educationally challenging environment, with the provision of support and services that will facilitate success and provide the building blocks for future goal attainment. Regardless of whether the student's focus is employment or higher education, skill development in the areas of self knowledge, organization, time management, goal setting and attainment, conflict resolution and community contribution will be emphasized. Experiential opportunities complement the formal academic class work to support personalized goals.

CARD is interested in focusing on individuals who have completed high



It's time to listen.

school, but have not been successful in obtaining employment or continuing their education in post secondary settings. Students interested in seeking employment or in continuing their education will be eligible to apply. It is anticipated that the Academy will begin in Summer, 2009.



Department of Child & Family Studies Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute College of Behavioral and Community Sciences University of South Florida 13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MHC 2113A Tampa, FL 33612-3899

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit. Org. **US POSTAGE PAID** Tampa, FL Permit No. 257