



**THE VOICE**  
**Anne Arundel County Chapter**  
**of the**  
**Autism Society of America**  
**February 2008** **Volume 12, Issue 7**

**President's Message**

**AACC-ASA meetings are held the last Tuesday evening of each month at Ruth Parker Eason School, 648 Old Mill Road, Millersville. Meetings begin at 7:00 pm.**

The meetings begin with introductions and general announcements, along with time for open discussion. A refreshment break is followed by a discussion led by the guest presenter.

Ample time is allowed for questions and follow-up discussion, as well as further opportunity for group support and socialization.

**New members and new ideas are always welcome.**

Thanks to everyone who attended our January meeting, which featured a discussion about **successful strategies for preparing students to transition to a new school, program, or placement**. It was led by **Mary Barbera** and **Roxanne Sporrer**, Special Education resource teachers/specialists with our school system. For further information, they can be contacted by phone at **(410) 222-5410** or by e-mail at **mbarbera@aacps.org** or **msporrer@aacps.org**.

Thanks also to everyone who joined us at the **'Evening with Deborah Lipsky'** on January 10th. She provided a lively presentation about her life as an individual with Aspergers Syndrome. I want to offer our appreciation to the Parent-Teacher Association of Old Mill Middle South for co-sponsoring this event, and our very special appreciation to **Nancy Snyder** for her dedicated work in coordinating this event.

Our February meeting will feature a presentation about **Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy** and its use with individuals on the autism spectrum, led by **Dr. Janelle Love**. This therapy, also known as HBOT, involves the use of oxygen at a higher than atmospheric pressure. I encourage parents and other family members, as well as professionals and other service providers, to join us on February 26th.

I'm pleased to announce that we have added a new feature to our website – a **calendar of events** that will provide updated information about the many activities and events in our local area. Be sure to check it out at <http://www.aaccasa.org/calundur.htm>. Our thanks to **Claudine Intner**, who is providing assistance to our web master **Barry Conner** in a variety of tasks, including maintaining the new calendar.

I'm also pleased to announce that we have a new brochure, entitled **'Where to Start'**, which provides local resource information. Although it is primarily intended for families of children newly diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder or families who are new to our area, it contains basic resource information that we believe will be of value to all families, professionals, and service providers. We are in the process of distributing the brochure to agencies and organizations who serve individuals with an autism spectrum disorder throughout our community. It is also available on our website at [http://www.aaccasa.org/images/where\\_to\\_start.pdf](http://www.aaccasa.org/images/where_to_start.pdf) or by calling our chapter phone line at **(410) 923-8800**. I offer our thanks to **Doug Shade** for his extensive work in creating this valuable resource.

In closing, I want to call attention to important information in this newsletter about our upcoming **Basket Bingo** fundraising event on **April 6th**, as well as about our **Hometown Heroes recognition event** on **April 29th** and the presentations by **Temple Grandin** on **March 8th and 9th** that we are co-sponsoring. I also want to call attention to a special article about the **'Building Bridges' autism awareness and education program**, which we have worked on for several years in partnership with the school system.

**Happy Valentines Day!**

**Phone line:**  
**(410) 923-8800**

**Web site:**  
**www.aaccasa.org**

**Next meeting:**  
**Tuesday,**  
**February 26th**  
**7:00 pm**



### **Chapter networking/support/resource guide**

Our information and resources guide, available at <http://www.aaccasa.org/images/NetworkingGuide11-07.pdf>, consists of a list of chapter member volunteers who are available to provide information and assistance to family members, friends, professionals, and service providers. We continue to seek additional chapter members who are willing to share their time and expertise. If you have experience with any of the topics and would like to provide information and assistance, please contact **Alison Hamilton** at (410) 451-8015 or [hamiltonal@verizon.net](mailto:hamiltonal@verizon.net).

### **Basket Bingo**

On **Sunday April 6th at 1:00 pm**, our third annual Basket Bingo event will be held at the **Elks Lodge on Defense Highway in Gambrills**.

To make this event an outstanding success, we ask that you please help spread the word by distributing flyers and by helping us obtain donations of cash, gift certificates, and/or merchandise for the event.

As an added feature, this year you can order tickets on-line through Paypal.

For further information, please see the flyer and donation letter accompanying this newsletter or go to <http://www.aaccasa.org/bingo2008.htm>.

### **Hometown Heroes**

In acknowledgment of April as **Autism Awareness Month**, we are again recognizing **Hometown Heroes for ASD**. We want to celebrate the efforts of the people in our community who go "above and beyond" to make a difference for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and who might not otherwise receive the recognition they deserve. You can help us spotlight these heroes and thank them for the value they bring to the lives of individuals with ASD.

We will hold a special event at our April chapter meeting, and invite each nominee to attend. At the meeting we will honor each nominee by presenting them with a framed certificate and sharing information about their contributions and the value they bring to our community. We will also include information about the nominees in our chapter newsletter.

To participate, please complete the nomination form accompanying this newsletter and send it to: AACC-ASA, P.O. Box 1304, Millersville MD 21108.

The deadline for submission is **April 10th**. If you have any questions, please call AACC-ASA at (410) 923-8800.

### **Sensory Processing Disorder parent support group**

On **Sunday February 3rd at 7:00 pm**, the Sensory Processing Disorder parent support group will meet at OT Ventures on Horned Owl Court in Ellicott City. The meeting will feature a discussion led by Dr. Linda Spencer, Speech-Language Pathologist, about ADHD and Executive Functioning. For further information or to RSVP, please contact OT Ventures at (443) 812-6396 or [ot\\_ventures@hotmail.com](mailto:ot_ventures@hotmail.com).

### **Parent support group**

On **Wednesday February 6th from 6:30 - 8:00 pm**, a parent support group will be held at the Hannah More School for parents of students with a range of disabilities including those in the emotional area, autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, learning disabilities, and health impairments. The support group, co-facilitated by professionals, is designed to offer parents a confidential, supportive climate to share experiences and knowledge with each other, to develop problem-solving and coping strategies and to inspire hope. The group is not limited to parents of students who attend the school. For further information or to RSVP, please contact **Bob Brown** at (443) 881-2034 or [rbrown@hannahmore.org](mailto:rbrown@hannahmore.org).

### **Presentation on Asperger's Disorder and Autism**

On **Thursday February 7th from 8:45 am - 4:30 pm**, the **New England Educational Institute** will sponsor a presentation entitled "**Asperger's Disorder and Autism: Advances in understanding and interventions**". It will be led by Celine Saulnier, Ph.D., of the Yale Child Study Center and held at the Sheraton Baltimore North on Dulaney Valley Road. The presentation will include information about key features of autism spectrum disorders (ASD), assessments for evaluating individuals with ASD, key elements of appropriate educational programs and specific teaching strategies, and social skills interventions and communication strategies. For further information, please go to <http://www.neei.org> or call (413) 499-1489 x 1.

### **Workshop on estate planning**

On **Thursday February 7th from 7:30 - 9:00 pm**, **Jewish Family Services** will sponsor a free workshop entitled "**Estate planning for families of children with disabilities**". It will be led by Eleanor Naiman, Esq. and held at the Jewish Family Services office on Park Center Court in Owings Mills. Pre-registration is requested. To RSVP or for further information, please contact **Ilene Devorah** at (410) 843-7381 or [idevorah@jfs.org](mailto:idevorah@jfs.org).



### **Presentation about IEP teams**

On **Thursday February 7th** from **6:00 - 9:00 pm**, the **Parents' Place of Maryland** will sponsor a free presentation entitled "**Meetings of the IEP Team**". It will be led by Rochelle Howell and held at the Parents' Place of Maryland office on Cromwell Park Drive in Glen Burnie. For further information or to register, please contact Rochelle Howell at **(410) 768-9100 x 109** or [Rhowelladvocate@aol.com](mailto:Rhowelladvocate@aol.com).

### **Presentation on college issues**

On **Monday February 11th** from **7:30- 9:00 pm**, **Individual Differences in Learning** will host a presentation entitled "**How to prepare your different learner for college**". It will be led by Fran Levin Bowman and held at the Linden Linthicum Church in Clarksville. The presentation will focus on college testing/application issues, choosing special needs colleges vs. colleges that provide programs within their schools, helping students figure out where they want to go to school, and finding ways to minimize stress during this busy and complicated process. Ms. Bowman will also highlight ways to improve a child's chances of getting into the schools that they choose. For further information or to register, please contact IDL at [info@gifteddifferentlearners.org](mailto:info@gifteddifferentlearners.org).

### **Autism support group**

On **Monday February 11th** from **7:00 - 9:00 pm**, an autism support group for families in the southern portion of our county will be held at Mayo Elementary School (media center) on Mayo Ridge Road in Edgewater. For further information, please contact **Tammy LeBow** at **(410) 336-6104**.

### **Parent support group**

On **Monday February 11th** from **7:00 - 9:00 pm**, a parent support group for children with disabilities and developmental disorders will be held at the offices of Frankly Communicating Speech Language Therapy on Old Westminster Pike in Westminster. The meeting will include a presentation about financial planning. For further information or to reserve a space, please call **(410) 871-2990**.

### **Adult Autism Resource Group**

On **Tuesday February 12th** from **7:00 - 9:00 pm**, the Adult Autism Resource Group will meet at the home of Ellen Feifarek on Hampton Lane in Baltimore. The meeting will feature a presentation by Charlotte Exner, Dean of the College of Health Professions at Towson University, about Towson University's plan for a new Center for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders. For further information, please contact **Linda Pearl** at **(410) 769-9500**.

### **Presentation on occupational therapy and sensory integration**

On **Tuesday February 12th** from **7:00 - 8:30 pm**, the **Howard County CHADD Parent Support Group** will host a presentation about pediatric occupational therapy, sensory integration theory and intervention, led by Jamie Levine of OT Ventures, at the Norbel School on Old Washington Road in Elkridge. For further information, please contact **Nancy Rhodes** at **(410) 796-6700** or [nrhodes@norbelschool.org](mailto:nrhodes@norbelschool.org).

### **Presentation for military families**

On **Tuesday February 12th** from **6:00 - 9:00 pm**, the **Fort Meade Exceptional Family Member Program** will host a presentation entitled "**Autism and other cognitive disabilities - safety considerations and how to get the most from TRI-CARE**". It will be led by Scott Campbell and held at the Pottomac Place Community Center on 2nd Corps Boulevard on Fort Meade. Registration is required. For further information or to register, please contact **Martila Seals** at **(301) 677-4122**.

### **Listening forum**

On **Wednesday February 13th** from **6:30 - 8:30 pm**, a **Child and Family Services Strategic Plan listening forum** will be held at Broadneck High School on Green Holly Drive in Annapolis. The purpose is to hear about experiences with the education, juvenile justice, child welfare, and/or mental health systems and share ideas for enhancing these systems; to gather feedback that will be used to create an interagency strategic plan; and to improve collaboration, communication and information sharing among agencies to enhance service delivery. For further information or to register, please go to [http://www.abcsignup.com/reg/event\\_page.asp?s1=46&s2=8692&aid=UOFM](http://www.abcsignup.com/reg/event_page.asp?s1=46&s2=8692&aid=UOFM) or call **Mike Tager** at **(410) 706-0961**.

### **AA-SECAC meeting**

On **Thursday February 14th** at **7:00 pm**, the **Anne Arundel County Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee** will hold their monthly meeting at the Vineyard Community Center on Najoles Road in Millersville. The meeting will include a presentation by Gregg Meade about Special Olympics. For further information, please contact AA-SECAC at **(410) 224-3122** or [AASECAC@fastmail.fm](mailto:AASECAC@fastmail.fm).

### **Presentation about autism**

On **Thursday February 14th** from **noon to 1:00 pm**, **Calvert Memorial Hospital** will host a free presentation entitled "**Interventions for autism**" led by Dr. Nitya Ramachandran. For further information or to register, please call **(410) 535-8233**.



### Book Friends

On **Thursday February 14th** from **6:30 – 8:00 pm**, **Book Friends** will hold their meeting at the public library located on McKinsey Road in Severna Park. Book Friends is a community book club for persons with or without a disability who are 18 years of age and older. For further information or to reserve a seat, please contact **Chrystal Irving** at **(443) 867-7032** or **Rebecca Raggio** at **(410) 923-5751**.

### Aspergers Syndrome support group

On **Monday February 18th** at **7:00 pm**, a meeting for individuals and families affected by Aspergers Syndrome and other autism spectrum disorders will be held at the Severn Covenant Church on Gambrills Road (in the 2nd floor of Fellowship Hall) in Severn. The meeting will include a discussion about experiences with the use of medication, psychotropic and other forms. For further information, please go to <http://aspergers.meetup.com/243>.

### Presentation about children with developmental disabilities

A presentation entitled “**Resources for developmentally disabled children**”, led by Linda Brice, LCSW-C, will be held on **Tuesday February 19th** from **6:30 - 8:00 pm** at Ruth Parker Eason School on Old Mill Road in Millersville and on **Thursday February 21st** from **6:30 - 8:00 pm** at Central Special School on Stepney Lane in Edgewater. For further information or to reserve childcare, please contact Linda Brice at **(410) 956-5885** or [Lbrice@aacps.org](mailto:Lbrice@aacps.org).

### Presentation about transition issues

On **Tuesday February 19<sup>th</sup>** a presentation for families with children/adults with developmental disabilities entitled “**What will life be like after school?**” will be held at both **9:30 am** and **7:00 pm** at the school facility on Marble Faun Lane in Columbia. For further information or to register, please contact **Jessica Pearsall** at [Jessica@pearsall.us](mailto:Jessica@pearsall.us) or **(443) 955-1384**.

### Autism family night

On **Tuesday February 19<sup>th</sup>** from **5:00 – 10:00 pm**, **The Rockfish restaurant** on Sixth Street in Annapolis, in conjunction with Pathfinders for Autism, will hold a special evening out for families living with an autism spectrum disorder. Special menu items are available. Reservations are encouraged, so that the restaurant can ensure they have adequate staff on hand. For further information or to make reservations, please call **(410) 267-1800**. The restaurant plans to hold this event every third Tuesday of the month, and a portion of the proceeds from the evening will be donated to Pathfinders for Autism.

### Presentation about medication

On **Tuesday February 19th** from **6:30 - 8:00 pm**, the **School Social Workers of Anne Arundel County** will host a presentation entitled “**Your child and psychiatric medication**” as part of their monthly parenting group meeting at North County library on Eastway in Glen Burnie. For further information, please call **(410) 437-2400 x 451**.

### Workshop series

The **Ivymount School’s Autism Outreach and Consultation Services** will host a series of workshops, led by Tamara Marder, Ph.D. BCBA, and Meghan Hoffman, M.Ed., BCBA. All workshops will be held at the Ivymount School on Seven Locks Road in Rockville from **7:00 - 9:00 pm**. The schedule is as follows:

**Tuesday February 19th**  
“**How to choose effective treatments**”

**Tuesday March 4th**  
“**An introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**”

**Tuesday March 18th**  
“**Teaching strategies for children with autism spectrum disorders using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**”

**Tuesday April 1st**  
“**An overview of challenging behaviors: Why behaviors occur and what are the specific treatments?**”

Registration is required. For further information or to obtain registration materials, please contact **Dr. Marder** at **(240) 441-8282** or [tmarder@ivymount.org](mailto:tmarder@ivymount.org).

### Autism Day at Bounce Around

On **Wednesday February 20th**, Bounce Around on Airport Park Road in Glen Burnie will hold four special one-hour sessions for the dedicated use of children with an autism spectrum disorder and their siblings, ages 1 - 16. The one-hour sessions will be held at **1:00 pm, 2:00 pm, 5:30 pm, and 6:30 pm**. The facility provides a large play arena, filled with a variety of inflated moon-bounce type equipment on which the children can bounce, slide, crawl and climb, as well as a 'quiet area' room where the children can go to relax and enjoy a break with water or juice. The fee is \$5.50 per child for the one-hour session. Adults who wish to actively participate and use the equipment during the one-hour session may do so for a fee of \$11, but there is no charge for adults who are supervising their children. Reservations are required and will be accepted through the morning of the event on a space-available basis. For further information or to make a reservation, please call **(410) 768-8288**.



### **Aspergers Syndrome support group**

On **Wednesday February 20th** from **7:00 – 9:00 pm**, the **Anne Arundel County Asperger Support Group** will hold their monthly meeting at St. Martin's in the Field Church on Benfield Boulevard in Severna Park. For further information, please contact **Sue Hayward** at **(410) 544-6661** or go to <http://www.aacaps.org>.

### **Tour of Asperger program**

On **Thursday February 21st** at **10:00 am**, the **Ivymount School** on Seven Locks Road in Rockville will host a tour of their program for students grades 2-8 with Asperger Syndrome. For further information or to RSVP, please call **Lenore Gladstone** at **(301) 469-0223 x 143** or go to <http://www.ivymount.org/asperger.html>.

### **Workshop series**

**Parents of Autistic Children's Education (PACE)** is sponsoring a series of workshops, led by Jane Barbin and Stacey McIntyre of **Behavioral Directions**, at the Inova Fairfax Hospital on Gallows Road in Falls Church, Virginia:

**Thursday February 21st** from **6:00 – 8:00 pm**  
“Effective autism treatments and identifying qualified providers”

**Saturday March 8th** from **10:00 am – noon**  
“Writing a measurable IEP”

**Thursday May 1st** from **6:00 – 8:00 pm**  
“Managing difficult behaviors in children”

For further information or to obtain registration materials, please go to <http://www.behavioraldirections.com> or call **(703) 855-4032**.

### **Washington Capitals Autism Awareness Day**

On **Sunday February 24th** at **3:00 pm**, the Washington Capitals will host the New Jersey Devils at the Verizon Center in an event to benefit Athletes Against Autism, Autism Speaks, and the American Special Hockey Association. For further information or to obtain tickets, please go to <http://www.capstickets.com/autism.html>.

### **Developmental Disabilities Day**

On **Tuesday February 26th** from **8:00 – 11:00 am**, the **Arc of Maryland** is hosting a **Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature**. For further information or to obtain registration materials, please contact the Arc of Maryland at **(410) 571-9320** or go to <http://www.thearcmd.org>.

### **Presentation on autism**

On **Saturday March 1st** from **10:00 am – noon**, a free presentation entitled “**Autism, ADHD, and asthma: What is really happening to our children and how you can make a difference without prescription medications**” led by Dr. Janelle Love will be held at the University of Maryland University College on Deerpath Road in Elkridge. For further information or to register, please call **Linda Brozanic** at **(800) 288-0383**.

### **Parenting Center courses**

The **Parenting Center at Anne Arundel Community College** is offering the following courses:

**Monday March 3rd, 10th, and 17th** from **7:00 – 9:00 pm**  
“Psychological tests and children”

**Tuesday March 4th, 11th, and 18th** from **7:00 – 9:00 pm**  
“The explosive child”

**Wednesday March 5th and 12th** from **7:00 – 9:00**  
“Finding the right counselor for a child”

For further information or to obtain registration materials, please contact the Parenting Center at **(410) 777-2159** or <http://www.aacc.edu/parenting>.

### **Temple Grandin presentations**

On **Saturday March 8th** from **6:00 – 10:00 pm**, and **Sunday March 9th** from **9:00 – 11:00 am**, the **Anne Arundel County Chapter of ASA**, along with the Baltimore Chesapeake, Howard County, and Montgomery County Chapters of ASA and Pathfinders for Autism will co-sponsor presentations by Dr. Temple Grandin at the Marriott Hotel on Shawan Road in Hunt Valley; the presentations are being held as part of the regional conference of the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association. The Saturday evening presentation is entitled “**Animal behavior**” and the Sunday morning presentation is entitled “**Autism - Thinking in pictures**”. For further information or to obtain registration materials, please go to [http://www.narha.org/Regions/Region2\\_Calendar.asp](http://www.narha.org/Regions/Region2_Calendar.asp). Information is also available by contacting **Ross Braun** at **(301) 474-6044** or [roscoe48@verizon.net](mailto:roscoe48@verizon.net).

### **Young Athletes program**

**Special Olympics** has a new program for young children with special needs ages 2—5 on **Wednesdays** from **4:00 – 5:00 pm** at Ruth Eason School on Old Mill Road in Millersville. The program offers training in basic athletics, body awareness, and teamwork. For further information, please contact **(410) 923-0383** or [edneva@aol.com](mailto:edneva@aol.com).



## News from National: ASA Day on the Hill

On Wednesday March 12th and Thursday March 13th, the **Autism Society of America** will host its **2008 Day on Capitol Hill** to increase awareness and understanding of autism issues among federal policymakers and to build support for ASA's legislative priorities, which include the following:

- \* Expanding the Promise to Individuals with Autism Act
- \* Combating Autism Act Appropriations
- \* Educational issues (IDEA and No Child Left Behind)
- \* Medicaid
- \* Rehabilitation Act
- \* Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Right and Assistance Act
- \* Disability Savings Accounts

The first day includes training sessions on becoming a more effective advocate, effective methods to leverage media and grassroots support, and autism-related opportunities at the state and local level. There will also be a session on the 2008 Presidential election and ways to communicate to our leaders the importance of autism. The second day, armed with this information, attendees will meet with their legislators to educate them on important autism issues. Participants will need to make their own appointments with congressional offices. Contact information is available at <http://www.house.gov/> for representatives and <http://www.senate.gov/> for senators. For further information or to register, please go to <http://www.autism-society.org/site/Calendar?view=Detail&id=6103>.

## Special Olympics

**Anne Arundel County Special Olympics** is offering the following sports for individuals with developmental disabilities age 8 and older:

**Swimming** on Fridays, beginning February 22nd, at the Annapolis Swim Center

- \* One-on-one from 6:00 - 7:00 pm
- \* Intermediates from 7:00 - 8:00 pm
- \* Lappers from 8:00 - 9:00 pm

**Duckpin bowling** on Saturdays, beginning March 8th, at Severna Park Bowling Lanes

For further information, please call (410) 923-0383 or go to <http://www.soamd.org>.

## Consulting services

**Parent Pro Consulting** is run by the parent of a child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder who has 20 years experience as an autism/ABA consultant. The service provides experienced support and advice for families. For further information, please go to <http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/parentproconsulting>.

## How a Big Fat Binder is Changing Disability Awareness Education in One School System

Reprinted with permission from the January OARacle e-newsletter of the Organization for Autism Research

"What we didn't want," says Linda Carter-Ferrier, President of the Anne Arundel County Chapter of the Autism Society of America, "was just another disability awareness day." "We" refers to a planning team made up of school system representatives, educators from a private school for children with disabilities, and community representatives, including Carter-Ferrier, all in Anne Arundel County, MD, outside of Baltimore and Washington, DC.

What the planning team eventually created, with the help of many others, was a comprehensive program for educators, administrators, and students about autism, now called Building Bridges: A Multi-Disciplinary Autism Awareness and Education Program. The program was piloted in the 2006-2007 school year and is in full use across the Anne Arundel Public School System.

The introduction describes the program as "designed to be implemented for all grade groups (elementary, middle, and high school) and to be used by a variety of school personnel (guidance counselor, special educator, general educator, etc.) and with a variety of audiences (whole school, grade group, grade team, individual class, etc.)."

What it looks like, Carter-Ferrier says with a laugh, is a big fat binder plus supplementary materials that include books and videos. The materials cover language needs, social skills lesson plans, friendship and empathy trainings, social skills group outlines, sensory needs, and permission slips. The supplementary materials include two of OAR's Life Journey through Autism series, *An Educator's Guide to Autism* and *An Educator's Guide to Asperger Syndrome*.

It was critical, says Carter-Ferrier, that the program be the kind of resource that was available when needed. "A teacher might need it on Monday when he doesn't know what is going on with a kid in his classroom or a guidance counselor may want to use it with a student who has been disrespectful to a student with an autism spectrum disorder on Thursday. If a team of educators is in a meeting, the program is easily accessible and provides ideas for activities and answers to questions educators may have."

### *The Necessary Spark*

Over her years as president of the chapter, she would often receive calls asking her to come and do something at a school about autism awareness or to help create a single program for a single school for an autism awareness day. "It was not systemic, it was not built in, and it was completely random," she says.

(continued on next page)



When she met with the school superintendent and he asked her what the school system could do for students with disabilities, Carter-Ferrier's first thought was that she had just gotten everything she could possibly ever want for Christmas.

The next day, she got a call from the assistant superintendent and then from the director of special education. "There was common knowledge that the school system needed something but doing something about it required a spark. Once we had the spark, we ran with it."

They put together a planning team that included several key people from the school system, including the director of special education, the out-of-home-school placements coordinator, a guidance counselor, and the nonpublic placement specialist. Several key staff members from the Hannah More School, a private school for children with disabilities in Reisterstown, MD, were also part of the planning team, including the director of Hannah More Type II Autism Programs, and a teacher assistant and social worker from the Hannah Moore partnership programs. In addition, the chairman of the Anne Arundel County Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee and Carter-Ferrier were part of the team.

The overall goal of the planning team is to create a systemic comprehensive program for all children with disabilities. They see this program as the first step in the process, Carter-Ferrier explains.

Building Bridges has been designed and implemented to accomplish three goals:

- \* Providing a means for peers to be able to reach out and connect with students with autism spectrum disorders
- \* Supporting educators' needs to understand ASD, which will then lead to enhanced interactions with and instruction of students with ASD
- \* Providing information and tools for educators to provide explicit instruction in social skills for students with ASD, along with integrated opportunities throughout the day in the school environment to promote social competence and successful interactions and relationship development with peers

#### ***Putting It To Work***

Once the binder was created, the school system initiated a series of "train the trainer" sessions to train core staff in the central office, division of special education. Those trainers then led a series of trainings for all the key people in the individual schools, including school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, and guidance counselors. Next, the lead educators in each school attended a training and

provided training for the educators in their schools. The training sessions lasted from two to three hours, concentrated on showing how the materials in the binder can be used.

Carter-Ferrier says that one of the biggest pluses of Building Bridges is that it breaks down walls within the school system and the schools themselves. "Now, everyone in the building can work with the kids on issues related to autism." For example, a teacher may notice that a child isn't diagnosed with autism or any learning disability but she sees signs that the child is having difficulty with social skills, which she recognizes because of Building Bridges. She then sends the child to the guidance counselor, who sets up some sessions for the child to work on social skills, which the counselor got from the program.

"The program is teacher-friendly, user-friendly, implementer-friendly. Anyone can present lessons. A multitude of types of educators could provide any particular lesson or lessons. The program is as flexible as we could possibly make it. Our goal was for no one to say, 'Oh, we can't do that.'"

#### ***Full Speed Ahead***

Carter-Ferrier notes that the team has not yet received a full analysis of the program's pilot year, but anecdotal reports are positive. "It's still a 'living' program," she says. "If someone has an idea for social skills lessons, he can bring it to the lead implementer and she can decide whether to add it to the program." People have also come to her and pointed out missing components. "Some of the speech and language therapists looked at what we initially gave them and told us there was nothing that they could use. So our lead implementer wrote a new section for them."

The program was implemented school system-wide in the 2007-2008 school year, Carter-Ferrier explained. As more and more people use it, more is being added and existing content is being refined. At the end of the school year, the school system is planning to release the program for use by other school systems along with a report that details Anne Arundel's success with the program.

#### ***Find Out More***

If you are interested in finding out more about Building Bridges, contact the program's lead implementer, Laura Phipps, at 410-222-5474 or [lhipps1@aacps.org](mailto:lhipps1@aacps.org).

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Our thanks to Mike Maloney, Executive Director of the Organization for Autism Research, for his role in facilitating this article and working with our chapter to provide the OAR guides for the Building Bridges project. Thanks also to Sherri Alms, who conducted the interview and wrote the article.



Anne Arundel County Chapter  
 Autism Society of America  
 P.O. Box 1304  
 Millersville, MD 21108

Postage  
 here

**\*\* Chapter News and Notes \*\***

We have available **autism awareness puzzle ribbon lapel pins** and **car magnets**, and **autism puzzle piece bracelets** and **wristbands**. They can be purchased at our meetings or by using the order forms at <http://www.aaccasa.org>.

We participate in Affiliate Programs with **Future Horizons** and **Autism Asperger Publishing Company**. Through these programs, when you follow the link at <http://www.aaccasa.org> to their web sites to make purchases, our chapter receives a portion of the purchase price.

Our **lending library** is located at the **Partners for Success Resource Center**, Oakwood Elementary School, Portable "B", 330 Oak Manor Drive, Glen Burnie. To see a full listing of the items available from our lending library, as well as related items available from the Partners for Success library, please go to <http://www.aaccasa.org>. To request an item, please contact Partners for Success at **(410) 222-3805** or [partnersforsuccess@aacps.org](mailto:partnersforsuccess@aacps.org). They will provide information about the various ways in which library materials can be obtained.

Subscribe to our **e-mail action alert** by sending a message through <http://www.aaccasa.org>. It is an easy way to learn the latest information about Federal, State, and local legislative initiatives, lobbying efforts, or other action items related to autism and disabilities.

**Anne Arundel County Chapter  
 Autism Society of America  
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