



April is Autism Awareness Month



By Jennifer Rentrope



April is Autism Awareness Month, but for the parents or family of a child with autism, everyday is Autism Awareness Month. It's Autism Awareness Month when your child is running up and down the grocery store aisles knocking as many items off of the perfectly lined shelves as possible and you have to explain to the store manager that your child has autism. It's Autism Awareness Month when you have to

explain to the elderly woman whom your child just pushed out of the way on his dash into Chuck E. Cheese, that your child has autism. It is Autism Awareness month, when your daughter hugs the pizza delivery guy, his very first day on the job and you inform him that the pizza, while good, is not well, bear hugging good, your child has autism. For those connected to a loved one with autism educating others is many times a requirement. But it should be noted that there is no shortage of prospective students as many are in need of an education. Class is in session!

The next time you are holding an impromptu workshop in line at the 7 Eleven, here are some key points you might want to share during your presentation. In all your chatter however, don't forget the main reason you were on line in the first place, why, Slushies, of course!

Common Characteristics in Autism Spectrum Disorders

Social Characteristics



- May exhibit poor eye contact
- May not differentiate between strangers and those seen every day or show anxiety around strangers
- May have a narrow range of emotions - inappropriate displays
- May not enjoy social games like peek-a-boo or patty cake
- May lack pretend/ imaginative play skills
- May not show an awareness of others
- May have difficulty reciprocating emotionally and socially and have difficulty relating to other
- Often demonstrate little or no interest in establishing friendships or have difficulty in developing and maintaining friendships
- Difficulty initiating or sustaining play with peers or groups
- May lack understanding of social cues, gestures, emotional expressions
- May lack understanding of how others feel /express moods
- May have strange fears or lack fear of real danger
- May repeat preferred play schemes over and over again

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Events

4/19- Art of Sand Festival
Radisson Resort, Port Canaveral.
 Month long event with 10 to 15 foot sand sculptures. 1-877-345-ARTS

4/22 - Bounce for Autism Pump It Up, Melbourne. 6-8pm..An event of bouncing, and dancing and sliding in support of Autism. 321-956-7867

4/24 - Brevard Youth Expo
Wickham Park, Melbourne. 10-3pm.
 Features organizations with programming for children aged preschool to H.S. Showcasing summer camps, after school programs, preschools and more. Crafts, laser tag. Call 321-255-4400

4/24 - Autism Film Screening
 4-6:30pm (See page 6 of newsletter)

4/25 - Safe Kids Day Safe Kids Brevard, *Pro Health and Fitness, Melbourne.* 1-4 pm. Prevention walk-throughs and bicycle rodeo. Free. Call 321-952-4536

4/28 - Social Networking Teen Group of North Brevard (CARD)
Norman's Restaurant, Cocoa 5:30-7:00pm. Social support group dinner meeting to connect and work on social skills. Call Kiim 321 212-8997 or Jason 407 242-5628

5/7 - Getting Connected with Community Resources - For all parents with children with ASD
Brevard School District, Viera 10am-12noon. Jacqueline Yearby, Speaker. Call Ginny Gleason at 321-633-100 ext 389

Our upcoming Events

4/27 - Parent Support Meeting - Malabar Baptist Church, Malabar 6pm-7pm. Call 723-1602 Next date: 5/11

4/26 - Bowling - Shore Lanes, Palm Bay 4pm-5pm Come out and join us. \$2.99 including shoes. Next date: 5/10

5/8 - Horseback Riding - Rescued Horses Saves Kids, Malabar. 10-12noon. R.S.V.P. By 5/7. Contact jbyearby@angelsbridginggaps.org

Treatments & Therapies

Resistant Eaters and Juice Plus

By Kristen DeLuca, M.S., CCC-SLP

In addition to speech and language, feeding disorders are another area that often impacts children on the autistic spectrum. While not a speech or language issue, it is generally treated by a speech language pathologist.

All children can be grouped into three categories: normal eater, picky eater, or resistant eaters. Resistant eaters are the most complex, and usually require medical and/ or therapeutic intervention. Resistant eaters may demonstrate limited food selection, limited food groups, anxiety or tantrums when presented food, and may experience food 'jags' (when a child will only eat one food item meal after meal).

If your child is a resistant eater, it's imperative to have a professional rule-out any underlying sensory, motor or gastrointestinal issues. Once this is done, therapy can begin. The following strategies can help parents of resistant eaters:

- Use a picture schedule or written schedule for your child's meal and snack times.
- Use a timer to indicate the start and end of meals
- Offer your child at least one preferred food item along with a new food item
- Do not invade your child's mouth without permission
- Discuss the taste, texture and smell of new foods

- Provide opportunities throughout the child's day to learn about food
- Create a food diary to note new foods tried and reactions to foods



A good way to increase your child's consumption of fruits and vegetables is with a whole food supplement. One supplement is Juice Plus. This supplement is helping children, particularly resistant eaters, increase their nutritional intensity. It contains juice powder concentrates from 17 different fruits, vegetables and grains and comes in capsules or gummies. Each ingredient is specially selected to provide a broad range of nutritional benefits.

Juice Plus is a complement to a healthy diet. It is a simple, convenient and inexpensive way to add more nutrition from fruits and vegetables to your child's diet every day. It is supported by clinical research conducted at leading hospitals and universities around the world and published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. It is recommended worldwide by thousands of doctors and health professionals.

For more information regarding feeding issues and how Juice Plus can help your child's nutrition, please contact Kristen DeLuca, M.S., CCC-SLP at kristendeluca16@gmail.com

Education is Key



Free Homework Helpers Program Offered in Palm Bay

PALM BAY, FL – Brevard County Parks and Recreation is offering free homework help and tutoring every Monday afternoon from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Ted Whitlock Community Center. The center is located inside Palm Bay Regional Park, 1951 Malabar Road, in Palm Bay.

The Homework Helpers program provides free homework assistance and tutoring in all subjects and is available to children grades K through 6th. Staff and volunteers at the Ted Whitlock Community Center will help students improve their grades and reward them for their hard work with games and fun activities.

Please contact the center at (321) 952-3231 for more information and to schedule a tutor who meets the needs of your child.



April is Autism Awareness Month *continued*

Communication Characteristics

- May have difficulty reading and showing emotion (e.g. little smiling or bland face).
- May be unusually quiet.
- May not respond to name, or appear not to hear or attend.
- May not babble and coo.
- Language may be delayed.
- Stereotyped or idiosyncratic speech is common -may have echolalia (repeating words or phrases they hear) either immediately or later.
- Used to say a few words, but now does not.
- Often have trouble imitating or using nonverbal gestures and appropriate facial expressions to communicate.
- May have difficulty initiating interaction with others.
- May appear not to be interested in communicating with others.
- May not imitate or demonstrate functional and pretend play.
- May not point or wave bye-bye.
- Abnormal pitch, intonation, rhythm, stress.
- Grammatical structure may appear immature.
- Difficulty understanding & interpreting pragmatic language.

- May be impulsive, compulsive, or perseverate on certain activities; behavior is inconsistent.
- May be distracted by auditory or visual stimuli.
- Has trouble with organizational skills, planning, or making choices.
- Relies on learned routines, cues, and other learned patterns.

Related Characteristics in Autism Spectrum Disorders

Sensory/Motor Characteristics

- May be over or under sensitive to certain sensory stimuli:
 - o Sounds
 - o Tastes
 - o Visual input
 - o Textures
 - o Smell
- May have insensitivity to pain/ high pain threshold.
- Poor fine motor skills (e.g. writing may be extremely difficult and laborious or sloppy, off the lines, and out of the boundaries).
- Gross motor skill difficulties
 - o Difficulty with coordination
 - o Balance problems
 - o Playground activities or sports may be difficult, awkward or frustrating.
- Limited awareness of the physical presence or needs of others.
- Unaware of their bodies place in space.

Behavior Characteristics

- May dislike being held or stiffen when held.
- Exhibits repetitive body movements such as hand or finger flapping or rocking.
- May be extremely sensitive to some auditory stimuli.
- May not respond to some auditory stimuli.
- May exhibit stereotyped and repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language.
- May perseverate on certain activities.
- May demonstrate persistent preoccupation with parts of objects.
- May resist changes in routines; unreasonable insistence on following routine.
- May lack fear of real danger.
- May explore environment by inappropriate methods such as licking, smelling, and handling objects.
- Avoids looking at other people.
- Avoids contact with other people, preferring to touch objects.

Attention/ Organization Characteristics

- Poor Concentration:
 - o Often off task
 - o Distractible
 - o Overloads easily
 - o May be disorganized
 - o Difficulty sustaining attention.
- Poor organizational skills:
 - o May lose papers, assignments, etc.
 - o Desk may be messy
 - o Backpack never emptied
 - o May not be able to predict or organize things needed for homework: book, packet, etc.
 - o May not remember homework
 - o Papers can be messy and written work unorganized
 - o Difficulty knowing how and where to start work.

Learning Characteristics

- Will perform unevenly within and across skill areas, sometimes demonstrating exceptionality in some areas.
- Resists changes in the learning environment.
- Has difficulty waiting or using unstructured Time.
- May not generalize skills to other settings.
- Has problems with abstract and conceptual thinking; requires concrete interactions.
- Uses and interprets speech literally; doesn't usually read facial expressions, body language or other social cues.

The Common Characteristics in Autism Spectrum Disorders chart is taken from the publication of the Special Education, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) titled, The Educational Aspects of Autism Spectrum Disorders as found at <http://www.k12.wa.us/specialed/pubdocs/Autism%20Manual.pdf>



VSA Florida 2009 Young Soloist State Finalists Erin Cheeseborough from Tallahassee, Paul Gavin from Sanibel Island and Matthew Oliver from Winter Haven.

4th Annual VSA Florida Young Soloists Program

Since 1984, the VSA International Young Soloists Program has been seeking to identify talented musicians who have a disability. The VSA International Young Soloists Award is given annually to four outstanding musicians, two from the United States and two from the international arena, providing an opportunity for these emerging musical artists to each earn a \$5,000 award and a performance in Washington, D.C.

Florida Affiliate Program

All United States VSA affiliates implement their own Young Soloists Programs. VSA Florida is proud to announce our 4th annual statewide program featuring the talent of our young musicians. Finalists selected by a panel of judges will be showcased at a Florida Orchestra "Concert in the Park" this fall. Additionally, these finalists will represent Florida by having their musical entries sent to Washington, DC to compete in the VSA International Young Soloist Program.

Eligibility

Any individual musician (instrumental or vocal) from the United States who has a disability, age 25 and under is eligible to apply. Individual musicians should complete the Individual Musician Application Form. Applications from musical ensembles (two to eight members) will be accepted and should complete the Ensemble Application Form. This includes any type of ensemble from a rock band to a chamber ensemble to a drum corps. In order to be eligible, at least one member of the ensemble must have a disability. All members of the ensemble must fulfill age requirements as stated above.

All types of music will be accepted, including but not limited to Rock/Alt Rock, Pop, Indie, Classical, Country/Folk, Jazz, R&B/Blues, Hip Hop/Rap, Latin, and World.

As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, a disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. (Impairment is a physiological disorder affecting one or more of a number of body systems, or a mental or psychological disorder.)

Selection Process

A panel of knowledgeable and prominent judges comprised of music professionals and educators will assist with the selection process. The 2009 judges included a professional musician and music professor from Hillsborough Community College, an adjunct professor of music from USF and the Dean of the College of Music at the University of South Florida. Selections will be announced in October 2010.

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Getting Connected with Community Resources

**Speaker: Jacqueline Yearby
Angels Bridging Gaps Autism Support Group**

For all parents of children on the Autism Spectrum.
To familiarize parents with local community resources that help their children.
Guest speakers from local organizations that service the ASD community

**May 7, 2010 10 AM - 12
Brevard School District, Viera, Florida**

For more information: Contact Ginny Gleason at 321-633-100 ext 389

VSA Florida *continued*

Selection Criteria

The VSA Florida Young Soloists Program selection panel will evaluate each audition recording in the areas of technique, tone, rhythm, interpretation, and intonation (if applicable).

Performance Opportunities

Recipients of the VSA Florida Young Soloists Award will be featured in pre-concert performance at the Fall Florida Orchestra's "Concert in the Park" in St. Petersburg in October 2010. All travel expenses for winners and their parents are covered by VSA Florida.

Application Procedures Checklist

You can access the applications on line at www.vsafll.org . Each applicant is required to submit the following materials:

- Completed and signed Individual Musician OR Ensemble Application Form.
- One-page narrative including biographical information and the reasons why the applicant feels he/she should be selected as the recipient of the 2009 VSA *arts* of Florida Young Soloists Award. This information should focus on the applicant's musical training and experience and not the applicant's disability.
- Recording of three (3) musical selections. **A DVD or CD recording is preferred.**

Hints: The music and artistry should be easily heard on your recording. It isn't necessary for the selections to be from one performance, but they should represent recent performances. Application materials should be sent to the address below and received no later than **August 31, 2010.**

Please submit the attached application form, your narrative, and your audition recording as soon as possible. Applications will be accepted April 15, 2010 through September 5, 2010. Deadline final.

Please send to:

Wendy Finklea
VSA Florida Young Soloists Award
3500 E. Fletcher Avenue
Suite 234
Tampa, FL 33613
(813) 558-5093
wfinklea@usf.edu



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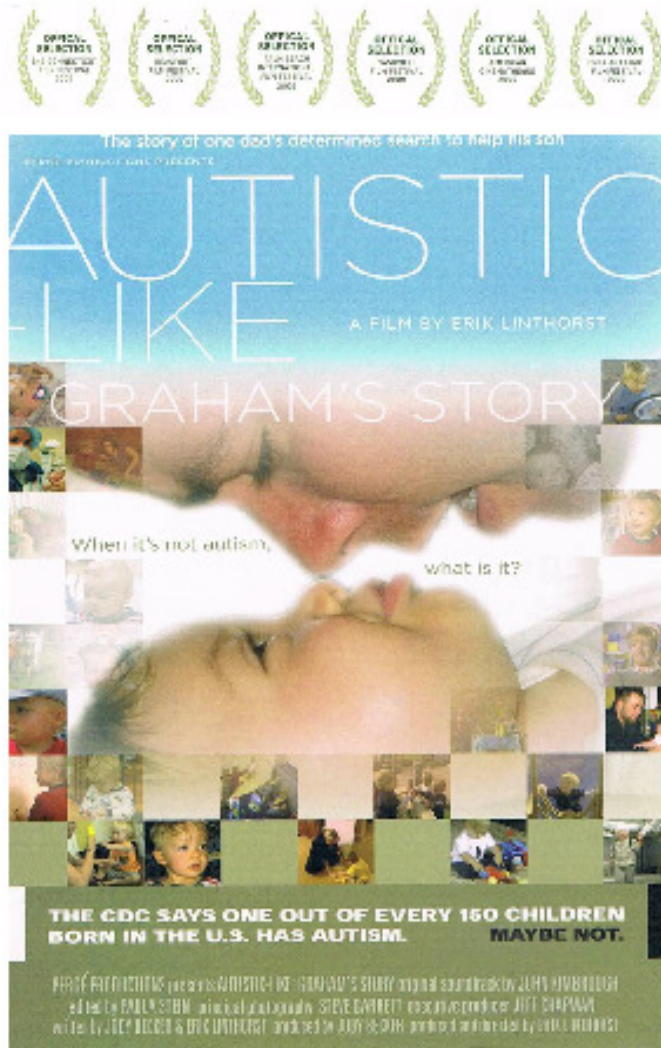
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For Autism Awareness Month

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A SCREENING OF



AUTISTIC-LIKE GRAHAM'S STORY

Angels Bridging Gaps Autism Support Group

Hosts Autism (ASD) Community Awareness Event which will include –
Reception (light food and drink), Film Screening and Q&A Panel with
Community Experts

April 24, 2010 · 4:30 – 6:30 P.M.

First Baptist Church of Malabar

Tickets \$10

For information by phone please call 631-807-2974
By email: www.angelsbridginggapsfilm.weebly.com

www.autisticlike.com

Tickets
available at
the door

The story of one dad's determined search to help his son.
An intimate portrait showing one dad's determined search to
find the right treatments, the right doctors, even the right
words to describe his son. Featuring exclusive interviews with
Dr. Stanley Greenspan, Dr. Ricki Robinson, Dr. Erna Blanche,
DanaKae Bonahoom, Lorin McGuire and Carol Gray.

Hope to see you there!