THE DOORS ARE OPEN
Vocational Academy celebrates grand opening
Page 26

GOOD DEEDS AT WORK
Good DeedWorks teens do important volunteer work in our community
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THINK ASPERGER’S IS UNDER WAY
One family’s efforts to ensure earlier diagnosis of Asperger’s syndrome
Page 32

SARRC makes dreams of employment a reality for Yeou-Luen Ni and other adults with autism
Page 22
Every 20 minutes another child is diagnosed with autism. It’s time to be committed to improving the lives of those affected by autism.

Join the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) and friends at the 11th Annual Community Breakfast and make your IMprint on autism.

Save the Date
Thursday, April 23, 2009
7–9 a.m.
Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa

For more details, visit autismcenter.org or call 602-340-8717.
Overcoming the Odds  While autism often presents challenges for those pursuing employment, Yeou-Luen Ni has learned to play to his strengths. Learn how SARRC’s Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy is making dreams of employment a reality for other adults with autism.

Building for the Future Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy has long been a vision for SARRC.

All in a Good Deed’s Work SARRC’s Good DeedWorks℠ program pairs teenagers affected by autism with typical peers to carry out important volunteer work within the community.

IMinvolved. RU? The 2009 awareness campaign kicks off this month, educating audiences about autism and SARRC, and inspiring donors’ commitments to SARRC. Learn more about the campaign and the team that developed it.

A Tool for Early Diagnosis  Patty and Phil Dion’s experience with Asperger’s syndrome has motivated the creation of ThinkAsperger’s℠, a program designed to help ensure those affected get the support they need earlier.

Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism SARRC has joined forces with more than a dozen nonprofit organizations in a national consortium called Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism (AFAA), which seeks to create meaningful futures for adults with autism.

Sign Me Up! Several SARRC staff members will be presenting at the annual conference of the Association for Behavior Analysis International®, which will be held in Phoenix for the first time in the organization’s history.

A Sanctuary for All The Tranquility Garden at SARRC’s main campus provides an often-needed respite to parents and children.

You’re Invited On Thursday, April 23, community leaders will come together at SARRC’s 11th annual Community Breakfast to support the organization in its mission.

Walk On More than 10,000 people participated in last year’s Arizona Walk Now for Autism, the state’s largest autism awareness and fund-raising event. Check out the results of the effort and mark your calendar for this year’s walk.
Letters

Your Thoughts

Tucson Needs a SARRC

We had a wonderful week in Phoenix visiting the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center. Amber gained so much knowledge from SARRC’s remote parent training (PARENT program). We so wish we had a SARRC in Tucson. Our son, Dylan, is doing so much better now. We have a long way to go; but we are headed in the right direction thanks to training and support from organizations like SARRC. Thank you for everything!

Janice Hester
Tucson, Ariz.

PARENT Program Opens Mother’s Eyes

I just wanted to let you know that SARRC’s PARENT program classes have changed my entire world. My daughter, who is 20, has a daughter that is 3. I have fought long and hard to make her hear and get involved in the autism community. If she had not gone to this class tonight, I still would be on the road to nowhere.

Thank you SARRC! I feel that maybe my daughter understands more now, will get involved and my granddaughter will have a better life because of this class.

Kim Prouse
Tucson, Ariz.

PRT Pays Off for Teacher in Paradise Valley Unified School District

After attending a SARRC presentation on Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT) last year, we have been using PRT with a particular student in my preschool classroom within the Paradise Valley Unified School District since last September. It was rough going at first, but she is doing beautifully now. About a month ago, everything seemed to click, and she went from saying one or two words consistently to approximately 30 words. She is now attending SARRC’s JumpStart program upon our recommendation to the family.

I very much appreciated email support on PRT from Dr. Daniel Openden at SARRC. It was enough to keep us going with PRT and not give up. We are now using PRT with another non-verbal child in our class. He, too, is taking off.

My school team works very hard with the children when I am not in the classroom, and they are also thrilled that their persistence has brought significant rewards. Thank you again and I look forward to attending more of your presentations in the future.

Mary Santy, M.A., CCC-SLP
Scottsdale, AZ

Special thanks to the writers, editors, photographers and designers who contribute their time and service in-kind to SARRC.
Our son, Matthew, will turn 18 this year, which should mark his entry into adulthood. While we have experienced his considerable progress and increased confidence, competence and independence, he still sneaks into his parents’ bed four or five nights a week and prefers to entertain himself with toddler-appropriate movies and computer programs.

Beyond the celebrations, Matt’s birthdays also can be painful reminders of the stark contrasts between his development and that of typical kids his age.

Matt has four years left in the school system. That’s four years to achieve our goal of empowering him to become part of the workforce and to someday live on his own. In the early years, we thought we’d have so much time to get him on track. There would be time to provide him with thousands of hours of therapeutic interventions. Time for science to advance and identify the causes and cures. Time for him to outgrow his autism. Time for a miracle.

While we may not have reached all our goals, SARRC fortunately continues to make progress toward building meaningful futures for our children — futures that include friends, jobs, homes and communities that accept, support and value our adults with autism. SARRC and its collaborating partners through Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism (AFAA) are also creating peace of mind for parents who contemplate that critical question of who will care for our kids when we’re no longer able to do so.

With SARRC’s recent official opening of the Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy (VLSA) and the advancements being made with the Urban Land Institute, Arizona State University and AFAA, we’re creating a more hopeful vision for the future.

The Vocational & Life Skills Academy fills a critical need in our community, providing teens and adults with autism with job and life-skills training, career coaching and social-skills development. These services will help them live more independently and empower them to become contributing members of our community. (To learn more about the VLSA, check out our story on page 26.)

On June 3, our family will celebrate Matt’s 18th birthday and the progress he’s worked so hard to make through the years. Despite the challenges, we know there are tremendous possibilities for his future and remain eternally hopeful for Matt and all of our children and adults with autism.

With heartfelt thanks for your support,

Denise D. Resnik
Co-Founder and Development Chair
During these challenging times, for-profit and nonprofit organizations around the country are making critical decisions and strategically positioning themselves for how to navigate the downturn and move forward with positive momentum. And if they’re not, they should.

The Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) is no different. SARRC recently unveiled its “Navigating 2009 Strategic Plan” to maximize the impact of our outreach and research programs; increase operational efficiencies; and enhance revenues and program sustainability. I want to take this opportunity to tell you about our plan.

Approved by the board of directors, the proactive, three-point plan calls for revenue-producing and revenue-conserving initiatives, including some staff reductions, along with other targeted measures to increase efficiencies. Our goal is to continue providing a high level of quality support and service to children, adults and families affected by autism. Last year, SARRC’s program enrollment exceeded 16,000.

As part of the strategic plan, SARRC restructured its management team and advanced its search to fill the newly created president/chief operating officer position. Jeri Kendle, the director of SARRC’s Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy, is serving as interim president/COO. Jeri, formerly a member of SARRC’s board of directors and a private-sector executive, has been leading the planning and implementation of the Vocational & Life Skills Academy.

Jeri has tremendous management and leadership skills as well as a deep knowledge of SARRC from many perspectives. We are grateful for her willingness to lead the charge as we navigate these challenging times and conduct a search for a president/COO.

SARRC’s senior leaders, who now serve as directors, have assumed the newly created positions of vice presidents. They are being supported by stronger operational systems and are assuming greater control over their budgets, people and programs. Chris Smith, Ph.D., research director, and Daniel Openden, Ph.D., clinical services director, have each been promoted to vice president. When a president/COO is hired, Jeri Kendle will also assume the role of vice president.

Raun Melmed, M.D., co-founder and developmental pediatrician, will remain SARRC’s medical director. The organization’s financial management consists of a finance director, supported by external consultants and an active board finance committee. Christine Harms, previously SARRC’s accounting manager, has been appointed finance director.

Lisa Glow, SARRC’s former CEO, and Michelle Reagor, former CFO, offered their resignations in support of the restructuring. Lisa and Michelle have both been committed to advancing SARRC’s mission. We are grateful to them for their years of service and commitments to our children, adults and families.

By making critical decisions, empowering our senior team and focusing on our long-term strategies, SARRC can look forward to serving our community for years to come.

Sincerely,

Howard Sobelman
Chairman
Board of Directors
‘Wings of EPOH’ Soars at Chicago International Children’s Film Festival

The animated short film, *Wings of EPOH*, based on the book by the same name, won the 2008 Rights of the Child Award at the 25th Annual Chicago International Children’s Film Festival.

Written by acclaimed author and Holocaust survivor, Gerda Weissmann Klein, and illustrated by *New York Times* best-selling author, Peter H. Reynolds, the film tells the story of Matthew, a boy with autism who takes a journey with a butterfly named Epoh (“hope” spelled backward). The story is designed to teach children acceptance, tolerance and empathy.

“I discovered much of myself in the characters,” Klein says. “The struggles and frustrations of communicating thoughts, finding comfort and connecting with loved ones is something many individuals with differences face, and it was something I dealt with in my life.”

For more: fablevision.com/wingsofepoh.

Recent Grants to SARRC

The following are grants received between October 2008 and January 2009. SARRC is grateful for the support of a generous community.

**JPMorgan Chase** – In support of the Workforce Training program at the Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy.

**American Express** – To benefit Autism CommunityWorks, which provides pre-vocational and vocational programs to young adults at the Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy.

**William L. and Ruth T. Pendleton Memorial Fund** – To support SARRC’s FRIEND/Wings of EPOH curriculum to provide acceptance and sensitivity training in schools for children in preschool through 12th grade.

**Brown Family Foundation** – To provide internships in SARRC’s research department.

**Finish Line Youth Foundation** – To support SARRC’s family camp programs.

**Marketside/Wal-Mart** – To provide support for the Community School.

Resnik Speaks at Autism Consortium Symposium

SARRC Co-founder Denise D. Resnik was invited to present at the Autism Consortium Symposium at Harvard Medical School on the “Power of Patients and Families as Partners in Research.” The Autism Consortium comprises a group of researchers, clinicians and families dedicated to radically accelerating research and enhancing clinical care for autism. The group believes that families and professionals must work together to achieve the best outcomes. Other speakers at the third annual symposium included Geraldine Dawson, Ph.D., of Autism Speaks; Jean Frazier, M.D., from UMASS Memorial Medical Center; Mark Bear, Ph.D., with the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at MIT; and Jeffrey Flier, M.D., dean of Harvard Medical School.

2009 CEC Convention to Be Held in Seattle

Educators from across the country will meet in Seattle to discuss the latest issues surrounding special and gifted education at the 2009 Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in April. Attendees will have the opportunity to share teaching strategies, learn about the latest special education legislation and trends, participate in educational sessions, explore new products and services, and network with other professionals. Holly Sokol, SARRC’s music therapist, will lead a one-hour presentation on the FRIEND (Fostering Relationships in Early Network Development) program.

SARRC Hosts PRT Workshop at Virginia Tech

Last November, Daniel Openden, Ph.D., BCBA, and Rachel McIntosh, BCaBA, led a four-day Pivotal Response Training (PRT) workshop at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va. The training increased the understanding of PRT for the parents and professionals who attended, and included a presentation of the content material via lectures, video and demonstrations.

The workshop was made possible by a generous grant to Virginia Tech from Autism Speaks.
In Brief

Denise Resnik Receives Volunteer Executive of the Year Award

SARRC co-founder and board member, Denise D. Resnik, was honored as Volunteer Executive of the Year at the Phoenix Business Journal’s Heart of Business Awards celebration. Resnik donates an average of 200 hours a month to SARRC and serves as chair of the board’s development committee. Other winners who are leaders of the autism community included lobbyist Gretchen Jacobs of the law firm Greenberg Traurig for Community Stewardship and SARRC board member Matt McMahon, Outback Steakhouse restaurateur, whose Beauty of a Bonzer event was recognized in the Most Outstanding Company Project category.

SARRC Participates in NATTAP Conference

The second annual Network of Autism Training and Technical Assistance Programs (NATTAP) Conference was hosted by the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI) in Columbus, Ohio, last November. The conference brought together educators, service providers and parents from across the country to review current methods for addressing the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). Sheri Dollin, M.Ed., director of education and training at SARRC, participated as a member of the NATTAP planning committee and presented SARRC’s FRIEND® program at the conference.

ASU Prepares Students for BCBA

The special education department at Arizona State University was recently approved to provide a course sequence that prepares students to become Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA). SARRC Vice President/Clinical Services Director Daniel Openden, Ph.D., BCBA, is currently teaching a class at ASU that focuses on applied behavior analysis (ABA) and counts toward the five courses that make up the sequence. Lori Vincent, BCBA, SARRC’s program manager, is Openden’s teaching assistant.

Autism CommunityWorks Shines at Aging with Autism Conference

Interim SARRC President and Chief Operating Officer Jeri Kendle and SARRC Vice President/Clinical Services Director Daniel Openden, Ph.D., BCBA, presented at the Aging with Autism conference in New York in December. The goal of the conference was to educate those who work with individuals with autism about the intrinsic issues this population faces as they grow older. Kendle and Openden presented SARRC’s Autism CommunityWorksSM program, which provides adolescents with autism ages 13 to 18 with training, mentoring and work experiences, to a packed house on the second day of the conference.

Event Professionals ‘Imagine’ for SARRC

More than 300 event industry professionals attended Imagine 2009 at Axis-Radius in Scottsdale last November. The turnout was impressive for the first-time event, which showcased local caterers, photographers, videographers, florists and others who cater to event professionals. Guests noshed on appetizers and sipped cocktails as they networked with other professionals in the event-planning community. The evening’s festivities, hosted by Sensational Events and Evening Entertainment Group, raised almost $5,000 for SARRC and the Joyner Walker Foundation.
Doug Davis Foundation Hosts Inaugural Celebrity Golf Invitational

Golfers of all skill levels took to the links in December to raise funds for children affected by autism at the inaugural Doug Davis Foundation Celebrity Golf Invitational. Sports celebrities, including Major League Baseball all-stars and Cy Young winners, teed off alongside local players at Troon North Golf Club in Scottsdale.

The day included a golf tournament, celebrity cocktail party, dinner and silent auction featuring sports memorabilia. The event raised $30,000 for SARRC and St. Joseph’s Hospital.

Autism Speaks Develops School Community Tool Kit

As the number of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) continues to rise, both public and private schools are integrating these students into their classrooms. The Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit provides information about autism — the symptoms, challenges and strengths — as well as tools and strategies that may result in more positive interactions for all members of a school community.

Learners with autism often have additional challenges in the school environment. With the support of the community, including everyone from teachers to bus drivers, children can make great strides and become valued members of a student body. The School Community Tool Kit can be found on the Autism Speaks Web site at autismspeaks.org/school.

Thank you Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center for your commitment to provide quality services and support to the children and families in our communities affected by autism.

Discover® Financial Services proudly supports the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center in its efforts to provide support to children and families affected by autism.
SARRC Receives Proceeds from Sale of Book

Not long after a family learns they’re expecting a baby, the debate begins as to what the new addition will call each of the excited grandparents. You Can Call me Hoppa! The Grandparents’ Guide to Choosing a Name that Fits was inspired by countless such conversations between Lauren Charpio, her husband and their respective parents. Charpio’s book includes everything from the traditional Grandma and Grandpa to the Danish monikers, Bedstefar and Bedstemor, and everything in between.

Many families affected by autism dream of the day they will hear their child call them Mom, Dad, Grandma or Grandpa. As a way of giving back, Charpio donates a portion of the proceeds from the sale of each book to SARRC. She hopes this contribution will bring families that much closer to the answers they so desperately seek.

To order, visit callmehoppa.com.
Addie Mocca

Q. What is your role at SARRC?
A: I’m what you might call a “Jill of all trades,” though my actual title is volunteer coordinator. This involves everything from compiling data on volunteers and helping with special events to managing day-to-day tasks and co-anchoring the Grandparents Group with Kathy Bosco. We have a group of 320 grandparents who attend monthly educational meetings, many of whom also volunteer with me on projects for all of the departments to meet immediate needs. I’m also involved in helping to set up the “ins and outs” of the new Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy, so I’ll be splitting my time between the main campus and the vocational academy.

Q. What do you enjoy the most about working with volunteers?
A: The greatest part of working with volunteers is obvious. They don’t have to be doing the work — they want to. Their energy and attitude is so positive, and it just flows out and empowers everyone around them. They give of their time freely and care enough to do it on a regular basis.

Carol and Jerry Frese

Carol Frese’s introduction to SARRC was through an article she read in the newspaper several years ago. She called to learn more about the parent workshop mentioned in the story, and Denise Resnik answered the phone. As the grandmother of two children with autism, Carol wanted to educate herself on all aspects of the disorder. Shortly thereafter, Carol and her husband, Jerry, were attending the monthly Grandparents Group meetings and volunteering on a weekly basis. “Every meeting we learned something new,” Carol says, “and we were able to pass that along to our kids.”

The Freses have been involved with SARRC for almost four years. It’s not uncommon to see Jerry on the floor of the volunteer room putting a table together. Or to find Carol tying ribbons on party invitations.

“The biggest impact SARRC has had on us is the realization of just how many people are involved with and affected by this disorder,” Jerry says. Carol adds, “We’ve been very impressed by the way SARRC is able to reach out to the community and help so many people.”
Three Corporate Donors Who Make a Difference

BY CRISTEN PENNINGTON

Company: Viewpoint Photographers
Owner: Steve Dreiseszun
Contact: (602) 371-0088 or viewpointphoto.com

When Steve Dreiseszun started taking pictures for SARRC, the organization didn’t even have a physical address. As Denise Resnik’s first cousin, he’s literally been part of the family since the very beginning. His body of photographic work for SARRC, all of which is done pro bono, includes the cover shot of almost every Outreach magazine, as well as the captivating photographs found on the pages of SARRC’s award-winning annual reports and upcoming IMprint campaign. Dreiseszun is passionate about capturing powerful images of children with autism in natural environments, whether it’s in their own home, at SARRC’s campus or at community-based settings like the Phoenix Zoo.

Dreiseszun is also the owner of Viewpoint Photographers, where the focus is primarily advertising and product work. To learn more about Steve Dreiseszun and Viewpoint Photographers, call (602) 371-0088.

Company: Agent for Autism/Giambi & Murdoch Real Estate
Owner: Rob Feidler
Contact: (480) 818-1406 or agent4autism.com

Rob and Kym Feidler are forever grateful for the services SARRC provided to their oldest son, Nolan, when he was diagnosed with autism four years ago. As a way of showing their appreciation, Rob, an East Valley Realtor®, donates 20 percent of the commission he receives from the successful close of each transaction to charity. And unless his client says otherwise, his charity of choice is SARRC.

As if that isn’t generous enough, the Feidlers also founded an annual golf tournament to benefit SARRC. The event is held every April around
Nolan's birthday and in honor of Autism Awareness Month. Daron Sutton, voice of the Arizona Diamondbacks, and his wife, Kristin, came on board just after the second annual tournament and Sutton's Strokes for Little Folks was born. The 4th annual tournament will be held on April 23 of this year.

“SARRC saved my life when I was lost in what felt like a nightmare,” said Kym Feidler. “This is the least we can do.”

For more information about Agent for Autism or Sutton’s Strokes for Little Folks, call Rob at (480) 818-1406.

Company: Hot Kopper
Owner: Tamara Kopper
Contact: (623) 202-0635

In spring of 2006, Tamara Kopper assisted with art direction on SARRC’s Outreach magazine. By fall of that same year, she had inherited the entire book. Since 2006, Kopper has donated her time and talent as the art director on every issue of Outreach and has also accepted the job of designing event signage and marketing materials promoting SARRC’s programs, workshops and trainings. She enjoys working on projects for the organization because it’s such a departure from the other publications she creates as an art director at Phoenix-based McMurry.

Her reason for working with SARRC is simple: she believes in giving back. “I felt very proud that SARRC thought enough of my design skills to ask me to help with Outreach. In reality, I truly enjoy the design process, whether it be researching imagery or creating a layout. Every project has its own unique challenges with copy and pictures telling a story.”

Editor’s note: In the last issue, Great Scott Productions’ contact information was incorrect. The correct phone number is (602) 254-1600 and their Web site is www.greatscottprod.com.
**SARRC Introduces Specialized Habilitation**

BY BETHANY DEMORE, SARRC PROGRAM MANAGER

What is specialized habilitation?
Specialized habilitation is a service that enhances traditional habilitation provided by other agencies. As a family-centered model, specialized habilitation supports the entire family through parent-based, in-home training. Highly trained behavioral interventionists provide direct instruction to parents on how to implement interventions throughout the daily life of their family.

What interventions are used in SARRC’s Specialized Habilitation program?
Each child and family in SARRC’s Specialized Habilitation program will receive an individualized treatment plan based on their needs, as well as their child’s response to various methods. The program will be primarily based upon Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT), combined with other evidence-based ABA methods, such as Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT) and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).

How does SARRC’s Specialized Habilitation compare to traditional habilitation?
SARRC’s Specialized Habilitation is a family-centered model focused on teaching parents to work with their children. While traditional habilitation occurs between a child and a habilitator only, specialized habilitation encourages child-parent interaction with coaching from a behavioral interventionist. Specialized habilitation is intended to enhance the traditional habilitation that is provided by other agencies. In addition, once parents are comfortable with the interventions, some of the hours of service can be used to provide training to extended family and habilitators.

How will SARRC support the training of habilitators from other agencies?
SARRC trainings and workshops will be offered at no charge to families and the habilitators from other agencies who are serving families in the Specialized Habilitation program.

How long is the program and how many hours a week are included?
Specialized Habilitation at SARRC is an 18-month program. After initial assessments are completed, specialized habilitation will be provided for four hours a week for approximately three months. The remainder of the program will continue at two hours per week.

Who qualifies for specialized habilitation services and what are the payment options?
Initially, this program is being offered to families of children who are 5 years old or younger. SARRC’s Specialized Habilitation program is currently funded by the State of Arizona through Habilitation Masters (“Hab M”) and Habilitation Bachelors (“Hab B”); children must be authorized for treatment prior to the age of 3. Families of children who do not qualify for state-funded specialized habilitation may receive these services through an affordable private payment option as space is available.
¿Qué es la habilitación especializada?
La habilitación especializada es un servicio que mejora la habilitación tradicional proporcionada por otras agencias. La habilitación especializada, como modelo enfocado en la familia, apoya a la familia entera a través de capacitaciones de los padres, basadas en casa. Intervencionistas conductistas sumamente adiestrados proporcionan instrucción directa a los padres de cómo poner en práctica las intervenciones a través de la vida cotidiana de su familia.

¿Qué intervenciones se utilizan en el programa de habilitación especializada de SARRC?
Todo niño y familia que esté en el programa de habilitación especializada de SARRC recibirán un plan individualizado de tratamiento basado en sus necesidades, así como en la respuesta de su hijo/a a varios métodos. El programa se basará principalmente en el Tratamiento Conductal (PRT, por sus siglas en inglés), combinado con otros métodos de ABA que se basan en la evidencia, como la Enseñanza de Ensayos Incrementales (DTT, por sus siglas en inglés) y el Sistema de Comunicación con Intercambio de Ilustraciones (PECS).

¿Cómo se compara la Habilitación Especializada de SARRC con la habilitación tradicional?
La Habilitación Especializada de SARRC es un modelo que gira alrededor de la familia enfocado en capacitar a los padres para trabajar con sus hijos. Mientras que la habilitación tradicional ocurre solamente entre un niño y un habilitador, la habilitación especializada favorece la interacción de padre e hijo con la capacitación de un intervencionista conductista. La Habilitación Especializada está dirigida a mejorar la habilitación tradicional que es proporcionada por otras agencias. Además, una vez que los padres se sientan a gusto con las intervenciones, algunas de las horas de servicio pueden ser utilizadas para capacitar a parientes y habilitadores.

¿Cómo SARRC apoya la capacitación de habilitadores de otras agencias?
La capacitación y talleres de SARRC se ofrecerán sin costo alguno a familias y habilitadores de otras agencias que sirven a familias en el programa de Habilitación Especializada.

¿Cuánto tiempo dura el programa y cuántas horas se incluyen a la semana?
La Habilitación Especializada de SARRC es un programa de 18 meses. Una vez terminadas las evaluaciones iniciales, se proporcionará habilitación especializada por cuatro horas durante tres meses aproximadamente. El resto del programa continuará dos horas a la semana.

¿Quién califica para recibir servicios de habilitación especializada y cuáles son las opciones de pago?
Inicialmente, este programa se ofrece a familias de niños de 5 años de edad o menos. El programa de Habilitación Especializada de SARRC está financiado actualmente por el Estado de Arizona a través de Habilitation Masters (“Hab M”) y Habilitation Bachelors (“Hab B”); debe autorizarse el tratamiento antes de que los niños cumplan 3 años de edad. Las familias con niños que no califican para la habilitación especializada financiada por el estado pueden recibir estos servicios a través de una opción privada de pago asequible según la disponibilidad de cupo.
SARRC Vice President/Research Director Christopher Smith, Ph.D., is lead author on a significant article, “Familial associations of intense preoccupations, an empirical factor of the restricted, repetitive behaviors and interests domain of autism,” which will appear in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry.

Autism is characterized by a triad of impairments: social skills, communication and restricted, repetitive behaviors and interests (RRBI). This article presents novel findings in regard to characteristics of “intense preoccupations” in fathers and the restricted, repetitive behaviors seen in their children with autism.

Because autism is very diverse in its presentation, researchers have been hindered in their efforts to find genes associated with this complex disorder. Earlier studies have successfully identified two other “factors,” or characteristics that meaningfully occur together in the restricted, repetitive behavior domain. They are insistence on sameness (IS) and repetitive stereotypic motor behaviors (RSMB).

Dr. Smith’s research has identified another factor, intense preoccupations (IP). Both IS and IP appear similarly among siblings with the disorder, more so than many other symptoms of autism. This similarity suggests this trait may help us to find genes, because similar presentation of the symptom among siblings suggests an underlying genetic association. IP may be especially helpful in genetic studies because its presence is significantly correlated with the specific autism-related personality traits in fathers.

SARRC Receives Funding for Telemedicine Research Study

SARRC Vice President/Clinical Services Daniel Openden, Ph.D., BCBA, and Vice President/Research Director Christopher J. Smith, Ph.D., received funding from the Organization of Autism Research (OAR) to conduct a study designed to measure the effects of training parents to provide intervention via the Arizona Telemedicine Program.

With the dramatic increase in children diagnosed with ASDs has come a shortage of qualified individuals to provide services. The lack of service providers is even more of a challenge for those who reside in rural or remote regions. This study will evaluate the efficacy of using telemedicine (via the Arizona Telemedicine Program) as a tool for providing immediate feedback and continued support for parents.

In addition, the study will look at the associations among cognitive functioning, adaptive behavior and the response to Pivotal Response Treatment. The results of this study may have important implications for delivery of cost-effective and efficient intervention for families in rural or remote areas.

Openden Presents at Geneva Centre for Autism International Symposium

Late last year, SARRC Vice President/Clinical Services Director Daniel Openden, Ph.D., BCBA, presented “Motivation Is the Key: Pivotal Response Treatment for Families with Children with Autism” at the Geneva Centre for Autism International Symposium.

The Geneva Centre for Autism is an international leader in the development and delivery of clinical intervention support and training for individuals with autism, families and professionals. This convention
Current Research Projects

**Collaboration to Investigate Genetic Vulnerability**

SARRC, the Autism Genetic Resource Exchange (AGRE) and the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen) are continuing their collaboration on a project that will further the investigation of the genetic vulnerability to autism. This research, under the direction of SARRC Vice President/Research Director Christopher J. Smith, Ph.D., SARRC Co-founder Raun Melmed, MD, David Craig, Ph.D., and Matthew Heuntelman, Ph.D., aims to identify specific autism-related genes that may enable researchers to identify the proteins the genes produce. This may assist in the early diagnosis of autism and lead to more effective treatments for the disorder.

**Clinical Trials**

New investigational drugs that may improve the core symptoms of autism will soon be studied at SARRC. We will be recruiting younger children with autism for these clinical trials. SARRC research coordinators will be able to provide additional information about these clinical trials over the next few months.

**Social Referencing Study**

Researchers at SARRC hope to better understand the differences in social referencing — a child’s response to others — between typically developing children and those with an autism spectrum disorder that occur during a common diagnostic assessment, the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS).

The ADOS does not currently measure social referencing. However, social referencing may be an important predictor of response to treatment and positive outcomes.

Please contact a SARRC research coordinator for additional information about participation in any of these research projects:

Sarah Brautigam, MPH: (602) 218-8196
sbrautigam@autismcenter.org
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Do you remember your favorite school teacher? What was her name? What grade did he teach? What did she do that made learning truly exciting? Nearly everyone can recall a teacher who stands out for having made learning a joyful experience. Our favorite teachers often gave us hands-on learning experiences. They made us feel good about our progress. And, most of all, their classes were full of fun!

These very special, memorable individuals may be thought of as instinctively super teachers. They are usually aware of having a special gift, yet it’s difficult for them to isolate exactly what differentiates them from their fellow teachers. Unfortunately, one reason we remember our favorite teachers so clearly is that we had very few of them.

Many parents and professionals, despite our dedication and devotion to our students with autism, may not be blessed with the instincts that come so naturally for super teachers. If only there was some way for those of us who were not born with exceptional teaching talents to become effective and enjoyable teachers for the children we seek to help.

The Research
This was the goal of two professors from the University of Kansas named Betty Hart and Todd Risley, who identified specific features of excellent preschool teaching performances. They asked parents and supervisors in both private (e.g., university lab-schools) and public (e.g., Head Start) preschools to help them identify the very best teachers, and then conducted systematic observations of the teaching elements these super teachers held in common.

Key features of what Hart and Risley called “Incidental Teaching” included:
1) The teacher waits for a child to show a special interest in a toy or topic of interest.
2) At precisely this teachable moment, the teacher prompts the child to use the new word(s) in order to obtain the item of interest.
3) The child uses the teacher’s cues to request or discuss what they want.
Communication

4) The teacher happily rewards the child with access to the toy of interest.

In a nutshell, incidental teaching is an applied behavior analysis (ABA) instructional procedure, but unlike more traditional ABA approaches, incidental teaching takes place during everyday play activities.

Incidental Teaching and Autism

Incidental teaching research was first conducted with typical preschoolers, and it was another two decades before incidental teaching was shown to have advantages for teaching children with autism. The most important research findings about incidental teaching have shown that children with autism are more likely to use new skills learned via incidental teaching than when they learn rote skills in distraction-free settings.

Parents and teachers often appreciate the fact that incidental teaching can take place during normal home and school routines, rather than requiring all teaching to be conducted in 1:1 sessions. Because incidental teaching cannot take place unless a child is fascinated with toys and activities in his environment, there is seldom a struggle to secure the attention and cooperative behavior of a child with autism.

Incidental teaching makes it feasible, although not necessarily easy, for all of us to become super teachers. As with all ABA procedures, parents can learn to use the same teaching procedures that are used by teachers and other professionals. Parents even have advantages over autism professionals who have been previously trained to be overly strict and directive. Parents are also especially astute at identifying their child’s most highly preferred toys and activities.

Many parents of young children with autism find that incidental teaching makes it possible to provide their children with intensive and effective ABA therapy, while simultaneously encouraging their children to enjoy their early childhood. After all, children with autism – just like all children – only get one childhood to enjoy!

Incidental Teaching 101

Incidental teaching is really just a way to use your child’s interest to encourage him to say or do something. As you take turns talking or doing something, encourage your child to use a skill that he or she needs to learn. To help you understand incidental teaching, here are some helpful steps taken from the research of Betty Hart and Todd Risley:

• Wait for your child to show a special interest in a toy or topic of interest.
• Prompt your child to use the new word(s) in order to obtain the item of interest.
• Support your child by offering cues that will help them request or discuss what they want.
• Reward your child by giving them access to the toy or topic of interest.

Gail G. McGee, Ph.D., is the director of the Emory Autism Center at the Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta. She can be reached at gmcgee@emory.edu.

Left: SARRC uses incidental teaching in its Community School and as an integral part of habilitation efforts.
Encontrando al Súper Maestro en Usted

La enseñanza incidental hace el aprendizaje divertido

GAIL G. MCGEE, PH.D.

Recuerda usted a su maestro predilecto de la escuela? ¿Cómo se llamaba? ¿Qué grado enseñó? ¿Qué hizo para que el aprendizaje fuera verdaderamente emocionante? Casi todos podemos recordar a un maestro que destacó por haber hecho la experiencia del aprendizaje regocijante. Nuestros maestros predilectos con frecuencia nos brindaron experiencias prácticas. Nos hicieron sentir bien con nuestro progreso. ¡Y, sobre todo, sus clases estaban llenas de diversión!

Podemos pensar que estos individuos muy especiales y memorables son súper maestros instintivamente. Por lo general están conscientes de tener un don especial, sin embargo es difícil para ellos aislar exactamente lo que los diferencia de sus compañeros maestros. Desafortunadamente, una razón por la que recordamos a nuestros maestros predilectos tan claramente es porque fueron pocos.

Muchos padres y profesionales, a pesar de nuestra dedicación y devoción hacia nuestros estudiantes con autismo, pueden no estar bendecidos con los instintos tan naturales como los de los súper maestros. Si tan solo hubiera alguna manera para aquellos de nosotros que no nacimos con los talentos excepcionales de enseñanza para convertirnos en maestros efectivos y agradables para los niños que tratamos de ayudar.

La Investigación

 Esto fue la meta de dos profesores de la Universidad de Kansas llamados Betty Hart y Todd Risley, que identificaron características específicas de excelentes rendimientos preescolares docentes. Ellos pidieron a padres y supervisores en escuelas preescolares tanto privadas (por ejemplo, escuelas-laboratorio universitarias) como públicas (por ejemplo, Head Start) ayuda para identificar a los mejores maestros, y llevaron a cabo observaciones sistemáticas de los elementos docentes que estos súper maestros tenían en común.

Las características clave que Hart y Risley llamaron “Enseñanza Incidental” incluyeron:

1) El/la maestro/a espera a que un niño muestre interés especial en un juguete o tema de interés.
2) Precisamente en este momento de enseñanza, el/la maestro/a induce al niño para que utilice la/s nueva/s palabra/s para poder obtener el artículo de interés.
3) El/la niño/a utiliza las claves del maestro para pedir o hablar de lo que quiere.
4) El/la maestro/a felizmente recompensa al niño dándole acceso al juguete de interés.

En pocas palabras, la enseñanza incidental es un procedimiento de instrucción del análisis conductual aplicado (ABA), pero a comparación de enfoques
La enseñanza incidental es realmente sólo una manera de utilizar el interés de su hijo/a para animarle a decir o hacer algo. Cuando usted tome turnos para hablar o hacer algo, ejerza a su hijo/a a utilizar una habilidad que él o ella necesite aprender. Para ayudarlo a entender la enseñanza incidental, aquí están algunos pasos útiles tomados de la investigación de Betty Hart y Todd Risley:

- Espere a que su hijo/a muestre un interés especial en un juguete o tema de interés.
- Induzca a su hijo/a a que utilice nueva/s palabra/s para poder obtener el artículo de interés.
- Ayude a su hijo/a ofreciendo claves que le ayudarán a pedir o a hablar de lo que quiere.
- Recompense a su hijo/a proporcionándole acceso al juguete o tema de interés.

La enseñanza incidental lo hace posible, aunque no necesariamente fácil, para que todos nosotros lleguemos a ser súper maestros. Al igual que con todos los procedimientos de ABA, los padres pueden aprender a utilizar los mismos procedimientos didácticos utilizados por maestros y otros profesionales. Hasta los padres tienen ventajas sobre los profesionales del autismo quienes han sido capacitados anteriormente de ser excesivamente estrictos y directivos. Los padres también son particularmente astutos en identificar juguetes y actividades altamente preferidos por su hijo/a.

Muchos padres de niños pequeños con autismo encuentran que la enseñanza incidental hace posible proporcionar a sus hijos terapia intensiva y efectiva de ABA, mientras exhortan simultáneamente a sus hijos a disfrutar de su infancia temprana. Después de todo, los niños con autismo –como todos los niños– solo tienen una sola infancia para disfrutar!

Gail G. McGee, Ph.D., es directora del centro de autismo Emory Autism Center en la universidad Emory University School of Medicine en Atlanta. Puede contactarla en gmcgee@emory.edu.
overcoming the odds

Yeou-Luen Ni is in the minority of adults with autism, offering hope to others for successful employment.

BY CHRISTIA GIBBONS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELISSA JILL PHOTOGRAPHY
Yeou-Luen Ni didn’t speak until he was 5 years old. That was the same year his father noticed him reading — and comprehending — a chemistry textbook.

While autism often presents challenges for those pursuing employment, Yeou-Luen has learned to play to his strengths, finding success at his part-time job as a software tester at Kolbe Corp., a company that produces assessments, software and certification programs to help organizations hire and manage staff.

Beyond his personal successes, Yeou-Luen believes his experience should give hope to others. That’s because nearly 90 percent of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) in this country are unemployed or under-employed. By comparison, the unemployment rate among adults with disabilities hovers around 67 percent.

Finding Hope

Yeou-Luen Ni, born in Taiwan, encourages others with ASDs to remain hopeful. “Failure is the mother of success,” he quotes from a Chinese proverb, adding in his own words, “so I won’t give up on my ideal of a stable job.”

Yeou-Luen, 41, has a master’s degree in computer science from Arizona State University. As a software tester, his job entails navigating Kolbe’s Web site in search of glitches.

“I like computer Web language,” he says. “I like testing to find problems and missing information.”

In his free time, Yeou-Luen is on a personal mission to help others with autism be more independent — particularly with their school work, relationships and financial issues. He is driven by his knowledge of the numbers associated with adults with autism.

“Approximately 3 percent of people with autism have independent-living skills,” he says. “Less than 1 percent get married.” It’s critical, he adds, that those percentages increase.

Benefits of Job Coaching

To help Yeou-Luen and his employer maximize their relationship, he works with job coach Erin Onacki, employment coordinator at the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center’s Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy (VLSA).
In addition to Kolbe, the VLSA partners with Outback restaurants, PetSmart, McDonald’s, Maricopa County, Hensley and Lisa G Café and Wine Bar. About 70 individuals with autism have enrolled in the VLSA, and 15 currently have jobs, Onacki says.

Before he began working with SARRC, Yeou-Luen had worked with a different employment service, which was unable to help him fulfill his professional aspirations. Within just one month of working with Onacki and SARRC, Yeou-Luen had a job.

“It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Yeou-Luen because he’s such a gifted individual with so many abilities,” Onacki says. She also marvels at his self-awareness. When they first met, he gave her a series of horizontally taped Post-It notes that read: “This is how I am, this is how I learn, this is my anxiety and this is how I’m successful.”

She worked with Yeou-Luen on-site at Kolbe when he first got the job last July, but quickly scaled down her number of visits because he was doing so well at assessing his tasks, learning them and completing them on time.

Late last year, Onacki called Yeou-Luen’s supervisor, James Trujillo, to discuss his progress and potential training needs — and learned he was doing very well.

For Trujillo, vice president of technology and development at Kolbe, it’s all about an employee bringing value to the table, and that’s what Yeou-Luen does. Yeou-Luen isn’t hindered by social norms and institutionalized learning, Trujillo says, making him the right person to code, review and site map the Kolbe Web site.

“He fits right into our team. We need sequential thinkers,” Trujillo says, and that plays perfectly into Yeou-Luen’s skill set. As the company develops a new Web site, “he’s helping us work out all the kinks,” Trujillo adds.

A Great Match

Yeou-Luen took Kolbe’s A index, an assessment designed to reveal a person’s natural strengths in specifying, adapting, improvising and imagining.

“We can work with his personality type and
know exactly what he needs to succeed,” Trujillo says. Yeou-Luen is a 6825 on the Kolbe A index, which Trujillo says is similar to his own numbers. That common ground often helps him understand where Yeou-Luen is coming from.

“We have a task at hand, and Yeou-Luen is a resource to us,” he says. Yeou-Luen and Trujillo work with one other staff member in what is affectionately called “The Cave” because of its tight quarters. “He is a great teammate,” Trujillo adds.

Kathy Kolbe, chairman of the board and chief creative officer at Kolbe Corp., interviewed Yeou-Luen for the job.

“She gave him an opportunity to be heard,” Onacki says. “It was really a genuine interview. She didn’t give him any slack.”

“It has to be real. Bona fide, real-world experience,” adds Kolbe, who has been hiring people with challenges for 30 years. “I have a personal history in not believing in the term disabled.”

Kolbe says she is dyslexic and, as a result, learned creative problem solving. She’s hired employees with hearing problems, physical disabilities and others who may be considered unemployable by some.

‘This Is Good Business’

Kolbe was originally connected to SARRC through a nephew with autism, and she began researching issues related to individualized job training.

Guided by the philosophy, “Because we could and because we should,” Kolbe urges other business owners to consider hiring people with disabilities. “This isn’t charity; this is good business.”

When people are paired with the right job, everyone wins. “It takes less time and cost to make the right fit,” Kolbe says.

Yeou-Luen is that fit.

The job, he says, has given him confidence, just one of the many benefits he touts to his friends as he encourages them in their employment pursuits.

“It’s helped me work in a team,” Yeou-Luen says. “It is important to work to gain skills and experience, and to learn from my colleagues whose skills are quite different from mine.”

American consumers prefer to do business with companies that hire individuals with disabilities. A 2006 University of Massachusetts Boston study reported “overwhelmingly positive attitudes among consumers toward socially responsible companies, and in particular, toward those that hire individuals with disabilities.”

To join SARRC’s Vocational & Life Skills Academy’s network of community worksites please contact Erin Dunham, employment services program coordinator, at (602) 340-1451 or edunham@autismcenter.org.
Future.
For so long, this single word has had the power to cripple parents of children with autism. Its negative connotation has come from a lack of vision for the future, few options for their children and the worry of what happens when they’re no longer able to care for their adult children.

Denise D. Resnik knows these worries all too well. The SARRC co-founder has felt the sting of “future” for more than 15 years; her son, Matthew, was diagnosed with autism at the age of 2. But thanks to the opening of SARRC’s Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy (VLSA), Resnik feels empowered when she looks ahead, as do armies of parents of children with autism. Through the VLSA, SARRC will be able to help young adults and adults with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) learn the necessary life skills that will enhance their ability to live and work as independently as possible.

“"The VLSA really started 12 years ago at the time SARRC was founded. It’s always been part of our dream to have a vocational component,” says Jeri Kendle, SARRC’s interim president and chief operating officer and director of the VLSA. “Our mission is to provide individuals with autism spectrum disorders continuing education, training, support, life and social skills development, and interest-based employment while providing employers with the training and tools needed to ensure successful outcomes. We want to help them pursue options for lifelong learning, have jobs and live as independently as possible.”

From the Ground Up
The 10,000-square-foot building at 16th Street and Oak, just minutes from SARRC’s Don & Sybil Harrington Campus for Exceptional Children, has long been a vision for Resnik and SARRC. Its reality is due to many generous in-kind donations and fundraising...
support from longtime SARRC partners, such as development firm Opus West, which led the fundraising, construction and project management for the building.

“We have a longstanding partnership with SARRC that goes back years, and we were very happy to support them in making this academy happen,” says Thomas W. Roberts, president of Opus West. “SARRC has made a difference for so many families, and to be a part of their growth and passion for this project is a real honor.”

With the help of Butler Design Group and Phoenix Design One, a building shell was transformed into a place where teens and adults with autism will be able to learn vital skills to help make them marketable in the workforce. Many other community partners put resources into the building as well. Donations ranged from grants and other types of funding to the tangible necessities to get things moving, such as the 30 laptop computers donated by JDA Software Group, Inc.

A Look Inside

Individuals ages 13 and older will benefit from a variety of services, including Autism CommunityWorksSM, a pre-vocational program that builds job skills in a hands-on setting at worksites such as the Phoenix Zoo, Burton Barr Phoenix Central Library, Desert Botanical Garden and several nonprofit social service agencies.

“These teens and adults are people who are very productive. As difficult as this disorder is, we also want to make sure people know our kids have abilities,” Resnik says. “We’re excited about the number of employers who have expressed an interest and are giving our clients and SARRC a chance to succeed and show them what we can do. And the academy will give our youths and adults a place to train so they are better prepared for a variety of work environments and jobs.”

“At the VLSA, we’re going to be able to work with our clients on a variety of job skills — everything from computer skills to learning how to work at a restaurant,” Kendle adds. “The building is designed for training and learning, even our mail and copy room.”

The academy will also provide teens and adults with autism with access to job placement services, job coaching and post-secondary education assistance. The academy boasts conference space available to parents, families and individuals with ASDs for seminars and workshops as well as training rooms for classes aimed at improving socialization or college preparation and job competency. And a lifestyle area — designed as a single bedroom apartment unit — has also been added to allow those with ASDs to learn and practice life skills that include laundry, budgeting, cooking and personal hygiene.

“Our ultimate mission is to seek independence for these individuals,” Kendle says. “We are helping them build skills that make them valuable in the workforce and contributing members of our community. It’s giving us all hope.

“Hope — that’s really what’s happening.”

Thank You to the Community

The following companies made the Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy possible:

$100,000 - $1,000,000
- Opus Foundation
- Noah’s Family Foundation
- Denise Resnik & Associates

$50,000 - $100,000
- The Dreiseszun Family Charitable Trust
- Ken & Heidi Scott Target

$10,000 - $50,000
- The 22005 Fund
- Alliance Residential
- American Express
- American Glass Tint, Inc.
- The Armstrong Family Foundation Autism Speaks
- Butler Design Group
- Globe Foundation
- Mary Hernandez
- The Hock Family
- JDA Software Group, Inc.
- Medicis Pharmaceutical Corporation
- JP Morgan/Chase
- NKW, Inc.
- New York Center for Autism Outback Steakhouse
- Phoenix Design One
- Pro-Tech
- The Schwartz Family
- Wells Fargo
- Nancy White

$5,000 - $10,000
- Dunn-Edwards
- Fine Line Manufacturing
- JFK Electric
- Kraemer Engineering
- Michelle Schechner Walters & Wolf

Up to $5,000
- Allied Fire, Inc.
- Armstrong
- Barrett-Homes
- Bedrosians
- Chaparral Glass
- City of Phoenix
- City of Phoenix Fire Department
- Cohen Financial Corporation
- Estudio Ray
- Formica Corporation
- Gemini Company, Inc.
- Goodmans Interior Structures
- KC Interior
- W J Maloney Plumbing
- McGrew Engineering
- MechoShade
- Midstate Mechanical
- Norcon Phoenix Flooring
- PK Associates
- ProClean, Inc.
- Roppe Corporation Shaw
- Sonoran Property Management
- Southwest Architectural Builders
- TW Steel
- Whirlpool Wholesale Floors

Spring 2009 | 27 | OUTREACH
n many ways, 18-year-old Camille Kopacz isn’t very different from her fellow freshmen at Glendale Community College. Immersing herself in her first semester, exploring courses and narrowing in on a major, Kopacz has also found time to take on a few extracurricular volunteer projects that will no doubt help make her resume shine. But for Kopacz and her family, those logged volunteer hours are more than just a qualification checked off a list. Diagnosed with several developmental disorders during her childhood before a physician determined she was on the autism spectrum, Kopacz has found social interaction and communication to be a challenge her whole life. There were moments when her mother, Barbara Evans, thought she wouldn’t ever see her daughter carry on a conversation, let alone serve meals with her peers to homeless families in need at Phoenix’s UMOM New Day Centers shelter.

But Kopacz did.

And thanks to the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC)’s Good DeedWorks™ program, which pairs teenagers affected by autism with typical peers to carry out important volunteer
work within the community, parents like Evans have a new, and very attainable, goal to strive for — a society where their children not only fit in, but contribute to the betterment of others.

“I remember those early years, wondering what I was going to do,” Evans says. “Things aren’t as bleak anymore. Our children have capabilities, and they feel like they can help other people. They have skills and are turning the tide, and helping people in need.”

Starting Small, Getting Big

This domino effect of self-confidence and inspiration is at the very heart of the Good DeedWorks program. Launched in August 2008, the program pairs six youths between the ages of 13 and 18 who are affected by autism with six typical peers of the same age on a volunteer team. Typical teens are educated on autism spectrum disorders, and are given tools to help them in working with their peers. Then, along with a SARRC coach, the teens go into a community organization and help however they can. Good DeedWorks is a complementary program to Autism CommunityWorksSM, which is aimed at helping young adults with autism to obtain on-the-job vocational skills through work experiences.

“This is wonderful for our kids because it encourages them to look at those bigger social issues,” says Jeri Kendle, SARRC’s director of the Vocational & Life Skills Academy. “These teens feel like they’re doing something to make the world a better place.”

In its first year, more than 5,000 community service hours were logged through Autism CommunityWorks and Good DeedWorks, and volunteer jobs have varied from washing dogs and cleaning out cages for the Arizona Animal Welfare League to bagging 8,000 pounds of carrots for St. Mary’s Food Bank. SARRC has been able to partner with more than a dozen Valley community organizations in the process, and the experience has been so positive for all parties involved that the doors are always open for these volunteer youths to come back.

“The benefits of being a part of this program are abundant,” says Sarah Hock, education manager for the Arizona Animal Welfare League. “We’re raising awareness about autism and what these individuals are capable of, and we’re educating about animals and our cause. We’re really working together to achieve a common goal.”

Get Involved

There are currently more than 125 youths on the autism spectrum who are registered to take part in a Good DeedWorks program, and volunteer projects are scheduled weekly. Before participating, volunteers on the autism spectrum fill out an application and questionnaire as well as provide some basic medical information.

Teens ages 13 to 18 who are interested in serving as mentors can also call to be put on the list for upcoming projects. Upon registering, you will need to fill out a basic application and provide emergency contact information. SARRC also welcomes community organizations to join their list of partners.

“The benefits to our participating organizations are huge,” Kendle says. “They are getting the help they need, and they’re learning about autism. The hope is that people will be more open to hiring people on the autism spectrum. This program is helping people understand the incredible skill and talents of those on the autism spectrum.”

Participating Organizations

Andre House
HomeBase Youth Services
Desert Mission Food Bank
Raising Special Kids
United Food Bank
Phoenix Weedwacker
St. Mary’s Food Bank
Project C.U.R.E.
AZ Children’s Association
WHEAT- World Hunger
Education, Advocacy & Training Organization
Shoebox Ministries
Make a Difference
Arizona Animal Welfare League
UMOM New Day Centers

Sign Up Today!
To be a part of Good DeedWorksSM, call Stephanie Hock, program coordinator, at (602) 218-8205.
SARRC’s 2009 Awareness Campaign will educate the community about autism and SARRC, and inspire people to get involved.

Got Milk?
The award-winning slogan has been on billboards, TV screens and magazine pages since 1993, but the marketing whizzes behind this phrase are proud of more than words on a page.

What began as a campaign for the California Milk Processor Board influenced consumers’ behaviors. In fact, within the campaign’s first year, milk sales increased for the first time in more than a decade.

Great campaigns raise awareness and drive action, which is just what the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) hopes to achieve through its 2009 awareness campaign, “Make Your IMprint on Autism™.”

Kicking off this month, IMprint educates a broad, diverse audience about autism and SARRC; reinforces SARRC’s value and impact; and inspires new and current donors to remain committed to SARRC.

“We hope it also inspires people throughout the community to serve as a catalyst for action and connect with SARRC,” says Denise D. Resnik, SARRC co-founder and PR agency president. “Our goal is to impact the lives of more children and families affected by autism and support them throughout their lifetimes.”

The Message
Encouraging us all to make an IMprint on autism, the campaign will be integrated throughout SARRC’s outreach and research programs, signature events and local news media, including SARRC’s Outreach magazine.

“We want to meaningfully engage everyone who interacts with SARRC and the autism community, acknowledge them, deepen our connections and thank them for their contributions,” says Dino Paul, president of Dino Design, who co-led the design efforts with Joe Ray, president/creative director of Estudio Ray, supported by creative team members Natalie Lang and Bob Emmelkamp.

Capitalizing on a variety of mediums, IMprint will speak to parents and families, researchers, physicians, educators and school officials, professionals and
paraprofessionals, donors and sponsors, business leaders and the community-at-large.

The campaign’s central message incorporates a level of involvement with SARRC and with autism, and raises the question: IMinvolved. R U?

“This campaign is more than just a statement. It’s a call to action,” Resnik says. “In addition to raising awareness of autism, we want to engage all sectors of our community to take action with us, from the playground to the workplace.”

A parallel campaign will also run in Spanish: ApoYO al Autismo. Y tú?

“From the beginning our goal has been to reach out to our Spanish-speaking families,” says Ray, who worked with a team to develop the parallel Spanish-language campaign.

“Through our bilingual programs and marketing efforts, including a partnership with Univision and Telemundo, we’re working hard to raise awareness of autism and help families better understand the early warning signs,” adds Sergio Peñaloza, SARRC board member and Cox Communications executive. “It’s essential we reach our families whose children are often diagnosed much later than Caucasian children. They need support, and their children need the benefits of early intervention in their language.”

How It Happened

SARRC has long had award-winning communications efforts. The 2006 Power of Numbers outreach campaign received the “Be More Informed” award from the KAET Channel 8 Be More Awards last year. And both the Power of Numbers and Action Moves Forward annual reports were named among the top 100 annual reports by AR100.

The previous successes motivated campaign committee members to aim high for 2009.

“We had a broad team of creative talent that thought very strategically about IMprint and what it could accomplish for families impacted by autism,” Paul says. “I believe this year’s campaign is one of our strongest yet.”

Creative Works Committee

The following individuals gave their time and energy to making IMprint a success:

Steve Dreiseszun, Viewpoint Photographers
Bob Emmelkamp, Community Servant
Stephanie Jarnagan, Think Communications
Natalie Lang, SARRC Volunteer
Mary McEvilly-Hernandez, Univision Radio
Martha Muniz, KPNX Channel 12
Dino Paul, Dino Design
Sergio Peñaloza*, Cox Communications
Cristen Pennington, SARRC
Shelli Poulos, SARRC Volunteer
Alexander Poulos, Tiffany & Bosco
Chris Ray, Estudio Ray
Joe Ray*, Estudio Ray
Mike Reina*, Southern Wine & Spirits
Denise D. Resnik*, Denise Resnik & Associates
Heidi Scott, Great Scott Productions
Howard Sobelman*, Snell & Wilmer
Rachel Southard, SARRC
Cheryl Walsh*, WalshCOMM
Lyndsey Waugh, SARRC Volunteer

* SARRC Board Member
Soon after David Dion was born prematurely in 1971, his parents realized they would face many health challenges throughout his life. But nothing prepared Phil and Patty Dion for David’s greatest challenge — an apparent inability to fit in with others. “Relating to others comes naturally to most people, but for David, everyday life was a monumental challenge,” says Patty Dion. “When he asked me, ‘Mom, how do you make a friend?’ I wasn’t prepared to answer because I didn’t realize how severe his problem was. His struggles led to extreme loneliness and, ultimately, depression.”

David’s challenges stemmed from an inability to pick up on subtle social cues like sarcasm or facial expressions. He also exhibited other manifestations, such as spending a great deal of time on the simplest tasks, like making a sandwich, or more complicated ones, like building a large structure in their yard.

“We took David to many specialists over the years, and the majority diagnosed him with learning disabilities,” Dion says. “In spite of his persistent efforts and the countless attempts to help him, his life was an unrelenting struggle. He didn’t know, we didn’t
know and the medical community didn't know how to identify his pervasive problem.”

**A Diagnosis at Last**

Finally, when David was 33, he received a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome. “The main differences between autism and Asperger's syndrome are that with Asperger's there is no obvious language delay or cognitive impairment, so it's harder to detect early,” says SARRC Vice President/Research Director Christopher Smith, Ph.D.

“We had heard the term Asperger's four years prior to his diagnosis, but because David didn't meet all the criteria at the time, he wasn't diagnosed,” Dion says. “We have since learned that Asperger's is commonly misdiagnosed because it can manifest subtly, which makes it easy for some to slip through the cracks of conventional screening.”

David had spent his entire life trying to fit in — he earned a college degree when experts said he'd never be able to do it. But sadly, within a year of his diagnosis, David lost his battle with depression. Toward the end of his life, his greatest hope had been to secure meaningful employment, but because of his social struggles and the special organizational skills he required, he was never able to achieve that goal.

“My daughter has said, 'If David had had some outward manifestation of his disability — if he was in a wheelchair, for example — people would've cut him a break.' But because Asperger's doesn’t have this outward manifestation, you expect so much more than a person with Asperger's can give,” Dion says. “You expect them to behave in a normal way, when all they're trying to do is find out what normal is.”

**ThinkAsperger's Is Born**

As a result of the Dions' life experiences and in honor of the profound impact David made on so many people, they reached out to Denise D. Resnik, co-founder of the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC), and began to develop an idea.

“We believe it's very important to develop a screening tool that is reliable and effective enough to include people who are atypical of the disorder. We don't want any other individuals or families to experience what David and our family went through for so many years,” Dion says. “If Asperger's is diagnosed early enough, families can put in place a system of supports to make their lives so much easier and safeguard against common disorders associated with Asperger's like depression.”

SARRC launched ThinkAsperger's last year with a funding commitment from the Dion family. In 2008, SARRC researchers conducted standardized cognitive testing and diagnostic assessments with individuals with Asperger's syndrome. The most integral aspect of the project to date has been discussions with family members about their children's early developmental history.

“When dealing with something as complex as Asperger’s, 20/20 hindsight becomes extremely valuable,” Smith says. “We can use their hindsight to help families today and families to come.”

The information culled from these interviews will eventually lead to the development of a screening tool that can be shared with educators. “We want to teach educators the early warning signs of Asperger's syndrome, so they can refer students who may need additional evaluation. We want them to understand the future implications of these early warning signs exhibited today, before other complications develop.”

This year, SARRC will identify the most common red flag symptoms of Asperger's syndrome, which will be integrated into a short checklist that will become part of a complete screening tool due out later this year.

“Ultimately, we want teachers to refer more kids than just those who actually have Asperger's, so we know the tool is sensitive enough,” Smith says. “We don't want anyone to slip through the cracks like David did.”
What happens when our nation’s children with autism join the ever-increasing population of adults with autism? Who will care for them when their parents are no longer able to do so? How will our society care for them? How can we be sure their days will be meaningful, productive and enjoyable? The need for vocational, residential and other effective services designed for adults with autism continues to far exceed the available resources.

To address these issues, the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) has joined forces with more than a dozen nonprofit organizations in a national consortium called Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism (AFAA). AFAA seeks to create meaningful futures for adults with autism that include homes, jobs, recreation, friends and supportive communities.

The Goal of AFAA

This national consortium, presented by Autism Speaks, Global Communities of Support, The New York Center for Autism and many others, has united to set national priorities for adults on the autism spectrum and to transform public policy and programming for teens and adults with autism. Throughout 2009 and 2010, AFAA will collect information, develop strategic solutions and advance a national agenda.

The first of three major AFAA initiatives took place in January in New York City. An Expert Panel/Think Tank brought together nationally recognized experts, including program operators, university professors, public policy authorities and specialists from both the public and private sectors. During the two-day conference they shared ideas about state-of-the-art residential, vocational, recreational, community integration and transition models for adults and young adults with autism. They also worked to identify resources beyond the government as potential partners in this venture and considered ways to navigate the national and state-specific challenges the autism community faces.

“As a society, we have an obligation to secure a brighter future for individuals with autism spectrum disorders,” explains Peter Bell, executive vice president of Autism Speaks and AFAA co-chair. “AFAA’s goal is to ensure that adults with autism break free of the all-too-common status of dependency and become engaged members of their communities.”

“The potential of adults with autism is not so much limited by their disability, but rather, by the failures of the system charged with supporting them,” adds Ilene Lainer, executive director of The New York Center for Autism and AFAA co-chair. “We hope to change that.”

The Time Is Now

“Our mission is to create a transformative agenda to address lifelong living and learning for adults with autism,” says Denise D. Resnik, SARRC co-founder and AFAA steering committee member. “We cannot afford to wait; this agenda needs to be accelerated into real change in the quality of life for adults with autism.”

Following the success of the Expert Panel/Think Tank, AFAA will be ramping up for the November 15 National Town Hall, a teleconference among more than 15 regional sites throughout the U.S., including Phoenix. In 2010, the Autism Congress will be held in Washington, D.C., where AFAA will develop a plan to put the ideas and strategies developed during the Expert Panel/Think Tank and National Town Hall into action.
For the first time in the history of the Association for Behavior Analysis International® (ABAI), the organization’s annual conference will be held in Phoenix, and a number of staff from the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) will be presenting. ABAI’s 35th Annual Convention will be held May 22-26 at the Phoenix Convention Center.

ABAI is an organization for professionals interested in the philosophy, science, application and teaching of behavior analysis. The annual conference is historically attended by more than 4,000 professors, researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, teachers, parents and consultants from more than 40 countries.

Presentations by SARRC Staff

SARRC Vice President/Clinical Services Director Daniel Openden, Ph.D., BCBA, SARRC, will provide a scholarly discussion of three related papers in two symposia at the conference: *The Changing Role of Social Skills Groups for Learners with Autism from Childhood to College and Pivotal Response Treatment: Applications for Training and Intervention*. He was also a co-author on a poster being presented by colleagues from Nova Scotia, titled *PRT-Based Early Intervention Program for Autism: One-Year Outcomes and Predictors*.

Rachel McIntosh, BCaBA, SARRC’s JumpStart director and Hispanic outreach coordinator, will present *Comparing Two Methods for Training Parents with Children with Autism to Implement Pivotal Response Treatment*. Openden and JumpStart interventionist Alexis Boglio were co-authors on the poster, which explores the improvements in parent-child responsivity when using a parent training program.

Bethany DeMore, program manager at SARRC, will present *A Systematic Desensitization Intervention to Treat Hypersensitivity to Haircuts in Children with Autism*, a poster whose other collaborators include Openden and Robert L. Koegel and Lynn Kern Koegel of University of California, Santa Barbara.

And lastly, Lori Vincent, M.Ed., BCBA, educational consultant at SARRC, will present *Promoting Social Learning at Recess: Using Structured Playground Activities to Increase Social Skills for Children with Autism*, which she co-authored with Openden and SARRC’s former director of school consultation services, Joseph Gentry, Ph.D., BCBA. The same trio will also present *Food Selectivity: Increasing Consumption of Non-Preferred Foods Through a Parent Implemented Intervention*.

Looking Ahead

“We’re excited to host ABA International’s annual convention in Phoenix this year,” says Dr. Maria Malott, chief executive officer of ABAI. “The city’s accommodations and convention center are outstanding, and it gives us an opportunity to reach out in a region we’ve never been. We especially look forward to welcoming attendees who have not previously experienced an ABAI event.”

For SARRC, having the conference in Phoenix is an opportunity to shine. “To have so many SARRC representatives at this conference speaks volumes about the great research we do here and its value in the autism community,” Openden says. “I’m incredibly proud of our team and look forward to seeing everyone in action in May.”

Questions?

The 35th Annual Convention of ABA International will be held May 22-26 at the Phoenix Convention Center. Questions can be directed to ABAI at (269) 492-9310 or via e-mail to convention@abainternational.org.
Providing an often-needed serene respite to parents and children, the Tranquility Garden at the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center’s (SARRC) main campus is an intimate courtyard filled with plants, trees and a beautiful Mexican-style water feature funded by friends of SARRC and decorated by SARRC kids.

Randy McGrane, managing director of Ensemble DevMan (EnsembleDevMan.com), orchestrated the creation of the Tranquility Garden and called on many long-time business relationships to assist in its development. Nancy Pattyn of Studioworks Design and McGrane sat in the space, now the garden, for a brown-bag lunch one afternoon and dreamed up the vision and strategy to make the garden an interactive environment. The intent was to use what was there to create a stimulating — but not overwhelming — experience that would be a calming space for kids and parents alike with a focus on repurposing materials and environmental sustainability.

A self-proclaimed “remodeling junkie,” McGrane considers the garden a “passion project” and an opportunity to use his hands-on approach to adding new life to a space while giving back to the community.

“I have followed SARRC’s growth for many years and wanted to contribute something meaningful and tangible to the organization,” McGrane says. “The Tranquility Garden was the perfect opportunity to be involved with a project from beginning to end and create a special place for the people of SARRC and those they serve.”

The garden’s focal point is the large water fountain, where the kids like to run their hands through the falling water. The water structure was created from the existing concrete block bench, the engineered design and construction of which was donated by Dan Waters, Creative Environments (CreativeEnvironments.com).

Local artist, Darcy McGrane (DarcyDesigns.org), donated her design and installation of the garden’s water feature mosaic. She also worked with group of kids, young adults and teachers from SARRC’s summer programs to create one-of-a-kind mosaic shapes from raw clay. The tiles were created by a multi-step process, which starts with forming the shapes from wet clay, drying them, firing them in an 1800-degree kiln, glazing them and re-firing the tiles one final time.

“This was an excellent opportunity to celebrate the arts with SARRC’s students and expose them to a unique tile — mosaic — making process,” Darcy adds. “Being involved in the project’s creation gave the students and teachers a special pride for the garden.”

Enjoyed by kids, families, volunteers and staff, the garden creates a welcoming atmosphere for kids and a contemplative space for their families.

The garden is dedicated to the memory of Telemachos “Mike” John Morfessis as a tribute to his life, made possible through a gift designated by Ioanna Morfessis and the Helios Education Foundation, the largest nonprofit organization in Arizona and Florida focused solely on education.
On Thursday, April 23, community leaders will come together for the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center’s 11th annual Community Breakfast to support the organization in its mission to advance research and provide a lifetime of support for individuals with autism and their families.

This year’s co-chairs are Alex and Shelli Poulos and Mike and Susan Reina. The Reinas also served as last year’s co-chairs.

“Shelli and Alex are stellar and have so much passion,” says Mike Reina, who has served on SARRC’s board of directors for three years. “They’re pros and hit the ground running!”

Lining Up the Co-Chairs

When Reina was first approached about co-chairing the breakfast, he felt he was too over-extended to take on the responsibility. “I can do it two years from now,” he said. So, in 2008, the Reinas were on board.

Reina, the director of marketing for Southern Wine & Spirits, and his wife, Susan, a physician’s assistant, have two children and have been involved with SARRC for about five years.

“I have two nephews with autism,” Mike says. “They live in Atlanta, and I wanted to do something from Phoenix to help support the cause.” Mike is also involved with Thunderbirds Charities, an organization dedicated to supporting charities that benefit children. Late last year, the Thunderbirds made possible the creation of the Thunderbirds Charities Play Village at SARRC’s Campus for Exceptional Children. Designs are now being completed, and construction will soon be under way.

An Event with Impact

After serving on the SARRC Breakfast Steering Committee for seven years, this is Shelli and Alex Poulos’ first year as co-chairs. The couple originally became involved with SARRC when the child of close family friends was diagnosed with autism. The family was devastated, and the Pouloses wanted to help.

“We feel blessed to have three happy, healthy children,” Shelli says. “Working with SARRC is one way we can help support our friends and all the other children and families affected by autism.”

A Phoenix native, Alex is a shareholder in the law firm of Tiffany & Bosco, P.A. He serves on the firm’s management and finance committee and is chair of its marketing committee. Shelli is a judge pro tem in Maricopa County, a legal adviser to Next Turn Productions in Scottsdale, and the executive director and corporate counsel for the Riva Yares Foundation. Shelli also serves on SARRC’s Development Committee.

“We are emotionally connected to the breakfast and to SARRC,” Shelli says. “By helping to make this event a success, we believe we can make a real difference for SARRC and all the families this wonderful organization serves.”

Reina attended his first breakfast six years ago. “I attend a lot of charitable fundraisers,” he says. “The SARRC Community Breakfast continues to be the most impactful charitable event I attend throughout the year.”

Get Involved!
To attend the breakfast or serve as a sponsor, contact SARRC at (602) 340-8717 or autismcenter.org.
More than 10,000 people came together in November for Arizona Walk Now for Autism, the state’s largest autism awareness- and fund-raising event. Last year’s turnout also included more Spanish-speaking walkers than any walk for any health-related cause in Arizona — an impressive 1,500 individuals joined the Univision Radio and Television team to show their support.

Benefiting Autism Speaks and the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC), the walk raised more than $560,000 in funds for vital research, education and habilitation programs. Under the leadership of co-chairs Mark Masters and Evan Danziger, the committee recruited hundreds of teams and more than 500 volunteers, and raised $85,000 in sponsorship dollars.

Leading the way for the third consecutive year in a row, Walk committee members Neil and Lynn Balter and their family and friends raised more than $72,000, followed by David’s Dream Team, led by first-time captains Phil and Patty Dion, which raised $58,000.

Returning honorary chair and Major League infielder Orlando Hudson and friends kicked off the start of the 5K, while returning emcee and voice of the Arizona Diamondbacks, Daron Sutton, was joined by Univision Radio DJ Claudia Saucedo on the main stage. Dancers, singers, musicians and entertainers of all ages wowed the crowd while Baxter the Bobcat, the Diamondbacks’ mascot, helped engage children and adults alike in the festivities.

This year’s walk is slated for Nov. 1.

Walk On
Más de 10,000 personas se congregaron en noviembre para participar en Arizona Walk Now for Autism, el evento de concienciación del autismo más grande del estado — y de recaudación de fondos. La concurrencia del año pasado también incluyó más participantes de habla Hispana que cualquier otra caminata en Arizona dedicada a otras causas relacionadas con la salud — un número impresionante de 1,500 individuos se unieron al equipo de radio y televisión de Univisión para mostrar su apoyo.

La caminata a beneficio de Autisms Speaks y del Centro de Investigaciones y Recursos del Autismo del Suroeste (SARRC, por sus siglas en inglés), recaudó más de $560,000 dólares en fondos para investigación fundamental, educación y programas de habilitación. Bajo liderazgo de los co-presidentes Mark Masters y Evan Danziger, el comité reclutó cientos de equipos y más de 500 voluntarios, y recaudó $85,000 dólares en patrocinios.

Llevando el liderazgo por tercer año consecutivo, los miembros del comité de Caminata Neil y Lynn Balter y sus familias y amistades recaudaron más de $72,000 dólares, seguido por el equipo David’s Dream Team, dirigido por los capitanes principiantes Phil y Patty Dion, que recaudó $38,000 dólares.

Una vez más el honorario presidente y jugador de cuadro de las Grandes Ligas, Orlando Hudson y amigos iniciaron la caminata de 5 kilómetros, mientras que Claudia Saucedo, DJ de la Radio de Univisión se unió en el escenario principal con el maestro de ceremonias y voz del equipo de béisbol Arizona Diamondbacks, Daron Sutton. Bailarines, cantantes, músicos y animadores de todas las edades enloquecieron a la multitud mientras Baxter el Lince, mascota de los Diamondbacks, ayudó a entretenerte a niños y adultos en la celebración.

La caminata de este año está programada para el 1° de noviembre.
For more information about Cox services visit: cox.com/arizona

At Cox Communications Arizona we are committed to being the most trusted provider of communication services. We strive to honor this by constantly building, strengthening and investing in our network, business operations and our employees and the communities we serve.

There are many ways we are realizing our trusted provider goal in Arizona – from Cox Charities and our employees’ support of non-profits in the community to an increased focus on diversity with the launch of Su Vida, a program on Cox7-AZ highlighting Hispanic culture, to our own employees banding together to create Project TWIG, a recycling program focused on turning local waste into growth.

Since Cox Charities’ inception in 1996, more than $2 million in grants have been awarded to non-profit organizations that impact our community primarily through youth education programs.
November 5, 1983, my brother Louis was born with autism. I was only 17 months older than him, yet my role as “protector” was defined by the time I was 4. Growing up with a brother with autism was always different. Kids were inquisitive; some accepted him, others did not.

I never blamed my brother for his passivity and dependence. I never saw Louis for what he couldn’t do; rather, I always tried to show others what he was capable of achieving. His disability was a family affair. We were “The Hocks,” and we all had our own roles to play.

Growing up, a sense of fear always lingered inside of me. Louis’s life was precariously perched on my parents’ shoulders, and I always felt that some day their strength would fail them. But it hasn’t, rather the fear forced my parents to take the necessary precautions to protect him.

My brother has helped me recognize the instability and fragility of life. His autism held us together as a family; it taught me responsibility and it crystallized the appreciation I now have for mental health.

As I reflect on my past, I cannot separate the caretaker I was at 4, 8 or 15; my time spent with Louis has shaped who I am today. I hold these tender threads of my history and weave a pattern that incorporates my past, present and future. I’ve spread this quilt in front of me, and the pattern I see is repeated many times. My desire to be in special education, more specifically teaching those with autism, is a bright ribbon of fabric in my life’s quilt.

As I continue to weave my quilt, my career at SARRC is the latest addition. As the SARRC Autism CommunityWorksSM coordinator, I work with teens with autism spectrum disorders and help them develop job and life skills that will serve them well as they make the transition into adulthood. I approach each teen as I would want someone to approach my brother — with care, compassion and the utmost respect. I see each of them for who they are and for the individual talents they bring to this world. If I have made an impact on them that is just a fraction of the impact they have made on me, I will consider myself successful.

Autism is something I passionately explore and pursue. On my journey, I will continue to gain the knowledge and education that will enable me to maintain an independent and strong sense of self. My brother will never have this opportunity for exploration. But he gave me the will, the desire and justification.

Stephanie Hock is an Autism CommunityWorksSM coordinator at SARRC’s new Opus West Vocational & Life Skills Academy and is the sister of an adult with autism.
SARRC Happenings
April - September 2009

11th Annual Community Breakfast

Join SARRC and friends at the 11th Annual Community Breakfast and Make Your IMprint on Autism™. The morning promises to be inspiring as you take a journey into the world of autism and learn more about SARRC, its donors and children and adults living with autism.

SARRC extends its gratitude to Alex and Shelli Poulos for co-chairing this year’s event along with returning co-chairs Mike and Susan Reina. For more information contact SARRC at breakfast@autismcenter.org or (480) 603-3280.

Date: Thu., April 23
Time: Registration at 6:30 a.m., program 7:30 - 9:00 a.m.
Place: Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa, 2400 E. Missouri Ave., Phoenix
Cost: Free; donations encouraged

Grandparents Group

The Grandparents Group focuses on educating and supporting grandparents of children with autism and presents the latest news and research in the field. New grandparents are welcome to come at 9 a.m. for a meet-and-greet and tour of SARRC.

Dates: April 24, May 15
Time: 10 to 11:30 a.m.
Place: SARRC, 300 N. 18th St., Phoenix
RSVP: (602) 218-8203

Support Group for Parents of Teens & Young Adults With HFA or Asperger's

Get together with other parents who are in the process of navigating their children’s transition from high school to “adult life.” This is an informal group of parents who, through experience, have gained a wealth of information and are eager to share with and support one another. Discussions about services available include vocational rehabilitation, Social Security, Magellan Behavioral Health, SARRC and high school transition planning in an IEP. Contact Debbie for additional information at azparentsupport@cox.net.

Dates: Second Monday of every month
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Place: Vocational & Life Skills Academy, 2225 N. 16th St., Phoenix
RSVP: azparentsupport@cox.net

East Valley Autism Parents Support Group
(Mum’s Night Out)

Join mothers of children with autism for a night out. Share your experiences, make new friends and learn something new. Rotating restaurant locations at Stapley Road and U.S. 60 in Mesa. Call Janet Kirwan of SARRC at (602) 218-8212 for more information.

Dates: First Tuesday of every month
Time: 7 p.m.
Place: Chili’s, Souper Salad or On the Border (Rotating restaurant locations at Stapley Road and U.S. 60 Mesa)
Cost: Free

4th Annual Sutton's Strokes for Little Folks Golf Tournament

Arizona’s “Voice of the Diamondbacks” Daron Sutton, and his wife, Kristin, will host the 4th Annual Sutton’s Strokes for Little Folks golf tournament benefiting SARRC on Thu., April 23. SARRC thanks the Suttons and tournament founders, Rob and Kym Feidler, for their continuing support and dedication to SARRC’s programs and families. Last year, the tournament raised more than $20,000 in support of local research, education and programs. For more information, visit autismcenter.org.

Date: Thu., April 23
Time: 10:30-11:30 a.m. check-in; shotgun start at noon
Place: Whirlwind Golf Club at Wild Horse Pass, 5692 W. North Loop Road, Chandler
Cost: $150 per player
Workshops

Understanding and Supporting Young Children with ASDs in the School Setting
This training is recommended for teachers, parents, professionals, habilitators, case workers and others working with children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) in preschool or toddler programs. The workshop will include an overview of characteristics of ASDs, motivational strategies to support appropriate behavior and a framework for incorporating instructional strategies into the classroom setting. To register, please contact SARRC’s intake coordinator at (480) 603-3283. Select one date only.

Dates: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fri., April 17 or 9 a.m. to noon Mon., Sept. 14
Place: SARRC, 300 N. 18th Street, Phoenix
Cost: Free

Teaching Through Music
Through fun and engaging activities, learn and experience easy-to-implement strategies and activities focusing on how music can be incorporated within any program in the home, school or community setting. Using applied behavior analysis (ABA) as a framework, participants will also learn how music can be a functional and motivating intervention to teach social, interpersonal, academic and language/communication skills, as well as improve attention and participation. Select one of the dates below.

Dates: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sat., April 25
9 a.m. to noon Fri., July 17
Place: SARRC, 300 N. 18th Street, Phoenix
Cost: $30

Pivotal Response Treatment for Supporting Young Children with ASDs in Home, School and Community Settings
SARRC Vice President/Clinical Services Director Daniel Openden, Ph.D., BCBA, SARRC’s, will describe the development and implementation of Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT), an evidence-based intervention for teaching children with autism. PRT is a family-centered approach that may be implemented throughout the day and across natural environments such as in the home, at school or in the community. Dr. Openden will discuss procedures for improving the pivotal response of motivation to produce generalized improvements in language and social skills and reductions in disruptive behaviors. Video examples will be used to illustrate how professionals can implement the procedures throughout the day and across settings. Participants will receive a certificate of attendance for professional development.

Date: Mon., April 27
Time: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Place: SARRC, 300 N. 18th Street, Phoenix
Cost: Free

Graphic Arts Class with Lisa MacCollum
Autism Artisans is a series of art workshops that exposes emerging and established artists with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) ages 13 and older to a variety of art mediums. In this session, graphic artist Lisa MacCollum will teach graphic art essentials to individuals with little or no experience. Using Adobe InDesign, participants will combine text and graphics to create visual communications, such as post cards, logos and signs.

Dates: Sat., April 25 or Sat., May 9
Time: 1-4 p.m.
Place: University of Advancing Technology, 2625 W. Baseline Road, Tempe
Cost: $20 per class

Dr. Joanne Gerenser: Promoting Speech and Language in Children with Autism
This conference will provide a model for integrating research in the areas of psycholinguistic development, early social development and lexical development within behavioral programming for children with autism. Research in the development of joint attention will be reviewed with implications for the deficits present in children with autism. Strategies to promote joint attention behaviors will be provided. This course is offered for a total of 0.6 ASHA continuing education units (Intermediate level, Professional area). ASHA CE Provider approval does not imply endorsement of course content, specific products or clinical procedures.

Date: Thu., May 21
Time: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Place: SARRC, 300 N. 18th Street, Phoenix
Cost: $65

To register for SARRC’s workshops and trainings, call (480) 603-3283 or email training@autismcenter.org.
**Get Connected**

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<th>Intervention</th>
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<td><strong>JumpStart®</strong></td>
<td>JumpStart® teaches parents about the characteristics of ASDs and covers a variety of important topics, including improving social communication, reducing problem behaviors, addressing concerns surrounding sleep and feeding, accessing state services and much more. JumpStart uses ABA-based interventions, including Pivotal Response Treatment and Discrete Trial Teaching. This five-week series is open to parents and children up to age 6, and includes discussion groups and hands-on training led by SARRC’s team of specialists.</td>
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<td><strong>SARRC Community School</strong></td>
<td>The SARRC Community School toddler and preschool classrooms include children at risk or diagnosed with autism along with typically developing children in a naturalistic classroom environment. The school promotes language and social development while providing positive supports to minimize behaviors that interfere with learning. Diagnosed children receive additional 1:1 interventions throughout the day that focus on the development of cognitive, motor, self-help, communication and social-emotional skills. Structured activities are available to all the children throughout the day and are specifically designed to foster engagement and social interaction. All-day care is available for typically developing children.</td>
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<td><strong>PARENT Program</strong></td>
<td>The PARENT (Parenting Autism with Research and Evidence-based Naturalistic Teaching) Program, which takes place in both Phoenix and Tucson, provides parents and caregivers a basic understanding of how their children communicate and how to facilitate language development. Parents leave the program with strategies for increasing and improving their child’s communication and social interaction while decreasing disruptive and/or self-stimulatory behaviors. Phoenix sessions are led by a clinical interventionist, and Tucson sessions are directed by a speech-language pathologist.</td>
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<td><strong>Specialized Habilitation Services</strong></td>
<td>SARRC now offers Specialized Habilitation to complement the habilitation services available through other agencies. Specialized Habilitation is an enrichment of services in addition to traditional habilitation, which means that these services may be available on top of habilitation hours available from other agencies. Specialized Habilitation is funded by the State of Arizona through Habilitation Masters (Hab M) and Habilitation Bachelors (Hab B). To qualify for Hab M or Hab B, children must be authorized for treatment prior to age 3. Families of children who do not qualify for state-funded Specialized Habilitation may receive these services through an affordable private-payment option based on availability.</td>
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<td><strong>Music Therapy</strong></td>
<td>SARRC’s board-certified music therapist provides weekly individual, multi-sensory music therapy sessions and collaborates with parents and school professionals to determine desired outcomes. Therapy sessions focus on developing motor and communication skills and self-expression, and can complement other therapies being received by the child.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Speech Therapy</strong></td>
<td>SARRC’s speech-language pathologist works with parents to formulate goals and tailor individual speech therapy sessions based on each child’s needs. Ongoing sessions focus on expressive and receptive language skills and work to enhance the child’s social communication. Speech therapy is offered only in Tucson.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family Camp</strong></td>
<td>SARRC hosts recreational family camps at Whispering Hope Ranch in Payson. The camp experience includes interaction with animals and other unique activities for individuals with autism, siblings and parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summer Camp for Kids</strong></td>
<td>The summer camp program is designed to help children with autism learn to build social skills through a variety of group activities held within existing community programs. Children are grouped by age with their peers for themed activity days, including gymnastics, karate, pottery-making and more.</td>
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### Arts & Culture
The Kemper & Ethel Marley Arts & Culture program blends artistic experiences with therapeutic autism intervention techniques. The program utilizes art to promote autism awareness, therapeutic intervention and opportunities for the talents and contributions of individuals with ASDs to be appreciated.

### Autism CommunityWorks℠
This is a community-based job training program for adolescents ages 13 to 18. Participants with ASDs and typical peer mentors receive job training, coaching, support and oversight from SARRC staff. Recreational activities are built into the program, providing participants with ASDs an opportunity to develop their social skills and the peer mentors the opportunity to develop a better understanding of their peers with disabilities. Autism CommunityWorks℠ sites include LibraryWorks℠ at the Burton Barr Library, ScienceWorks℠ at the Arizona Science Center, GardenWorks℠ at the Desert Botanical Garden, TheatreWorks℠ at the Phoenix Theatre and GoodDeedWorks℠ at other nonprofit organizations.

### Parent Orientation
In parent orientation classes, SARRC provides information and guidance to parents of newly diagnosed children. SARRC’s family services director also offers ongoing support to parents as they explore therapeutic and education options, and as they learn to deal with their child’s intervention.

### Training Services
SARRC offers public and private schools a selection of training topics tailored to school-specific needs and interests. Trainings and workshops can accommodate both small and large groups. The training model promotes the use of best practices in creating comprehensive individualized programs based on the challenges and abilities of each student. Training topics address the identification and implementation of strategies and techniques used to support students with autism across all skill levels, educational settings and activities.

### Consultation Support
School-based consultation is offered to schools and districts to support individuals with ASDs and help them reach their personal potential. School-initiated services include classroom observation, behavior, educational and social-skills assessment and inclusion-based consultation. Consultation services build capacity within schools and districts to independently support the social, academic and behavioral needs of children with autism, including those within inclusive programs. SARRC’s behavioral and educational specialists consult directly with the school and IEP team to identify appropriate supports, assist with program development and other issues for a student and members of the IEP team.

### Education and Training Workshop Series
The Education and Training program offers topic-based workshops and trainings for individuals with ASDs, families, professionals and others living or working with individuals with autism and related disorders. The content for this program addresses practical knowledge and skills for implementation of interventions based on principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA). Additionally, this program furthers the participants’ understanding of ASDs, cutting-edge research and evidence-based treatment approaches. SARRC hosts workshops and trainings led by local and national speakers.

### FRIEND® Program
This social skills program for K-12th grade students provides increased awareness of ASDs among students and school staff, and creates supportive opportunities for students with ASDs to interact appropriately with typical peers. Innovative materials, including the FRIEND® program manual and Wings of EPOH children’s book, DVD and educator activity guide can be used as an inclusive social-skills curriculum to promote awareness of ASDs, social differences and appropriate strategies for facilitating social interactions. The materials provide easy-to-follow instructions for implementation and may be purchased in any number of combinations or individually, depending on the need. For additional support, direct training is also available. This program also includes a playground program, which provides structured activities for all children on the playground and social coaching for students with ASDs to help them participate in play activities with their same-age peers.

### Physician Outreach Program
SARRC’s Autism Spectrum Disorders Screening Kit enables physicians to effectively screen for autism during developmental checkups. The kit includes parent questionnaires, presented in English and Spanish, scoring templates and referral materials to assist with timely referrals and earlier diagnoses. SARRC’s physician outreach efforts also include the Distinguished Lecture Series, where national autism experts present the latest autism information to both physicians and parents.
SARRC in the Community

Total program enrollment for 2008, including children, parents, grandparents, educators, physicians, professionals and paraprofessionals

16,578

Percentage of 2008 enrollment represented by parents

30%

English- and Spanish-speaking children with autism and family members enrolled in JumpStart®, an early-intervention program that teaches parents of newly diagnosed children about autism

382

Number of professionals engaged via SARRC’s Physician Outreach program in 2008

2,621

Number of hours of community service provided through SARRC’s Autism Community WorksSM program

5,000+

Number of education professionals who were provided trainings, workshops or school consultation services in 2008

3,400

Number of adults enrolled in new employment services program

88

“Autism is treatable and Lance is living proof of that. SARRC gave us hope for the future and saved our family.”

– Stacy Goodrich, parent

“SARRC is proud of its 12-year history of serving families affected by autism, physicians and professionals, and we are committed to continually improving and expanding our array of programs and services.”

– Howard Sobelman, SARRC Board Chairman
This year, more children will be diagnosed with autism than AIDS, diabetes and cancer combined.

The Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center provides early intervention services, education and training for families and professionals, vocational and life skills programs, and support across the lifespan for individuals with autism. Every 20 minutes another child is diagnosed with autism. It’s time to get involved.

make your IMprint on autism

autismcenter.org
Reach.
Your goals.
Your potential.
Your community.

We are a proud supporter of SARRC’s efforts through our photography, from the beginning more than 10 years ago.

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