

CHILDREN AT RISK NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Submitted by David H. Allingham

First and foremost I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a very satisfying New Year!

With that said, I'd like to thank everyone for their support this year and I hope that you will continue to find time in your busy lives to provide support for Children at Risk, Ottawa in the up-coming new year.

Your Board has continued to work towards providing a more professional and active role in the day to day affairs of CAR. We hope that this will result in making your volunteering experience more enjoyable. We are also working on improving accountability so that we can better determine what our expenses are so in the future we can better control them. It is my hope that CAR will continue to advance along this path.

We are excited by the relationship that we are forging with Rogers Television and would ask that you support their charitable efforts as CAR and other worthy charities will benefit from it.

Thanks again for your support and try to find some time to take care of yourselves during the up-coming holiday season and throughout the next year.



"ROLLIN' FOR RISK"
Bowl-A-Thon for Autism
Walkley Bowling Lanes
Sunday, January 21, 2007

Pledge Forms available at www.childrenatrisk.ca starting on December 11, 2006. Minimum Pledges of \$100/team for entry. All pledges over \$10 will receive an income tax receipt. More news as this develops....

PROJECT CLEAR SKIES DONATION

Project Clear Skies is an initiative of the Ottawa Airport Authority to support local charities with donations of funds to finance capital purchases. Two years ago, Children at Risk received \$10,000 to upgrade our appliances, furniture, equipment and supplies. Once again, our application for office renovations, new telephones and new TV/VCR/DVD equipment has been approved for the amount of \$4,890. Many, many thanks to Project Clear Skies for recognizing the needs of charities to have equipment and supplies in order to offer programs and services!



JUST ANNOUNCED!

Children at Risk, Ottawa

Recipient Charity

25TH Anniversary Celebration

2007 HOPE Volleyball SummerFest

Saturday, July 14, 2007

We will be required to supply 50 Volunteers for this fabulous event. Join us for the world's largest beach volleyball tournament and concert – registration will begin April 27, 2007! More TBA....



UPDATE ON CHARITY PARTNERSHIP WITH ROGERS TELEVISION

Many of you are aware of the charity partnership that Rogers Television has extended to Children at Risk for a two-year period. It is to support Autism through raising funds, awareness and helping Children at Risk to make connections with other organizations for support!

Rogers is creating a promotional poster and 90 second promotional video for the December 6th Sparkle fundraising event. They will both also be used throughout the next 2 years to promote this partnership.

**2006/2007 CHILDREN AT RISK
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President: David Allingham
 Vice-President: Marlene Steppan
 Secretary: Mary McDonald
 Treasurer: Dean Ryan
 Member at Large: Craig Perkin
 Member at Large: Paul Lacroix
 Member at Large: Andrea Allingham
 Member at Large: Ed Gratton



**ANNUAL AO/CHILDREN AT RISK/
ASPIRATIONS/ASPERGER'S
HOLIDAY PARTY: RSVP**

Sunday December 10th, 2006; 12 - 3 p.m.
 Vanier/Stanley Room, Minto Place Suite Hotel
 433 Laurier Avenue W, Ottawa

There will be fun for all ages at our annual holiday party!
 Please plan to attend, and bring the family. Have fun, renew
 old friendships and make new ones.

Activities include:

- Light lunch and snacks (nut-free and some GFCF free items - all foods will be labelled).
- Games, music and movies.
- Activity centers: card-making, make your own ornament, cookie decorating and more!
- A visit by Santa Claus (12:30 - 1 pm).
- Swimming in the hotel pool (don't forget your suit!).
- Treat bags for the kids/door prizes for the adults.

You can get some of your holiday shopping done and support your favourite organizations! Sorry, ASO chocolates are sold out. CAR will have Entertainment books available for \$35 and Kiwanis fruitcakes for \$13.

There will be a fee of \$10 per family (sliding scale available as needed), payable at the door. So that we may adequately prepare, please R.S.V.P if you plan to attend. Call Shirley Allan at 613-834-4493 (leave message) or email: theallans@sympatico.ca. Please state how many from your family will attend and how many of those are children.

CHARITY COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

Submitted by Brenda Reisch

It is only the beginning of December, but already holiday lights are up, stores are bustling and the children are getting excited! Soon we will ring out 2006 and welcome 2007 with fun and good cheer!! Each year – and for close to 28 years, Children at Risk and its Volunteer Board of Directors tries to make a difference in the lives of our special children and their families. You are the reason why we exist, why we spend our time raising funds to offer programs and awareness to offer an understanding of the challenges our parents, siblings, friends & relatives face – but most of all the challenges faced by a child diagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorders!

2006 has some special memories, closing the year on a high! In August, Rogers Television approached our charity to offer a 2-year charity partnership to raise funds and awareness. On October 5th, Children at Risk hosted our First Annual Open House, with our Group Facilitators and Board Members welcoming families to attend and learn more about us! Our Celebrity-Carved Pumpkin Contest raised record funds and in November we found out that we had been chosen as one of HOPE Volleyball Summerfest 2007 charity recipients!! Numerous other organizations and sponsors have extended support through golf tournaments, raffles, BBQ's and more to help us help families in the Autism community. 2007 promises to be a great year, as Children at Risk will attempt to offer more programs to address the needs in our community.

I want to take this time to sincerely (and from the bottom of my heart) thank all our Volunteers, Sponsors and Supporters who gave of themselves over this past year! All the Best for Safe and Happy Holidays!!



Children at Risk 2006 Report on Services:

Social Skill Therapy (Friendship) Groups
 (Based on sessions of 8-10 weeks, 1 ½ hours/wk)
 Ages 4-6 years 27 children
 Ages 7-9 years 17 children
 Ages 9+ 36 children
 Asperger & PDD Teens (new!)..... 18 children
 (8 week session, 2 hrs/wk)
 TOTAL: 98 children served
 Sibling Support Groups
 (3 sessions, 1 ½-2 hours/wk)
 Ages 5-13 26 children served

**GRAND TOTAL OF NUMBER OF CHILDREN
RECEIVING DIRECT SERVICES FROM CHILDREN AT
RISK:124**

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Submitted by Brenda Reisch
Fundraising Chairperson (613-731-6103)

UPCOMING EVENTS/ACTIVITIES SINCE SEPTEMBER '06

What Happened:

“FALL FOLLIES” GOLF TOURNAMENT

On October 21, Stonebridge Golf & Country Club hosted a “Fall Follies” Golf Tournament to raise funds for Children at Risk! Over 100 golfers braved the early morning snow and cold (including some of our families!) to raise \$3,575!! The funds included a special donation of \$500 from Doug Sipolins of Anadoug Inc. This event was the brainchild of parent and general manager Peter Hale, offering a fun-filled, “themed” event course and a delicious luncheon for all patrons! We extend our heartfelt appreciation for all who participated in this great event!!

11th ANNUAL CELEBRITY-CARVED PUMPKIN CONTEST – OCTOBER 26-28/2006

Starting the second decade of this terrific fundraiser, the Ottawa community rallied to help raise over \$7,500 – almost a 50% increase from 2005!! 99 Local celebrities, politicians, sports figures and media personalities “carved for the cause”. Numerous donations of Prize Packages by the Celebrities, including Ottawa Senators Hockey Tickets and Elton John tickets with the Ottawa Citizen’s Lynn Saxberg’s “Sir Elton” pumpkin. Hats off to our many enthusiastic Volunteers who manned the 4 mall displays, managed by Merle Hagerman, Alison Armstrong, Carol Laity and Andrea Allingham! Many thanks to Merivale Mall, Carlingwood Shopping Centre, Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, Place d’Orleans for hosting our displays - especially to Merivale Mall for hosting our Reception and for supplying our pumpkins!!

Here are our Winners:

ELEVENTH ANNUAL

CELEBRITY-CARVED PUMPKIN CONTEST 2006

Top Lucky Thirteen Celebrities (FINAL after 3rd day)

- The Strandz Hair Design Team – Lincoln Fields
- Lynn Saxberg - The Ottawa Citizen Music
- Dan Seguin - CBC Television Sports
- J. J. Clarke – CTV Television Weather
- Stuntman Stu – CTV Television & Rogers Television
- Wade Redden - The Ottawa Senators Hockey Club
- Bruce Garrioch - The Ottawa Sun Sports
- Lawrence Greenspon - Attorney at Law
- The Ottawa Senators Foundation
- Rick Gibbons – The Ottawa Sun Publisher & CEO
- Codi Jeffreys – Majic 100 FM
- Sandra Blaikie – A-Channel Television News
- Catherine Lathem – CTV Television News

FUNDS RAISED AFTER 3RD DAY FOR CHILDREN AT RISK (Supporting Autistic Children): \$7,523.61

CRA TSD GOLF TOURNAMENT

Headlined by parent Randy Fix the CRA TSD department held a department golf tournament in September and chose Children at Risk as their recipient charity. Many thanks to Randy and all his co-workers for a generous donation of \$2,162.50!!

MACMILLAN’S FROZEN FOODS FALL CAMPAIGN

Another successful MacMillan’s fundraiser earned over \$500. We thank parents like Patricia Flanagan, Janet Kooiman and Susan Holder who gather orders from co-workers, friends and family to help raise funds for Children at Risk! Look for our Spring MacMillan’s Campaign in May, 2007!!

What is On Now/Coming:

2007 ENTERTAINMENT COUPON BOOKS

These fabulous coupon books are still available – only \$35, making a great Christmas gift for those “hard-to-buy-for” people on your list! Books can be picked up at our office (call 741-8255) or at a number of select Quickie Convenience Stores (see www.childrenatrisk.ca for a list of the stores – with brisk sales, call ahead to check on availability!).

OTTAWA 67’S 50/50 TICKET SALES

Once again, the Ottawa 67’s Hockey Club and the Kiwanis Club of Rideau are inviting Children at Risk to raise funds through selling 50/50 tickets! We are booked for the month of March, 2007, with six home games:

- Friday, March 27:30 PM game
- Friday, March 97:30 PM game
- Sunday, March 112 PM game
- Friday, March 16 7:30 PM game
- Saturday, March 172 PM game
- Sunday, March 182 PM game

We will need 8-10 Volunteers per game – Volunteers need to arrive 1 ½ hours before game time, with 3 hours of time required. Students are welcome, but must be at least 16 years of age. Parking and a beverage will be provided for Volunteers. If you can help out, please email carsup@magma.ca or call 741-8255 to book your games!

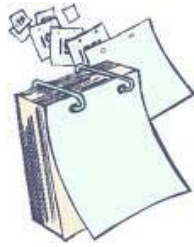
DONOR’S CORNER

- In Memory of Kay Galazka \$30
- IODE Margaret Brand Chapter \$200
- In Memory of Hilda May King \$280
- In Memory of Carol Gardner \$315
- Anadoug Incorporated \$500
- In Memory of Eunice Carruthers \$550
- Kiwanis Club of Kanata \$1,071.07

UPCOMING EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

Mark your calendars

- 6th Annual Rockin' for Risk
50s/60s/70s Fundraising Dance –
Saturday, April 14, 2007
- 12th ANNUAL CHILDREN AT RISK
RAFFLE- May-June/2007
- ANNUAL FAMILY PICNIC – June
2007



EVENT TICKET DONATIONS

Recognizing the importance of outings for our families, Children at Risk regularly requests ticket donations for local entertainment events and sports activities. Since September, our families have enjoyed:

- Ottawa 67's Hockey Games
- The Wiggles Live
- World Famous Lipizzaner Stallions
- Optimist Club "Silhouette of the Season" Musical Variety Concert
- Cirque du Soleil "Delirium"
- NAC Orchestra Performances

With the interest we had in the Delirium tickets, we will be asking for not only family-oriented events, but adult, premier concert ticket donations. Please note that not all promoters donate – but we can certainly ask!!

We will be requesting potential donations for:

- Aladdin Musical
- Ottawa 67's VS St. Mike's Majors (Scotiabank Place)
- Evanescence
- Capital Hoops Basketball Classic
- Dierks Bently & Doc Walker
- The Tragically Hip
- Barenaked Ladies
- Rod Stewart
- Josh Groban
- Christina Aguilera
- Nelly Furtado



Here are some emails we received from grateful families:



From Diana & Michael Gibbons ... *Thank you very much for the Lipizzaner Stallions tickets. We enjoyed the show very much. Chris stayed for the whole performance ... which is a rarity!!*



From Andrew Kavchak ... *I just wanted to thank you for the two tickets to the Friday 67s game. I went with my older son Michael and after the first period we moved to some seats that we closer to the ice. The evening was wonderful (even though Ottawa lost!). As a result of the first time that I took Michael to a game last February he developed and interest in hockey and started to play minor hockey last month. So far he loves it. I really appreciate the free tickets....it certainly motivated Michael! Thank you!*

From Brenda MacMillan ... *Just wanted to thank you for the 67's tickets for last Friday, the 4 of us had a nice night out. Bonus - Adam was picked as one of 8 kids to go to centre ice in the 2nd intermission to put a large puzzle together. He thought that was really "cool". Thanks again!*



From Jessie ... *A BIG THANK YOU for the tickets to The Wiggles. Laura had a beaming smile from ear to ear as she did all the dance motions and sang along with her all time favourite group. Little brother Adam, mum and dad also enjoyed the performance.*

From Al Roberts ... *I took Dillon to see the Wiggles yesterday. He still watches and listens to far to much Barney and Marie Soleil but we have been moving him to new artists such as Raft, Fred Penner and the Wiggles. I think it must have been the most fun he's had a one of these events. He loved the music and was smiling and clapping. We got moved to the second bowl but went to an area that was pretty empty so that he could stand up etc. Thanks so much for coordinating getting these tickets. We really enjoyed ourselves.*

MORE EVENT TICKET THANK YOU'S



From Chris King ... *Thank you very much for the Delirium Tickets last Saturday. It's rare that Larry and I get to go to an event of this sort and unaccompanied by children!!! So it was a great treat... The seats were fabulous! The show was fantastic! We even bought a CD of the music following the show. Thanks.*

From Hazel ... *Just wanted to send you a quick note to say thank you to Children At Risk and for you to pass on my gratitude to the organization that donated the tickets to Cirque du Soleil Delirium. Brian flew to the UK Saturday evening so was too busy to come with me so I took my friend Shelly instead. ... Shelly and I both agreed it was one of the best shows we have ever been to. Everything from the music, singers, performers and set was so spectacular*

From Diana Gibbons ... *Our family has had a tremendously difficult year ... Raising a son with Autism is a privilege, but also sometimes a daunting task. It is rare my 19 year old daughter Sarah and I have any time to enjoy each others' company. What a tremendous delight it was for us to receive 2 tickets to Cirque de Soleil's Delerium. We are overwhelmed by the magnificance of this performance. The choreographers and creators are no doubt geniuses. The acrobats, musicians, and dancers have their timing down to the microsecond. It was the absolute best time that either of us have ever enjoyed at a theatrical/musical performance. We thank Cirque de Soleil for their generosity and kindness... for 2-1/2 solid hours ... there was my daughter, myself and a dreamworld ... what more can one ask for than to get away and live a dream without a care in the world, for just a couple of hours. Thank you so much and Happy Holidays to you.*

From Sandy Wynne and Paul Behncke ... *It was an awesome show...a feast for the senses! We appreciate the opportunity to be in attendance. The Cirque's generous donation of tickets allowed us a real escape from the real world by transporting us somewhere else entirely.*

From Angela Racanelli ... *Thank you very much for the tickets. The show was excellent. ... Great show.*

From Mary-Anne ... *We had a wonderful time and the show was really great, thanks so much again.*

From Leslie Cardarelli ... *Hi there. The show was simply amazing!!!!!! Thanks so much, it was awesome!*

From Diep Jackson...*We had great seats and are very grateful for the donation. The talents, dance, the band, special effects, the strength of the gymnasts were incredible. Now I understand what they mean by a - multifaceted - venue. Delirium is certainly not a traditional circus! Thank you very much again.*

From Sharon McLetchie ... *Thank You so much! The show was amazing! I had a great time.*

From Diane Theron ... *Just a quick email to say thank you so much for the evening at the NAC., what an absolute treat!!!! I had something on my mind and honestly, it was the first few hours of absolute respite that I had! When I was a child, we spent a lot of time at the theater, and this brought back fond memories. Thanks for the opportunity!*

FEEDBACK FROM CAR OPEN HOUSE

From Lynnea Westlind ... *I am the 3rd year Bachelor of Social Work student who attended your open house last week to see if I could rally enough information for a proposal for a research paper. I just wanted to say thanks to everyone that I talked to. Everyone was so friendly and helpful in trying to tell me as much as possible about Children at Risk and the programs they run. My proposal is done, and hopefully my subject will approved for a paper and so I hope to see you all again soon.*



SIBLING & LIFESKILLS GROUPS UPDATE

Attached you will find information on the Winter 2007 Social Skill and Sibling Support Groups. If your child is already registered with Children at Risk, please email or mail your selections. If you are new to the charity, we will need to conduct a (free) intake meeting with your child prior to group assignment (Siblings are not required to have intake meetings). We try, as much as possible, to accommodate all requests but limitations can occur with budgetary restraints.

Please feel free to call or email our office (741-8255 or carsup@magma.ca) if you have any questions or require additional information. We welcome feedback and look forward to hearing from you!

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE DSW STUDENT PLACEMENTS

The Fall session of the Developmental Services Worker Program (2nd year students) once again joined with Children at Risk for Program Placements of 22 students for 10 weeks/2hrs a week with families (35 families applied). With the Winter session to start in January, our families will once again be offered this partnership. If you applied in August, your application will be carried forward. If you want to apply, please go to our website at www.childrenatrisk.ca to find an information letter and application forms. Submit these to Children at Risk before December 31, 2006. Please note that not all requests will receive a Student Placement – placements are subject to the choice of the students and often location is a factor.

SPECTRUM INTERVENTION GROUP FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT AND SATURDAY MORNING PROGRAM

Spectrum is happy to announce that as a result of a grant from Unity for Autism www.unityforautism.ca, starting in January, we will once again be offering our Saturday morning Social and Recreational program for 7-15 year olds but at a much reduced fee.

Details are as follows;

- Starting Jan. 6, 2007 to Mar.10, 2007, program times 9:30am to 12 noon.
- Ratios will be 1 of our qualified/trained staff to 2 children.
- Thanks to this grant, we can offer the program at a much reduced rate of \$150 for 10 weeks.
- At our location in the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, 2825 Dumaaurier Avenue (just off the Queensway at Pinecrest).
- Depending on the interests of the participants, some special theme days are planned, similar to the "Mad Science" special guest we had in the last session.
- Making good use of the Club's facilities at our disposal, children will be grouped according to their interests /skill sets and will participate in many fun structured activities, with some emphasis on learning/playing various sports.
- Our staff have many years combined experience working with children with ASD (in one to one ABA therapy and social programs) and parents will be consulted in order to develop some individualized social, language and communication goals for each child.

Please see www.spectrumig.com for more details on programs and go to "Programs currently being offered" and scroll down Social programs to download a "social registration form".

ASO NEWS

NEW SOCIAL & LIFE SKILLS FOR ADULTS & OLDER TEENS WITH ASPERGER SYNDROME: REGISTRATION DEADLINE DEC 14

Y's Owl Maclure Co-Operative Centre will be offering social & life skills for adults and older teens (16 years old and up) with Asperger Syndrome. Group participants will meet for 2 hour sessions, once a week on Tuesday evenings (6-8pm), for 8 weeks, starting January 23, 2007. The meetings will take place at 1140 Morrison Dr. (Near Lee Valley). Registration deadline will be Thursday Dec. 14, 2006. There are two ways to register:

- Call Service Coordination at 613-748-1788 (intake department) for all individuals diagnosed with a developmental disability.
- Or call Y's Owl Maclure at 613-721-1500.

For further information contact Sheri Sullivan, Heather Ungar or Suzanne Ford at Y's Owl Maclure Co-op Centre at 613-721-1500.

CHEO INFO SESSION

AT AUTISM ONTARIO-OTTAWA: Jan 16

The Autism Ontario-Ottawa Chapter is pleased to invite CHEO representatives to meet our members at our January meeting. All welcomed!!! An opportunity will also be given to participants to share ideas and communicate their needs to the Autism Ontario-Ottawa Chapter council members.

Guest speakers: Therese Labonte, Manager of the ASD School Program and Kerri-Lynn Herbert, Manager of the Autism Intervention Program (previously called Preschool autism program) will be talking about their services.

When: Tuesday January 16, 2007 at 7:30pm

Location: Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Ave (just North of Somerset). Message board to the left of the main door will indicate which room will be used for the session.

Parking: Free parking located on street and behind the building.

WORKSHOPS IN OTTAWA: Hosted by Autism Awareness Centre Inc. in March 2007

March 29: Carol Kranowitz (author of "The Out-of-Sync Child): Functional Fun for the Out-of-Sync Child; morning session will cover the basics of sensory processing disorder; afternoon session will cover functional and fun activities.

March 30: Kari Dunn Buron (author of "The Incredible 5 Point Scale" and "When My Worries Get Too Big"): Understanding Social Cognition and Its Impact On Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Please visit www.autismawarenesscentre.com for more info.

Children at Risk Ottawa, Administrative Support/Reception, Part-Time Position

Children at Risk, Ottawa is a charitable organization that provides services to families with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders, to develop their social and life skills. The Administrative Support/Receptionist is the first point of contact for parents and professionals to the organization, therefore public relations and customer service is an essential part of this position.

The ideal candidate should possess the following skills and education:

- Must possess excellent oral and written communication skills in English and functional in French
- Post Secondary education or equivalent, with experience in office administration
- Excellent customer service skills
- Ability to track and compile information
- Excellent prioritizing and organizational skills
- Experience in using MS Word, Access, Excel, and Outlook
- Have a good understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Ability to work independently or as part of a team in a sensitive environment

Hand deliver, fax, or email job applications no later than 4pm, Friday, December 22, 2006 to:

Human Resources Committee,

Children at Risk Ottawa,

235 Donald Street, Suite 212,

Ottawa, ON, K1N 1N1

Tel: 613-741-8255,

Fax: 613-741-5530,

Email: carsup@magma.ca,

Website: www.childrenatrisk.ca

Only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

An Autism Fairytale**by Hazel Smith**

Once upon a time Cynthia Howroyd, a New Brunswick speech pathologist was busy traveling around visiting her clients with Autism. One day she had an unfortunate car accident and was immobilized for a period of time. She was concerned about her clients who relied on her and thought that with today's technology there had to be a way of keeping in touch through web based, interactive sessions. Over time this dream transpired into something bigger. Why offer this just for her clients when there were so many parents of newly diagnosed kids on the Autism Spectrum that were crying out for services only to ride on the carousel of waiting lists?

After 4 years of development and a ton of cash, this fairytale became a reality. On October 26th of this year, AutismPro was launched at the Geneva Centre Symposium in Toronto.

What exactly is AutismPro you ask? AutismPro is a web-based tool that even the technologically challenged can navigate to design an individualized educational intervention plan for their child. Nothing is ever forced on you - you choose the teaching method that suits your goals and style, and you design a course of action based on recommendations generated by the system, which you can even argue with to get a better suggestion. Basically some really clever techies have tapped into the brainpower of a world-class board of Autism experts. Their combined knowledge and expertise is accessible right from your computer to help you make expert decisions on how to successfully undertake an early intervention plan truly tailored for your child. The tool's innovative technology provides training and precise treatment recommendations from the broad range of salient therapies and teaching methods available in autism today. It categorizes them into three easy to understand methodologies - developmental, behavioural and social. You aren't restricted to one treatment approach but instead have the flexibility to combine best practices which results in a plan that suits your child. If you don't know about a particular approach, the system will educate you on the most well researched methods out there. This can save hours of trawling through websites and links; it's like having an autism library at your finger tips.

An Autism Fairytale (cont'd)

How can it do this and still be simple to use? - Every phase of the program is delivered with lesson plans, activities and strategies and draws from an extensive library of video demonstrations (real therapists implementing the suggested activity) , case illustrations, sample graphics and other multimedia resources to guide and educate the user. The more you interact with the program, the more tailored your plan becomes. You can even log and track your child's progress through the plan and view bar charts which help show where you may need to make adjustments.

This first release concentrates on early intervention for children from birth to 7 years of age who are moderate to severe. The focus of the second release in April 2007 will include activity plans for high functioning and Asperger's children. With continued adoption, this web-based application will advance to assist families with the struggles of autism throughout the life span.

There is so much more I would like to tell you but instead I recommend that you take a few minutes to check out the website www.autismpro.com If you want to experience the full bells and whistles of AutismPro from an expert, sign up for a web seminar. http://www.autismpro.com/web_seminar_schedule.html. It maybe the best 45 minutes you'll spend being educated on what technology can provide for you in the field of autism. It certainly has made a difference in my life. As a parent I can be empowered on my own terms and on my own schedule to assist my son in every aspect of his life with autism during family time and with his therapists.

Faces of Teenage Depression**by David J. Baxter**

During the adolescent years, teenagers experience a series of massive hormonal changes, brain growth, personality growth, socialization influences, and changes in body image and self-perceptions. In addition, they are trying to cope with all of this in an increasingly stressful and challenging world. One which, in many significant ways, is much more troubling than the world in which most of their parents grew up.

Their world may include

- Parental separation and divorce;
- Peer pressure to experiment with sometimes dangerous drugs or activities;
- The threat of gang violence and swarming, racism and bigotry;
- Worries about serious incurable diseases like AIDS and SARS;
- Fears about terrorism; and
- Dire predictions about a limited economic and career future.

Teens often try to cope with what they are feeling by withdrawing and hiding in their rooms away from their parents. In turn, many parents, either because they don't know how to respond to their teen or because they believe that they are part of the reason the teen is acting this way, withdraw themselves to avoid conflict or react angrily to the irritability or anger they see being directed at them.

Most teenagers and parents find a way to navigate successfully through this troubling time and in a few years things seem to return to "normal". So as a parent, how do you distinguish "normal moodiness" or "teenage angst" from something more serious?

How common is teenage depression?

Typical estimates are that about four to 12% of teens suffer depression sufficiently severe to meet the criteria for a diagnosis of Major Depression. Many more probably meet the criteria for Adjustment Reaction with Depressed Mood (a less severe reaction to a specific event or events in the teen's life) or Dysthymic Disorder (basically a form of chronic mild depression). The National Institute of Mental Health also reports that teenage girls are more likely to develop depression than teenage boys (NIMH, 2000). However, this may indicate only that teenage boys are more likely to hide their symptoms behind surliness or anger.

What is even more worrisome is that there are repeated suggestions that many cases, perhaps as high as 60 to 80%, go undiagnosed and therefore untreated. And untreated teenage depression does not just "go away". Recent research studies indicate that about two-thirds of teenagers who suffer depression experience another major depressive episode in their early adult years. Untreated teenage depression is also associated with increased risk for problems such as illness, interpersonal and social difficulties, and an increased risk for substance abuse and suicidal thinking.

Faces of Teenage Depression (cont't)**Looking for signs that may be associated with teenage depression**

Bear in mind that it is not uncommon for any teen to exhibit some of these signs from time to time. And, a teen who exhibits only one or two of these symptoms for a short period of time is not necessarily suffering from depression. However, if you see several of the symptoms below and they continue for more than four or five weeks, it may be wise to seek a professional opinion:

- Frequent physical complaints such as headaches, stomach aches or tiredness
- Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school
- Sadness and hopelessness
- Lack of enthusiasm, energy or motivation
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Increased indecision, poor concentration, forgetfulness
- Outbursts of anger, shouting, complaining, unexplained irritability, or crying
- Hypersensitivity to criticism or perceived rejection or failure
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Social isolation, poor communication
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Poor self-esteem or guilt
- Problems with authority
- Suicidal thoughts or actions

Risk factors for depression

In childhood, boys and girls appear to be at equal risk for depressive disorders. During adolescence it is generally believed that girls are twice as likely as boys to develop depression. This may be misleading, however, as girls are more likely to exhibit symptoms such as sadness and crying and to express their unhappiness directly while boys are more likely to suffer alone and/or express their distress in the form of anger or aggression.

Specific risk factors for both boys and girls

- Family or personal stress.
- Family history of depression, anxiety disorders, or obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- Loss of a parent or loved one or a romantic relationship.
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or learning disabilities.
- Chronic illness, such as diabetes, asthma, Crohn's disease, etc.
- Abuse, neglect, or perceived rejection by one or more family members.
- Other traumatic events, including natural disasters.

What to do if you think your teen is depressed

Remind yourself that anger or irritability is often the first sign in a teenager that something is wrong, so it is important to "look behind the anger" instead of reacting to it. Even if it turns out that your teen is just angry, reacting to anger with anger only escalates the problem. And if the underlying problem is depression, your being angry is like punishing your child for feeling depressed.

The most frustrating part of dealing with a depressed teen is that he or she often resists talking about it and may well reject your attempts at obtaining professional help. If so, it can be helpful to talk to your family doctor or a qualified counselor yourself. You can obtain information about ways to live with and cope with a loved one who is suffering from depression, and receive advice on ways to encourage your teen to talk to a professional. The first step may be to arrange an appointment with your family doctor under the guise of an "annual checkup". It may be easier for your teen to accept help for a "physical" problem than a psychological one. Also, your family doctor should be able to distinguish between "normal teenage angst" and depression and can recommend a counselor for you or your teen.

The most important support you can provide is to find ways to remind your teen that you are always eager to provide whatever help your teen is willing to accept. Make sure your teen understands that you are not trying to intrude and that you accept a person's need for privacy. The knowledge that he or she is not entirely alone is extremely important and means much more than you may think at the time.