



NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2008

Issue #45

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Charitable Registration #
10691/3775/RR/0001

Our Mission Statement

To provide services and programs to families of children diagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorders to develop their child's behavioural, communication, and social skills, and to advocate for their ongoing needs.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Rollin' for Risk Bowl-A-Thon
January 18, 2009

8th Annual "Rockin' for Risk" 50s/60s/70s dance
March 28, 2009



Children at Risk Annual Raffle
May/June 2009

Autism Community Annual Family Picnic - **June 14, 2009**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



With Christmas and a New Year fast approaching, it is once again time to reflect and give thanks for all of the great things we have in life. Because people have fought and died for our rights, we live in a free and relatively safe country with many opportunities that some throughout the world could never imagine. As in most of life's arenas there are those who step forward, take charge and made a difference.

Children At Risk had a good 2008 with many services provided to families raising a child diagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorders. In 2009, once again we will face new challenges as we would like to provide even more services to our community. More services means more costs. Fundraising is our main source of revenue. Be someone who steps forward and makes a difference.

I hope 2009 brings you, your family and your friends all the peace, joy and happiness that we all deserve.

Paul Lacroix, President, Board of Directors

Autism Community Holiday Party



Where: Dovercourt Community Centre
When: Sunday, Dec. 21, 2008 - 12 to 4 pm.
Activities: Will have 3-4 therapists on site with activities, and swimming for one hour.
Cost: Free to Autism Ontario and Children at Risk members (otherwise \$5 per person up to a maximum of \$15 per family with kids under 10 free).

There will be food and refreshments provided, 1/3 of menu is GF/CF, and the other 2/3's is regular food.
RSVP Shannon Salisbury (ottawa@autismontario.com)

2008/2009 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President.....	Paul Lacroix
Treasurer	Lesia Gilbert
Secretary	Amanda Telford
Director	Hazel Smith
Director	Robert Jaffray
Director	Andrea Mailhot
Director	Diane Theron
Director	Mark Lalonde
Director	Stephanie Casagrande

CHILDREN AT RISK 2008 REPORT ON SERVICES

Social Skill Therapy (Friendship) Groups

(Based on sessions of 8-10 weeks, 1 ½ hours/wk)

Ages 4-6 years	22 children
Ages 7-9 years	18 children
Ages 9-11 years	8 children
Ages 11-14 years	21 children
Cooking Club Teens	14 children
Asperger "Typical Teens" (8 week session, 2 hrs/wk)	20 children
TOTAL:	103 children served

Sibling Support Groups

(1 session, 2 hours/wk)

Ages 5-13	7 children served
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**GRAND TOTAL OF NUMBER OF CHILDREN
RECEIVING DIRECT SERVICES FROM
CHILDREN AT RISK: 120**



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Submitted by Brenda Reisch

I always like to take this time to acknowledge and thank the many, many sponsors, funders, businesses, parents, volunteers, facilitators, community partners and more who ensure that Children at Risk is able to continue its support of the Autism Community. In 2009, Children at Risk will light 30 candles on its birthday cake, marking 3 decades of service in Ottawa and the surrounding region for Autistic children and their families!

This past year saw even more diversity in community supports for Autism with the Cooking Club, Happy Trails Summer Farm Camp and Yoga classes to name a few. Autism was on platforms of politicians, the front page of newspapers and in Hollywood with Jenny McCarthy and her son. (see article on Page10)

What needs to be avoided is making Autism "sexy" or the "disability du jour". With increasing economic instability, funding for social services (where most supports for Autism come from) will be one of the first areas to be cut. Autism needs to rank up there for support with cancer, heart disease, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis and other well-known medical conditions. Governments would never consider cutting resources, funding and supports for those conditions. However, Autism will continue to receive less support until it is recognized as the medical/neurological disability that it is.

Children at Risk goes into 2009 with some trepidation – as our 2006-2008 charity partnership with Rogers TV closes, no 2009 funding grants from The Community Foundation, no Ottawa 67's 50/50 ticket sales – to name a few. Extra efforts will be made to procure funds with the hopes that we will not have to cut services to reflect the decrease in financing. We are starting off the year with the news that the South Nepean Autism Centre is going to grant funding for one additional Social Skill Group in Barrhaven, at least!

Wishing all of our families and friends safe, happy and restful holidays at this special time of year!!

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Submitted by Brenda Reisch, Fundraising Chairperson

UPCOMING EVENTS/ACTIVITIES SINCE SEPTEMBER 2008...

What Happened:

13th ANNUAL CELEBRITY-CARVED PUMPKIN CONTEST



2007 Champions –Strandz Hair Design Team

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR CELEBRITY-CARVERS, VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS!

We want to extend sincere appreciation to everyone who helped to raise ****\$10,440.18**** for Autistic children and their families through Children at Risk!! We had a terrific event, with a record 113 carvers raising a record amount in this fun and seasonal fundraiser. It was very heart-warming to see, despite challenging economic times, the wonderful community support that was extended by so many local businesses and individuals.

Our Pumpkin Mall Managers **Hazel Smith/Mark Lalonde, Alison Armstrong, Andrea Allingham** and **Angele Jodouin/Melody Grealy-Fredette** did a wonderful job of coordinating volunteers and pumpkins. We also want to acknowledge the terrific job done by **Jason Dever** and his company **Adapt IT** in hosting and manning the Online Auction. Once again, extra special thanks to **Merivale Mall** for providing the pumpkins and hosting our Reception, as well as **Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, Place d'Orleans** and **Carlingwood Shopping Centre** for extending areas for our displays!

FUNDRAISING UPDATE (Cont'd)

Top Lucky Thirteen Celebrities 2008 (FINAL)



- 1) Stuntman Stu – Three Guys On the Radio - TEAM 1200
- 2) Greco
- 3) Il Paradiso & Strandz Hair Design – Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre
- 4) Ed Hand (Rogers TV) & Nancy Stapleton (Y101)
- 5) J.J. Clarke – CTV Weather
- 6) Carol Anne Meehan – CTV News
- 7) Sandra Blaikie – A-Channel News at 6
- 8) Wayne Scanlan – Ottawa Citizen Sports
- 9) Derick & TL – Rogers TV Daytime
- 10) Kitty Dines – “Bearly Awake” – 106.9 The Bear
- 11) Rick Gibbons – Ottawa Sun Publisher/CEO
- 12) Dylan Black – 106.9 The Bear
- 13) Lynn Saxberg – Ottawa Citizen Music

DONOR'S CORNER

Network Chiropractic Healing Centre	\$80.00
Lawrence Greenspon	\$100.00
Spirit Ultimate Tournament	\$2,257.09

FUNDRAISING UPDATE (Cont'd)

OTTAWA SENATORS FOUNDATION DONATION



On Thursday, October 16, Children at Risk was one of 46 local charitable organizations to receive a total of \$1,007,350. The Sens Foundation and the Ottawa Senators Hockey Club have contributed more than \$50 million to community initiatives in the National Capital Region since the hockey club's return to the National Hockey League in 1992.

Launched in October 1998, the Sens Foundation provides direct financial aid to organizations within the eastern Ontario and western Quebec regions that service children and youth in the areas of education, health, and recreation. Today's beneficiary day featured the Sens Foundation, along with co-event fundraisers and corporate partners, presenting cheques, with Children at Risk receiving \$5,000 through the Microsoft Golf Classic for Autism. Recognition of effort is also due to Steve and Linda Warne for their tireless work on the golf tournament, as well as supporting other initiatives for Autism – like the South Nepean Autism Centre (SNAC).

MACMILLAN'S FALL CAMPAIGN

With many orders gathered by parents and friends, our Fall MacMillan's Frozen Food helped earn a profit of close to \$700. Thanks and appreciation to those who participated in this tasty fundraising activity!

FUNDRAISING UPDATE (Cont'd)

What is On Now/Coming:

2008/2009 ENTERTAINMENT COUPON BOOKS



They are still available! For only \$35, you too can own this premier discount coupon book that can save you hundreds (even thousands) of dollars on dining out, fast food, services, merchandise, sports and recreational activities.

Check out our website www.childrenatrisk.ca for a list of Quickie Convenience Stores that will be selling the book for Children at Risk until January or through our offices (613-741-8255). The book is also available through parent **Merle Hagerman** in the CentrepoinTE area (613-226-4982) and at the **Kanata Optometry Centre**, 99 Kakulu Rd. (613-592-6193), as well as **Pflug Optical**, 1580 Merivale Rd. (613-723-2766). They make great stocking stuffers and books are available for other major cities like Montreal and Toronto!

3rd Annual "ROLLIN' FOR RISK"

Bowl-A-Thon for Autism
Walkley Bowling Lanes
Sunday, January 18, 2009, 1-4 PM

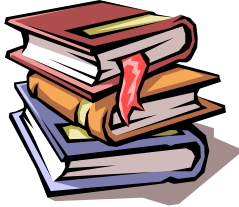


Pledge Form attached or available at www.childrenatrisk.ca Minimum Pledges of \$100/team for entry. All pledges over \$20 will receive an income tax receipt. Join us for fun, prizes and a rockin' & rollin' good family time!

RESOURCE CORNER

Submitted by Liz Schissler,
Social Skills Group Facilitator

Books: The following books focus on emotions and social skill development. The first two books are written for children and provide a fun overview of a range of emotions; the other books provide suggested strategies for children with ASD. Many of these books are available on amazon.ca, asperger.net, Parent Books or Autism Awareness.



CHILDREN'S BOOKS

A To Z Do You Ever Feel Like Me (Hardcover) by Bonnie Hausman (Author), Sandi Fellman (Illustrator)

How Are You Peeling? : Foods with Moods (Paperback - 2004) by Saxton Freymann and Joost Elffers- a fun and funny look at emotions

RESOURCE BOOKS

Exploring Feelings: Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to Manage Anger/ Anxiety (2 different books) by Dr. Tony Attwood

Super Skills - A Social Skills Group Program for Children with AS, HFA and Related Challenges by Judith Coucouvanis

The Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations (Paperback) by Brenda Smith Myles, Melissa L. Trautman, Ronda L. Schelvan

The Incredible 5-Point Scale: Assisting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Understanding Social Interactions and Controlling Their Emotional (Paperback) by Kari Dunn Buron & Mitzi Curtis

RESOURCE CORNER (Cont'd)



Some interesting ideas about social thinking and perspective taking by Michelle Garcia Winner
<http://www.socialthinking.com/>

A good collection of resources and links
<http://www.asperger.net/bookstore.htm>

A weekly newsletter worth checking out
http://usautism.org/USAAA_Newsletter/usaaa_newsletter_112508.htm



NEW FACEBOOK GROUP

Marie LaRose has set up a Facebook group and website specifically to inform other parents about all the autism related workshops.

It's viewable at:
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?ref=logo#/group.php?gid=36323711774>

Here's a websites for non-Facebook users:
<http://ottawaautismconnection.com/>

KANATA TEEN COOKING GROUP

Hello, my name is Lee Anne Lock and I am facilitating our 3rd cooking group thanks to the support of Children at Risk. Jean Grant Kearney is the co-facilitator. This program is for teens ages 14-19 years with Asperger Syndrome or who are high Functioning Autistic students. The students have had a great time preparing simple meals, learning what different tools are used for in the kitchen, learning basic safety rules in the kitchen and of course realizing that with yummy cooking comes cleaning up the mess!! But they all pitched in and did a wonderful job in all areas.

At the same time, the students are developing their social skills by working as a group and communicating around the dinner table sharing ideas and thoughts with their peers. We are all looking forward to their last cooking class next week where they get to invite a guest and prepare a meal we have already made in our classes for them. We will be serving spaghetti, caesar salad, garlic bread with cupcakes and fruit for dessert. They are all excited. We are all hoping to have another cooking class in the New Year to try out new recipes and meet new friends!

YOGA for TEENS with ASD and THEIR PARENT

Where: Children at Risk on Donald Street
When: Mondays - January 19, 26 February 2, 9, 16, 23 and March 2, 9
Time: 7:00 to 7:45
Cost: \$30.00 for 8 weeks
Ages: Teens from 10 to 18
How: Send an e-mail to mommymagic@rogers.com or call 613-749-1199

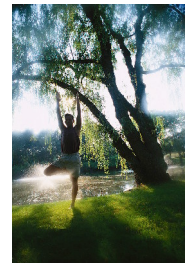


"Yes you can learn Yoga"

No matter where on the spectrum you may be, you can learn and benefit from this beginner level yoga class which will incorporate breathing techniques, postures (asana), building strength, stretching, visualization and relaxation. Routines will be broken down into small steps so that everyone should be able to leave this 8 sessions class with new beginner's yoga skills for life. Both parents and teens benefit from this class, plus you can practice at home together. You will need: a yoga mat or a towel, comfortable clothing and a water bottle. Everyone is welcome to come and join the class.

YOGA FOR ADULTS ASD

Where: Nepean Sportsplex
When: Saturdays - January 10, 17, 24, February 7, 14, 21, 28 and March 14
Time: 2:00 to 2:45
Cost: \$60.00 for 8 weeks
How: Send an e-mail to mommymagic@rogers.com or call 613-749-1199



"Yes you can learn Yoga"

No matter where on the spectrum you may be, you can learn and benefit from this beginner level yoga class which will incorporate breathing techniques, postures (asana), building strength, stretching, visualization and relaxation. Routines will be broken down into small steps so that everyone should be able to leave this 8 sessions class with new beginner's yoga skills for life. You will need: a yoga mat or a towel, comfortable clothing and a water bottle. A parent or a worker facilitator will need to be present for those with higher needs.



DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT



Since October 1995, Dreams Take Flight - Ottawa Chapter, has given special needs children an opportunity to be treated to a incredible day of magical memories at the happiest place on earth - Disney World. For several years, Children at Risk has been one of the charities chosen to have ASD children and their siblings included in this wonderful initiative. On October 16, Timothy, Annie, Chris, Mitchell and Jesse arrived at the Ottawa Airport just after 4 AM to begin a day of adventure and excitement that ended with their return at midnight! Hats off to the many dedicated individuals for Dreams Take Flight who raise funds all year, as well as volunteer on the trip – making this dream come true!!

BROOKFIELD STUDENT RECEIVES AWARD



On November 24, in the Senate chambers on Parliament Hill, Brookfield student Anthony Curkeet-Green was presented with an achievement award for being a remarkable student and young man.

Anthony is a student with Aspergers but this is not the message you receive if you are Anthony's teacher. What you see is a passionate student who goes far beyond the norm in order to learn. When a subject fascinates him, his thirst for knowledge is unquenchable, even long after the course is over. His attention to detail and ability to analyze make him truly a pleasure to teach.

Things have never been easy for Anthony. With Aspergers, each day is a struggle. Fortunately, however, he has had the unstinting support of his parents. As well, he has been fortunate in encountering caring, dedicated teachers who have given of their time to bring him to the point at which he is today. As his mother, Ms. Curkeet, says, 'There is great tolerance in our society for kids whose disabilities are visually obvious, but much less so for those whose differences are subtle.' For Aspergers students, learning how to read social cues (body language, sarcasm, etc.), even initiating and maintaining a conversation with others, can be a harder challenge than learning calculus. They must struggle to interpret every aspect of social behaviour logically, as opposed to the majority of people who learn all this instinctively. For these students to be socially acceptable to their peers takes a long time and adds a great deal of stress to their lives.

Nonetheless, Anthony is a very up-beat young man, highly deserving of the honour he has received. During his brief acceptance speech at the Senate, he mentioned the many things that have helped him throughout his struggle – in particular - Tae Kwando, which has taught him to have respect for instructors, seniors and other people in general. Additionally, Anthony spoke about coping mechanisms for others who have the same difficulties and concluded with a very positive message: 'Never give up, regardless of the challenges you face'.

An excellent student and inspiring young man, Anthony Curkeet-Green has a message for us all.

McGuinty Government Helps Families Save For Children With Disabilities

Ontario is making it possible for social assistance recipients to take advantage of Registered Disability Savings Plans (RDSPs). Like the Registered Education Savings Plan, RDSPs allow family members and loved ones to save money tax free until withdrawal. The program helps people plan for the future needs of children and adults with disabilities.

Changes to Ontario's social assistance rules will make sure that both RDSP assets and withdrawals are fully exempt. This means:

- * RDSP contributions do not impact eligibility for social assistance.
- * People on social assistance can take money out of an RDSP without affecting their social assistance payments.
- * To further help social assistance recipients with disabilities save for their future, Ontario is also increasing the amount they can receive as a gift or payment from \$5,000 to \$6,000 a year.

QUOTES

"This is about making it easier for families to save for their children with disabilities," said Minister of Community and Social Services Madeleine Meilleur. "We are making sure that people can put money in an RDSP without it affecting their eligibility for disability support."

"The message from the Ontario government is clear. It trusts families to help their relative with a disability and has opened the door for them to secure the future for their loved one. In twenty years, we'll look back on this as a watershed moment for people with disabilities," said President and Co-Founder of Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network Al Etmanski.

"What will happen when I'm no longer here is a sentiment shared by many families caring for a relative with a disability. The future for their loved ones was almost certain poverty. But with today's welcomed announcement, the Ontario government has cleared the way for families and communities to invest in a new vision for Ontario citizens with disabilities," said Ontario RDSP Working Group Chair Jeff Dobbin.

QUICK FACTS

- * Any individual that is eligible for the Disability Tax Credit may establish an RDSP.
- * British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland have also announced that they will fully exempt both RDSP assets and withdrawals.

LEARN MORE

Find out more about the federal Registered Disability Savings Plans.
To establish a RDSP, you must qualify for a Canada's Disability Tax Credit.
See how employment supports help people on the Ontario Disability Support Program.
Learn more about the province's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities.

Kevin Cooke, Minister's Office, 416-325-5219
Chris Tidey, Communications and Marketing, 416-325-5760

UPCOMING WORKSHOP

April 2 – 3, 2009 at the Holiday Inn (in Gatineau)
Thursday, April 2: Leslie Broun and Peter Gerhardt
Friday, April 3: Jenny Clark Brack, a paediatric OT

Here is the abstract for Peter Gerhardt's presentation: Today, professionals, families and learners with ASD are beginning to redefine the outcomes of the transition process beyond simple job placement to focus on career development and measures of personal competence and life satisfaction. To this end, this presentation will provide an overview and practical suggestions for transition planning AT ANY AGE in support of desirable and individualized employment outcomes with attention to assessment, community based training, employment development, job-related social skills, and quality of life concerns.

Workshop Objectives

After having attended this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Identify the components of a comprehensive transition plan
- Define the multiple constituent groups whose needs are to be met in the employment development process
- Discuss the important of co-worker training in employment maintenance.
- Describe the individually determined components of an assessment of quality of life

Leslie Broun's presentation will probably be "Essential Elements of Positive Practice and Visual Strategies for Teaching Children to Read". *Check out one of her articles on page 11 of this Newsletter.*

Jenny Clark Brack's presentation on Friday April 3rd is *Ready S.E.T. Go! Sensorimotor Early Childhood/Elementary Themes & ASD.*



For information on upcoming events check out AutismOntario.com.

NOUVEAU SERVICE POUR FAMILLES FRANCOPHONES À OTTAWA

Le programme « Réalisons le potentiel de la communauté » (RPC) est un service exceptionnel de Autism Ontario, visant à appuyer directement les familles, les parents et les enfants ayant des troubles du spectre autistique, grâce à un meilleur accès à des spécialistes en TSA (Troubles envahissants de l'autisme) dans notre communauté, et à fournir aux enfants et jeunes des occasions d'apprentissage stimulantes, au sein de leur communauté.

Les familles restreignent souvent leur participation à des activités sociales ou décident de ne pas y participer du tout, à cause d'un manque de milieu favorable qui leur permettrait de bénéficier d'expériences auxquelles d'autres familles peuvent accéder plus facilement. Ces expériences quotidiennes peuvent comprendre la natation, le patinage, ou même aller au cinéma.

Faites nous savoir quels sont les conférenciers spécialistes, les ateliers ou les occasions d'apprentissage social que vous aimeriez accueillir dans notre communauté. Vous pouvez nous téléphoner ou nous envoyer un courriel pour nous faire part de vos idées. Je vous invite aussi à compléter un SONDAGE maintenant disponible sur notre site web au www.autimontario.com afin de mieux déterminer les besoins des familles francophones à travers la province de l'Ontario.

Marlene Steppan, Coordinatrice de programme
Réalisons le potentiel de la communauté
Autism Ontario – bureau d'Ottawa
613-230-6305 prcottawa@autismontario.com

Parents have not just the right but the duty to advocate for children with special needs. Yet parental activism, like any kind of political activism, is most useful when it is informed with facts rather than simply emotion. The case of actor **Jenny McCarthy** is an instructive one. Ms. McCarthy's high-profile campaign to promote her "cure" for autism has raised much awareness about the disorder, which is good. But it has also encouraged parents to pursue treatments that have little, if any, scientific support. Like most parent advocates, Ms. McCarthy is immensely passionate about her cause. This passion is her greatest strength -- and her greatest weakness. She claims to have cured her six-year-old son of autism through a restricted diet, vitamins and chelation therapy (a controversial metal-detoxification procedure). She has published a book describing her "journey in healing autism," told her story many times in the media, and taken part in a number of public demonstrations. Owing to her celebrity, and that of her partner actor Jim Carrey, Ms. McCarthy has become the most famous autism advocate in North America. Growing interest in biological treatments for autism has been chalked up to what physicians call the "Jenny McCarthy Effect."

Of course, any parent of a child with a disease or disability can be a force to behold, as a parent should be. Parents raise millions for research and improved access to care. They force governments to address problems they might otherwise ignore. They make sacrifices that put fair-weather advocates to shame. Although their motivation is beyond reproach, the emotional investment can sometimes affect the judgment of parent advocates. Parents of autistic children, in particular, are prone to embracing treatments that are dubious at best, dangerous at worst. This is because autism, though studied intensely, is still not well understood. And so the number of treatments available is staggering: gluten-free diets, supplements, behavioural modification, language therapy -- to name but a few.

When parents learn their children have autism, the first place they go for guidance is the Internet, where misinformation abounds. Understanding autism, one researcher claimed, is the "Olympics of critical thinking." It's little surprise that "proof" of a treatment's effectiveness is often anecdotal instead of research-based. But anecdotes aren't evidence. Because something works for one doesn't mean it will work for all, or even many. Some doctors do believe digestion could be related to autism -- the so-called gut-brain connection -- so it's possible a special diet has helped Ms. McCarthy's son. But touting it as a cure is wrong. Ms. McCarthy is providing parents of autistic children with false hope instead of facts. Dr. James R. Laidler, a U.S. anesthesiologist with two autistic children, says many parent advocates are "hooked" on hope. He would know. He once was addicted himself, practising and promoting treatments that he later realized didn't work. In an essay describing that period, he writes that hope is "a very seductive thing to those who have lost it. It is not really surprising that people will buy it even when their better judgment tells them not to." Parent advocates do much good and deserve our admiration. For the sake of their children, however, they should retain some degree of skepticism about miracle cures.

Setting a Foundation for Literacy Skill Development by Leslie Broun, M.Ed.

<p><i>Matching Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to match is the foundation of all learning • Practice matching simple shapes (of one colour) – circle, square, etc. • Graduate to simple objects and then simple pictures (commercially produced lotto or matching games) <p><i>Sorting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When matching has been mastered, work on sorting simple objects – popsicle sticks, spoons, toys, socks, clothing, etc. or commercially produced sorting kits 	<p><i>Scrapbooks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrapbooks are an excellent way to help children with ASD to organize items in the environment – categorization skills. • Scrapbooks can be created with pictures from catalogues, advertisements, photos, labels (e.g. movie covers). • Topics might include foods, animals, the house (room by room), toys, clothing, the farm, transportation/vehicles or cartoon characters, focusing on the interests of the child. • Again, work towards pointing and sharing attention to the pictures. • An alphabet scrapbook is also a good resource – one letter per page and pictures of items that begin with the letter.
<p><i>Reading to Your Child</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that you choose stories that your child will understand and that are within her/his experience. • Many children like to hear the same story over and over again – it’s O.K.! Hearing the same story can be a very reassuring experience. You can always pair it with a new story and gradually build up the number of stories your child enjoys. • As you read, see if you can engage your child in pointing to favourite characters (e.g. Clifford, Thomas) and familiar objects, establishing joint attention. Model the action and assist the child to point gradually fading the assistance. 	<p><i>The Alphabet</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For many children, learning the letters and their sounds is not a prerequisite skill for reading. • Many children with ASD learn more efficiently through whole word sight recognition. A combined approach is most effective over the long term. • Start with showing your child the names of family members printed on flashcards (2” x 5”) • Make sure that the words you teach are relevant and meaningful. Children will want to engage with materials and words that have meaning for them.
<p><i>Personal Books</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating books for your child can be fun and a very effective way to help her/him to engage in the shared reading process. • Using photographs, you can write and illustrate small books about things that are familiar and relevant to your child: the family, your house, favourite foods, pets, going for a visit, holidays, going to the park, etc. • When we use familiar materials, we are more likely to achieve attention and comprehension. • The use of photographs will also help the child to build memories of persons and events. 	<p><i>Fine Motor Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child goes through a scribbling stage – let your child scribble! • Pictures for colouring should be large and simple. If you have a good colouring book, you can have pictures enlarged at a copy shop – make multiple copies of the same picture. • Let your child watch you scribble and colour – this is called passive modeling. • When your child is ready, work for imitation: , _ , O and X are the prerequisite strokes for printing. • Remember: little hands = little materials (crayons, scissors, paper for cutting) • Let your child become familiar with the keyboard as this may be his/her most efficient writing tool in the long term.

“Autism is just part of who I am,” says Nick in a wise moment.

My son accepts and likes who he is. This is amazing given that he was born with a communication language disability. He does not feel his mouth, his tongue or his lips. When he was small I worried that he would choke every time he put food in his mouth. “One bite,” I’d say as he was stuffing more into his mouth. Nick’s eyes would smile as the food came spilling out.

Learning to speak has been an adventure. Be my sons’ speech therapist has been with us from the beginning. She started with simple sounds and graduate to combinations of sounds and complex words and phrases. She has always made learning to talk a game, the completion of daily exercises are rewarded with praise and games.

When Nick was three every time he was strapped into his car seat he would say, “I want to go to Dondo.” It took two years before his brother finally realized that he wanted to go to McDonalds. Through it all Nick was patient. He had good days and bad days until finally he said, “Mom I don’t want to do any more speech lessons. I understand what I am saying. Why can’t everyone else”. Nick did not understand that the reason we talk is to communicate how we think and feel to others. Life without communication would be very lonely. We speak so that others will understand us.

And then Nick discovered Shakespeare. His first experience was a children’s’ adaptation of Midsummer’s Nights Dream. Nick played Nick Bottom one of the comic characters and stole the show. He spoke loudly and clearly and with great comic timing. He gets Shakespeare’s text. He can explain the images Shakespeare uses to convey feelings and thoughts. The natural rhyming and phrasing helps him to speak slowly and clearly. Studying people through characters has help Nick to understand social situations which can be a mystery.

This past year Nick tackled the role of Caliban from Shakespeare’s the Tempest. Caliban is described as a monster born from an earth spirit and Prospero a human father. Prospero used Caliban to learn the secrets of the island. But put him in a cage when Caliban made friends with Prospero’s human daughter Miranda.

Nick performed this scene from the Tempest at Shakespeare’s 400th birthday party at the National Arts Center’s. The acoustic were bad, only Diane D’Aquina wonderfully deep voice playing the role of Elizabeth the Queen next to my son Nick crawling out of a cave through the arms of other actors could be heard. Nick makes a brilliant Caliban. He understands how Prospero misjudged Caliban because the same thing happens to him. I am proud that Nick is autistic because that is part of who he is.

The Potty Journey: Guide to Toilet Training Children with Special Needs,
Including Autism and Related Disorders
By Judith Coucouvanis, AAPC 2008

**Reviewed by Maureen Bennie
Director, Autism Awareness Centre Inc.**

Parents of children with autism or other special needs frequently struggle with toilet training their child. Toileting a child with special needs is more difficult because there are often additional challenges such as communication difficulties, sensory issues, behavioral concerns, resistance to change, inability to generalize a newly learned skill, and the need for routine. Using traditional toilet training books and methods are not always helpful because the autism population does not think the same way a neurotypical child does. The child with autism may not care about pleasing parents or receiving verbal praise. Because there may be significant developmental delays, the toileting process may not be started until after the age of 4. Using a diaper to eliminate has been the routine for several years and this can be hard to change. Children's books introducing toilet training may not be appropriate because the child is too big for a potty chair or using the potty chair then transitioning to the toilet becomes yet another change and obstacle in this process.

All of these concerns may feel insurmountable and overwhelming when making the decision to begin toilet training. Judith Coucouvanis has come to the rescue with her new book *The Potty Journey: Guide to Toilet Training Children with Special Needs, Including Autism and Related Disorders* that empowers parents and professionals with practical information to make this journey a success. I would recommend reading the book in its entirety first before starting toileting because Ms.Coucouvanis equips the reader with a plan and presents the overall picture for this process. She uses the concept of a journey/trip and all the things one would need to do to make the trip a successful one. It is these planning tips and manageable steps that make toileting "do-able".

One of the biggest quandaries parents face is not knowing when to start toileting. Ms.Coucouvanis outlines considerations when to begin toileting in the second chapter. She discusses mental age which is not the same as chronological age, the ability to remain dry for 1 – 2 hours at a time, and being over the age of 4 when bodily functions are more mature. It is also important that you as the parent are emotionally ready for this commitment which takes several weeks, and that there are no additional life stressors such as a move, divorce, job change, or major illness.

One key to successful toileting is using a team approach. Everyone who spends time with that child should be involved in the toileting process. Children with autism don't generalize from one situation to the next so for success to occur there has to be a consistent toileting routine and approach throughout the child's day which may unfold in several places.

Ms.Coucouvanis introduces the Daily Progress Record (DPR) in chapter 3 which is the foundation of the toileting process. She provides lots of examples and a template in the appendix. She teaches how to practice toileting, use rewards, and supports the child's learning with visual examples. She dedicates two chapters to troubleshooting problems. The book is peppered with thoughts from parents and professionals who have gone through this journey. Their comments offer positive support and encouragement. The final chapter is dedicated for stories from those who have completed the toileting journey.

Ms.Coucouvani also writes about creating independence with toileting – how to fade prompts and your presence in the bathroom. She also discusses bathroom use in other locations such as the school and public restrooms. The hidden curriculum rules for boys and girls public bathroom use are outlined. Most mothers are not aware of how different a men’s public bathroom is from a women’s.

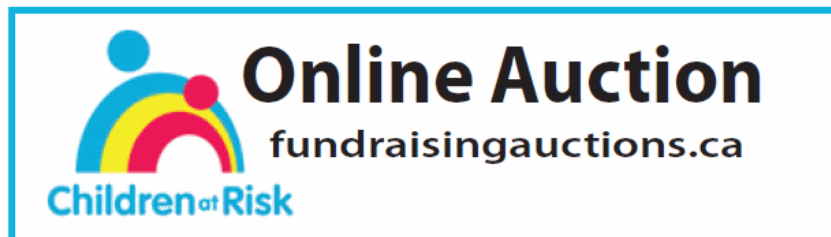
There is a helpful appendix at the end which includes charts for determining toileting readiness, the Daily Progress Record, records for your team members (known as the travel crew), a checklist to prepare for this journey, suggested rewards, Sitting Practice Record, and a visual breakdown of the toileting steps.

On a personal note, I toilet trained my 9 ½ year old son with autism in the summer of 2006. There was very little literature on this subject and nothing that I could find on the internet to guide me on how to train the older child with autism. My husband and I devised our own plan and experimented with different ideas. A book like this one would have been a gift for us, providing support and troubleshooting ideas. We got the job done, but it was a six week struggle.

The Potty Journey: Guide to Toilet Training Children with Special Needs, Including Autism and Related Disorders book takes parents and professionals through the toileting journey which is a challenge but well worth the effort. Toileting with independence and confidence is a life-long skill; without this skill, a person’s choices are limited and they are dependent on someone else for one of their most basic needs.

Available on-line for \$22.50 at www.autismawarenesscentre.org, or by faxing (403) 451-9011 or by e-mailing maureen.aaci@shaw.ca.

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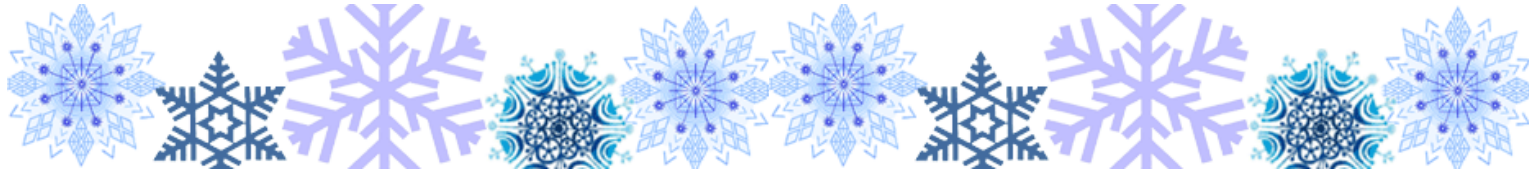


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Pictures from Rogers Sparkle Event (December 3, 2008)



Rogers Ottawa



Brenda Reisch & Bambina Lemme



Brenda Desjardins & Michèle Lanoue



Edward presents a plaque of appreciation to Rogers TV Executive Producers Lynne Whitehead & Gavin Lumsden, along with Station Manager Ray Skaff.



17 year-old ASD teen Edward King & TL Rader (Rogers Daytime). Edward entertained everyone with his accomplishments and how Children at Risk has been part of his life.



Edward accepts \$20,000 cheque for Children at Risk with Nepean-Carleton MPP Lisa MacLeod and Rogers TV Station Manager Ray Skaff.

