

**Celebrating
30 years**



NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2009

Issue #47

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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

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

Greetings to all! Well spring is 'just around the corner' and it brings with it our "Rockin' for Risk." Being that I'm in my fifties, this is the one event of the year I most look forward to. I enjoy the music, dance, people with their costumes and all round fun. If you have not been to this event, it is time for you to do a nostalgic time warp in our time machine and join us in the 50-60 and 70s.

Lately Children at Risk has been fortunate to receive free tickets to many events. Many thanks to all of our donors, including United Way/Centraide Ottawa, The Ottawa Senators Foundation, The Trinity Development Group, The Ottawa 67's, The National Arts Centre and more. Our membership, thanks to Brenda and Bambina at our office has increased significantly over the past year. If at any time you can volunteer a few hours of your time, please contact our office. We can always use great people at our fundraising events.

Most Children at Risk money is generated through fundraising with some coming through grants that have to be researched out by your board. If you know of any companies that are looking for a charity to donate money to or set up grants for or have fundraising events for, please contact our office. Wishing everyone well in the future,

Paul Lacroix, President, Board of Directors

8th ANNUAL "ROCKIN' FOR RISK" 50S/60S/70S DANCE – Saturday, March 28, 2009

Ottawa is ready to Rock & Roll! Join us in celebrating 8 years of rockin', rollin' and raisin' funds for Autism through Children at Risk!



Saturday, March 28, 2009, 7:30 pm to 12:30 am
(doors open 7 pm)

Algonquin College, Building "D"

Featuring:

Live music from Intersection

Ottawa's Elvis, Shawn Barry

MC "Brother Bob" Derro from OLDIES 1310

Dance demos from TL & Chris Rader

Door, Costume and Dance Prizes

Silent Action, Raffle, Mid-Evening Sandwich Buffet
(included in ticket price!)

Tickets \$25 advance/\$30 door, \$225 table of ten (advance sales)
(must be 19+ years)

Ticket info at www.childrenatrisk.ca or call 613-741-8255

Don't delay – get your tickets today!

*Volunteers needed – please email Paula Tam at rtam66@yahoo.com

2008/2009 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Submitted by Brenda Reisch

30 years ago parents of children with Autism cried out for services. 30 years ago services were practically non-existent. 30 years ago, Children at Risk, Ottawa was born ...

30 years later, we are proud to still be here and still providing service to the Autism Community. Despite all the changes that have taken place, 30 years later our mission is still to support Autistic children and their families to the best of our abilities.

I cannot say that the current economic crisis has not made me nervous. Our charity has continued to exist on the support of community-minded businesses, donors, individuals and foundations that recognize the value of the support we extend. But the reality is that if the economy is struggling, people are losing jobs and businesses failing, basic needs of food and shelter will take priority over charitable donations.

As a charity with no government funding, we have an obligation to be fiscally responsible. When funding is decreased, it means we must first respond by reducing services. Of course, on-going efforts are continued to find new funding, but the process tends to be cyclical.

Children at Risk

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE (Cont'd)

However, it is at times like this, that I see the importance of our charity being higher than ever – the importance of being there for these families who already find most days challenging solely on the needs of their diagnosed children! Lately we have been putting extra efforts into procuring ticket donations for events and I recently received a thank-you email from one of the families:

“It was a real treat and escape to recently attend the Ballet at the NAC, for both my daughter and I at a time when the stress level in our household was very high. My husband had just lost his job, and in anticipation of that happening we had cut out all our "extra" expenses. My 7 year olds eyes were glued to the stage the entire performance, she didn't miss a step. At the end of it, not only did she say that she "totally loved it", but also that she was happy to have "girls' time" with me. It brought tears to my eyes. We often forget in our daily lives as we run our autistic child from therapy appointment to therapy appointment about the time our children crave with us ... special time that can only be found in moments like the one I experienced with my daughter at this event. Thank you for giving me that moment with her. I know she will cherish it for a long time, as will I.”

So, I say – bring it on! Whether Children at Risk will still be here in another 30 years cannot be answered. But today, here and now, I will continue to work passionately for funding, supports and services for the Autism Community.

DONOR'S CORNER

Thales Canada Inc.	\$50.00
Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation	\$96.00
The Hunt Club Dental Centre	\$200.00
Navan Lions Club	\$250.00
First United Church of Ottawa	\$458.22
Tracev Beintema	\$572.00

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Submitted by Brenda Reisch, Fundraising Chairperson

UPCOMING EVENTS/ACTIVITIES SINCE DECEMBER 2008 ...

What Happened:

Autism Community Holiday Party

Many thanks to Autism Ontario for hosting the Autism Community Holiday Party on Sunday, December 21 (2008) at the Dovercourt Community Centre. Despite a cold and snowy day, many families braved the weather to participate in swimming, crafts, yummy food and a visit from The Big Guy – Santa!

Here is a note from one of the families:

"Thanks Autism Ontario for the wonderful Christmas party today. My son is 7 yr old and this is the first time he's really enjoyed a Christmas party! The crafts were fabulous, the swimming was thoroughly enjoyed, the food was great and Santa, although terribly intimidating to Mitchell, was amazing.... I didn't know he could sing so well!!! Thanks again for the fantastic memories."

Entertainment Coupon Books

Despite economic challenges and stiff competition amongst charities, Children at Risk still managed to sell 258 Entertainment Books, earning \$3,612! Many thanks to all those who bought/sold and distributed the coupon books. The 2009/2010 book will be available mid-August and plans are currently to offer them again, courtesy of Quickie Convenience Stores, in select retail locations.

Capital Chordettes Auction

On Saturday, December 6, The Capital Chordettes held their Annual Christmas Craft Auction and Concert at the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Gardens Centre. This delightful afternoon included a Silent Auction, Bake Table, Craft Table, Children's Table, Used Books and a very special performance of Christmas carols and favourites from The Chordettes! The event culminated in the presentation of a cheque for **\$1,902.71** to Children at Risk, bringing the cumulative support of the Chordettes to **\$16,544.85** since 2004!!

FUNDRAISING UPDATE (Cont'd)

3rd Annual "Rollin' for Risk" Bowl-A-Thon

The 3rd Annual Children at Risk Bowl-A-Thon on Sunday, January 18 was a wonderful success, as parents, children and other supporters packed Walkley Bowling Lanes for a fun afternoon of bowling, music, dancing, prizes and Elvis! With business sponsorships and generous pledges, we raised over \$6,200!!!

Congratulations to Renee Clark and her team, Jacques & His Angels, who raised \$1,060 to win the Il Divo 100 level Suite tickets! Kudos to The Perth Pinheads, who raised \$800, as well as Donovan's Dominators & Gutterly Ridiculous, who both raised over \$300 – as well as all our teams for their efforts to raise funds!

Please join me in thanking the following sponsors:

- *Gold Sponsor* – Adapt IT.com
- *Silver Sponsors* - Minto, Kiwanis Idol, Poco Pazzo Italian Restaurant, Villa Lucia Supper Club
- *Raffle Sponsors* – Ottawa Sports Gallery, Pelican Fishery & Grill, Ogilvie Wave Splash Pool, Museum of Science & Technology, Louis Steak House, Really Lebanese, The Disney Store
- *Grab Bag Sponsors* – Boston Pizza, Pizza Hut, Speedy Messenger, Rogers TV, CAA, Jade Cabinets, Executive Golf.ca; Grand & Toy, Trinity Development Group, Bulk Barn, Kiwanis Idol, Ottawa Sun

Special Mention: Walkley Bowling Lanes (Derek & Chris), Shawn Barry (Elvis), Twisting Terry Newcombe (Balloon Man) & Rogers Radio Group with "Brother Bob" Derro, The Disney team "Disney VoluntEARS" (for the beautiful Disney Posters) and Lone Star (Salsa & Chips Donation).

Many thanks, as well, to our terrific team of Volunteers – Anne, Alicja, Bambina, Rebecca, Jennifer, Chris, Samantha, Kira, Paul, Hazel (plus some spouses who helped to load my van!)

It was a great way to spend a snowy, cold winter afternoon – again we thank all those involved and hope you will join us next January for the 4th Annual "Rollin' for Risk" Bowl-A-Thon!!!

THANK YOU'S

Thank you very much for the 67s tickets! It was a great opportunity to have a family outing since our previous attempts didn't work out. Mitchell, our 7 yr old on the spectrum, had a ton of fun at the game, thereby making it enjoyable for the rest of us. And, for once, we didn't have to leave early. Thanks to Children at Risk for providing these free tickets!
The Kelly Family

This was my first time attending an Ottawa 67's game here in Ottawa, plus an opportunity to show my close friends from Cuba and Barbados what being Canadian is all about. We had such a great time that we can't wait for the next hockey game to play in town. Thank you to Trinity for making this happen!
Stephanie

I want to thank you for your generous donation. My two sons have really enjoyed a few games these past few weeks. They have really come out of their shells to appreciate the whole exciting atmosphere at the civic centre. Thank you again, cheers!
Craig

I just wanted to thank you for the 67's tickets last weekend. My friends and I had a great time and we finally got to see an Ottawa team play good hockey this year. Thanks again.
Michael Noel

We definitely appreciate the donations. My boys are starting to like the game ... just another way of getting outside interests, independence and social behaviours ... what a great place to learn as the 67s environment is so family friendly and safe. Thanks again!
Ursula

Recently my family and I were able to enjoy tickets to an Ottawa 67's hockey game generously donated to Children at Risk through the Trinity Development Group. The tickets provided a fantastic opportunity to spend time together as a family in a venue/setting we would normally go to and which we very much enjoyed. It was a wonderful experience for our children and the game was great fun to watch. Sincere thanks to Trinity Development Group for the generous donation of the tickets!
Susan

THANK YOU'S (Cont'd)

Michael, Chris and our brother-in-law Andre had a wonderful time at the Ottawa 67's game on Sunday. The game was high scoring and exciting. The caliber of play is amazing and surely some of these talented athletes will soon be seen playing at Scotia Bank Place. Please extend our thanks to Trinity Development Corporation for the donation of tickets. Perhaps, to some people an afternoon at a hockey game is sometimes taken for granted. For us, parents of a very special young man with autism, an afternoon spent with him, seeing him with a smile on his face, enjoying a day out with his Dad and Uncle is PRICELESS! Once again, thank you so much!
Diana, Michael and Chris

We would like to express our gratitude for the donated tickets to an Ottawa 67s game in January. It was the first time we were able to take our son (age 7 with ASD) and our daughter (age 5) to a game as a family. The seats were wonderful and I'm sure the teams could hear our son cheering, quite loudly at times. Since we did not know how he would be with the large crowd, it was nice to have the donation. It turned out to be a success and we hope to enjoy the Ottawa 67's games again in the future. Best wishes!
Pam

I am writing to express my sincerest appreciation to the Trinity Development Group for their donation of the Ottawa 67's tickets to the Children At Risk community. My 16 year old son absolutely loves hockey and attending a 67's game is one of his favourite outings. Going out to a hockey game on a Friday night is the perfect antidote to a full and challenging week at school. It also offers us some time together and provides a little respite for his mother and sister, who prefer to stay in and cuddle under a blanket on the sofa. The Civic Centre is a terrific venue: it's far more manageable than the madhouse of the Scotiabank Place. Every seat is excellent and it is much more family-oriented. And it is wonderful to support young athletes playing their hearts out for the love of the game. Thank you for providing us the opportunity to participate. Sincerely,
John Martins

THANK YOU'S (Cont'd)

We received tickets to a 67's game back in January which the four of us attended. We had a good time and Adam got right into the cheering act with a hockey team seated across from us. Thanks to Trinity, families like ours are able to enjoy these outings. *The MacMillans*

Avery and his Dad would be attending the 67's hockey game - this would be Avery's first time ever to a hockey game!! The night was a huge success for the pair, who make the heavily traffic road trip, due to the bus strike it took longer than anticipated, but they eventually arrived safe and hungry and excited. With tummies filled with cheese burgers and ketchup (only) - off the duo went to find the game. Excited? This was not the best description! Thrilled? That doesn't fit either - over the moon perhaps. By attending the 67's game with Dadda, none of the other kids' dads have ever had this experience and the other kids envy is clear - time out just with dad one on one, and to a hockey game, blew their imaginations wide. Avery is one special little chappy and in our hearts as a star, now thanks to the generous donation from Trinity, our chappy is star at grade 2. *The Kirkland Clan*

I would like to extend a kind thank you to the United Way and the Ottawa 67's Hockey Club for their donation of tickets to Children at Risk. We take my son and his friends who sometimes do not get an opportunity to see a game live, let alone myself and we have a wonderful time together, to see the smiles on their faces is a wonderful reward. Thank you again for your kind donations! *Nancy*

Our family has much appreciated the generous donation of a number of 67's hockey tickets from the Trinity Development Group. It has been a helpful outlet for our family. Please pass our sincere thanks to these thoughtful people who have made it possible. With gratefulness! *Maurice and Mary*

The girls and I had a super time last Friday night!! One of my friend's daughter's was also playing during one of the intermissions - she's six - so it was fun. Take care! *Jean*

THANK YOU'S (Cont'd)

On behalf of our entire family, I wanted to take a moment to express our sincerest thanks for the tickets to the Ottawa 67's hockey game. Our 5 year old ASD son had a wonderful time at the game against the London Knights, and it was a fantastic opportunity to expose him to a new experience. We are never sure how he will react at events like this, so purchasing tickets for the family is not something we would take a chance on. Fortunately, because of your generosity, we were able to try out something we would not normally attempt, and as an added bonus, our son had such a great time that afternoon. It was a truly positive experience for all of us. Thank you for this. *Maureen*

I would like to say thank you to Trinity Group for donating 67's tickets to the families within Children At Risk. My family has two children with ASD. My older son has Asperger's syndrome. He has come home from school disappointed that he doesn't have friends ... feeling like he doesn't fit in. My son met a boy at school he adores. They both love hockey and are into video games. They want to spend all their time together. My son's friend comes from a single parent environment. His father is a true hockey fan and a really good person. He has provided transportation, after school care (while I drove our other son to therapy) and play dates. To be able to thank him by inviting him to a hockey game is great! The boys have a blast and the dads get a chance to hang out. I can't say enough about the donation that Trinity Group is making ... it is truly appreciated! Thank you so much!!! *The Brentons*

I just wanted to thank you and Children at Risk again for the tickets. It was great to be able to bring our son (3 1/2 (autistic)) to the game and we're happy to get free tickets since we suspected we wouldn't be able to stay the whole game (he made it through 1 1/2 periods ok but after that he had enough so we left early). However it was a great experience for all of us; he did enjoy it and we wanted to expose him to that sort of environment (large crowd & lots of noise, having to sit for an extended period of time and focus on the game, etc) and he did very well (part of us expected to basically have to leave after 5 minutes). Thanks again and have a nice day! *Mike*

THANK YOU'S (Cont'd)

Our severely Autistic son had gone into crisis last year and had to be hospitalized for 9 weeks. After that, he was placed in a temporary respite home and is slowly transitioning home. This outing to an Ottawa 67's game was his first to an event since last summer, enabling us to be together as a family, with his workers. Your donation was so very precious to allow this opportunity for Ian and his family.
Brenda

SOUTH NEPEAN AUTISM CENTRE SPONSORS SOCIAL SKILL GROUP

I would like to thank CAR and SNAC for their involvement and support in running the Thursday night Friendship/Social Skill Groups. CAR has always offered my son & our family top quality services and for this we are grateful to everyone that is involved.

My son attends the Barrhaven group on Thursday evenings, which is funded by SNAC. He loves the group meetings and looks forward to them every week. These groups have assisted him greatly with social skills and his self-esteem. Every week he leaves the group with a huge smile on his face and a new story to tell me on the car ride home.

I would also like to thank the Barrhaven Child Care Centre for the use of their facility. We live in the Osgoode / Kemptville area; therefore, the Barrhaven location makes it possible for us to easily attend the groups. If the Barrhaven location was not available to us, I'm afraid we would have to miss out on this much-loved activity. Thank you to everyone involved in this endeavor. *Patricia Flanagan*

*Thank
You*

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Real Show

On Saturday, May 30, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., the Capital Chordettes and Common Interest will be presenting "The Real Show" with a guest Quartet from Vancouver "Realtime" an a cappella Quartet, at Dominion Chalmers United Church, 355 Cooper Street, Ottawa, Ontario. Tickets: \$20.00. Tickets available online at: www.capitalchordettes.ca or contact Gaile (613) 591-0281.



The Capital Chordettes, a Ladies' Barbershop singing Chorus love to sing, dance and entertain with a cappella, four-part harmony. The chorus currently has 60 members under the direction of Carolyn Henderson. The Chordettes placed 1st at the 2008 Area 2 Contest with Harmony Incorporated. Common Interest, a men's quartet was the 2007 Ontario District Champions of the Barbershop Harmony Society. Our Guest Quartet from Vancouver is "Realtime" an acappella Quartet, 2005 International Gold Medalists of the Barbershop Harmony Society.



To learn more visit us at our websites:

- Capital Chordettes Inc.: www.capitalchordettes.ca or contact Carol Anne Clarke - 613-274-0643;
- Common Interest: www.commoninterest.ca

UPCOMING EVENTS

SNAC March Morning Drop-In

We are pleased to inform you that for the month of March 2009 we will be holding a morning drop-in at SNAC. Tuesdays we will be open for drop-in from 9:00 am-11:00 am. Thursdays will remain the same open in the afternoons from 1:00 - 3:00 pm.

These changes are for the month of March only. Looking forward to seeing new and returning members. For more information please give us a call at 613-825-9385 ext. 14.

Dale O'Reilly, Manager Resource Centre
56 Kennevale Drive, Nepean Ontario

Workshop music and movement

Thursday, March 26 from 1:00 to 3:00: Making Music Meaningful. Music touches on every aspect of children's development: social, intellectual, emotional, physical – and of course, it's just plain fun! Come experience a music and movement class for you and your child with Nicole Wassink of Making Music Meaningful. After the class, let Dale and Andrea entertain the kids while you join in on a discussion about the many benefits of music and movement for young children. In addition to sharing her great enthusiasm for early childhood music education, Nicole will offer some insight as to how you can incorporate music into your child's life. A hand-out of the songs and rhymes used in the class will help get you on your way. Making Music Meaningful is a music and movement program for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers and is offered in five Ottawa locations. For more details please visit www.makingmusicmeaningful.com.

Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada

The Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada is holding its very first annual national fundraiser, TREK FOR TS on Sunday, March 29th from 2 -5 pm. The TREK begins in front of City Hall (City Festival Plaza), down Queen Elizabeth Drive on the canal up until Pretoria Bridge and back up Colonel By (on the canal) over Laurier Bridge back to City Hall. The event has two objectives: The first is to create an awareness of Tourette Syndrome. Most people think of Tourette's as a condition that involves solely tics.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada (Cont'd)

But the reality is that most individuals affected by TS are also affected by co-morbidity disorders such as anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, to name just a few. We're hoping through this event, to let the public in general know, what Tourette Syndrome is and how they can, if need be, seek help and support. Secondly, this event is our first national annual fundraiser. The only funds we receive are from private donations and membership dues. We do not receive any government grants or funding. Funding is a critical part of our existence and our ability to fulfill our responsibility to those who need our help.

Individuals can register as participants online at www.tourette.ca, and follow the links for the event and also, people can now pledge online as well. It's very easy to sign up! Are you ready for the 1st Annual Trek for Tourette? We would ask everyone to join us on March 29th and if they can't make it, please consider donating generously to the Foundation.

Jill Bobula, President, Ottawa Chapter
Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada
1-800-361-3120

Are you ready for the 1st Annual Trek for Tourette?



Autism Ontario – Ottawa Chapter

Welcomes new Chapter Manager

Tracy Davidson has joined Autism Ontario - Ottawa Chapter in the position of Chapter Manager, Development and Fundraising. Tracy brings with her considerable experience representing and promoting organizations that provide support services in the Ottawa community and is excited to work with Autism Ontario - Ottawa Chapter. Tracy's previous experience includes working in sexual health as Executive Director with Planned Parenthood Ottawa and working with individuals who are homeless or at-risk as Centre Manager with Centre 507. Contact info: 613.230.6305 or email: chaptermgr.ottawa@autismontario.com.



Autism and Yoga

What do we know about autism? We know that it affects more boys than girls. We don't know what causes it and we know it doesn't discriminate who it affects. It has 3 main impairments – communication, social skills and behaviour. The range in which these 3 can affect a child can range from mild to severe.

What do we know about yoga? We know that yoga is a way to help stretch the muscles to allow the body to relax. Everyone can benefit from yoga - people of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and religions. The documented medical benefits of yoga include strength and stamina, reducing stress and anxiety and lowered blood pressure. In addition yoga helps one to achieve emotional balance, develop focus, improve cardiovascular, respiration, muscular-skeletal, and nervous system health. Yoga enables your body-mind to become more alert, receptive and balanced. Yoga helps develop focus, concentration and discipline needed to be in the here and now.

How can yoga help our autistic kids or adults affected by autism? Yoga can help them to calm themselves, aid in sleeping better, reduce anxiety and stress. It can build self confidence and self esteem too. I don't claim to cure anyone but if I can give someone a little peace of mind for a day then I'm prepared to share my knowledge.

E-mail: info@mommymagicyoga.com

Phone: (613) 749-1199



RESOURCE CORNER

Submitted by Liz Schissler,
Social Skills Group Facilitator



CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Starting Points: The Basics of Understanding and Supporting Children and Youth with Asperger Syndrome by Jill Hudson and Brenda Smith Myles. This book provides solid strategies and visual supports to use with children with ASD.

You are a Social Detective by Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke (2008). This book focuses on social thinking and using your eyes, ears and brains to plan what to say and do in social situations.



SOME FUN AND EDUCATIONAL WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT FOR AND WITH YOUR CHILDREN:

www.do2learn.com Offers ideas for activities, some free picture cards for visual organizers and many other ideas and resources.

www.starfall.com A great website for readiness skills and early reading skills.

<http://club.kids.biblioottawalibrary.ca/index.php?q=en> Click on Tumble Books for audio books to listen online. This website also offers other interactive game and activities.

www.kidzone.ws Offers many free printable worksheets organized by grade level and subject area.

www.cbc.ca/kids Provides games and videos for children and preschoolers.

A mother just knows.

Will has a winning smile and an infectious laugh. He is the type of kid who gives you the most, but also takes the most out of you. He is bright, inquisitive, talks incessantly, adores his sister, and just gives you a kiss for no reason but to say 'I love you.' His brain never shuts off; the wheels are always in motion. Will also has phobias that put him into a state of panic, he hits and spits when frustrated, he invades personal space and is unable to read people's emotions. We never quite know why, what (or where!) a 'meltdown' will occur, so we are always living in a bit of a panic. We live in a social world, and Will is barely surviving.

Parenting is the hardest job in the world, but there is an extra weight to bear when your child has special needs. At first glance, Will just looks like a 'normal' child with age-appropriate struggles, but if you look deeper and knew his history, you might have more empathy for this amazing little boy. My son can't just 'suck it up' as some people may think; he has Asperger's Disorder. This is an Autism Spectrum Disorder that leaves my son quite overwhelmed in social situations and this often results in inappropriate behaviour - sometimes silly, sometimes aggressive. The aggression is all but gone since we have had taken exhaustive measures and efforts to train him to react otherwise. As of today (February 2009), Will only takes his aggression out on inanimate objects, and that is a blessing in my opinion; it is the first sign that shows me he is already self-regulating and that all of our hard work is paying off. Many people did not listen to the early concerns I had about my son - doctors and close friends included.

Trust me. A mother just knows.

I am convinced of that more than I have ever been before. William was just 2 weeks old when the red flags began. Sure babies cry, but Will cried a lot. He was difficult to soothe and it didn't seem to get a whole lot better once those magic '3, 4, 5, 6 month marks' came and went. Oh how I waited for the day he would just wake up and be happy more than he was intense. Loud noises, bright lights, the wrong fabric all of these could set him off and he would be distraught and fretful for what seemed an unreasonable length of time. I tried 'mom and baby playgroups' so that I could sit and enjoy chatting about the joys, trials and tribulations of new motherhood, but Will just cried at the echoes in the community centre where the playgroup was held. We had to quit 2 separate 'mom and baby playgroups' as a result of his excessive fussiness. It got pretty lonely at home, but I just accepted the fact that this is what being a new mom was all about. I forced myself to take him for walks, despite his crying in the stroller - every bump on the street or sidewalk would unsettle him. He never took a pacifier, despite our repeated attempts. I had well intentioned people tell me 'if you relax, he will be relaxed'. When I approached Will's pediatrician with my concerns over his excessive crying, her exact words were "What did you expect? That's what babies do, they cry." It wasn't long after that appointment that I realized that wasn't the doctor for us. Since I was nursing, I eliminated dairy from my diet, thinking that would be the cure - it wasn't. I read books and tried to find every possible way to make my beautiful little boy happy. We established a great routine for sleeping and eating that really seemed to work; Will enjoyed his routine. But any bump in the routine led to what we came to label as 'a meltdown'. Little did we know in those early months that the term would become part of our daily vocabulary in the near future!

I returned to work half time in February of 2004. I had some severe anxiety at who would look after my sweet but 'high maintenance' child. We found a wonderful caregiver, Cindy, who looked after him 2 mornings a week while both grandmas split the rest of the time. It wasn't until I returned to work full time in September 2004 that Cindy got to truly experience just a snapshot of what we were experiencing at home.

A WILL OF MY OWN (Cont'd)

We were honestly surprised that Cindy didn't just give up on William and send us packing. After all, I think she surprised herself as well as there were enough happy and lower maintenance children out there in need of childcare, why stand up to such a challenge? But Cindy did. She consulted with an early childhood developmental specialist at the Ontario Early Years Centre who provided some strategies that would help William with the transitions he was having so much difficulty with. The joys and struggles at home continued as Will got older. I hated to compare my son with other children, but it was hard not to. Other children enjoyed playing with their toys, laughed at a funny puppet show, and took pleasure in Gymboree classes, music lessons and play dates. But not William. Will rarely used his toys for their intended purpose; instead he used them to build his 'machines' and 'inventions' from a very early age. Instead of enjoying the fun of the puppet show, he would focus and obsess on one object or gesture and this thought would consume him for the duration of the performance - and usually for days afterward! His vocabulary and use of language was advanced for his age, and he was so inquisitive about his environment. We never doubted that we had an extremely bright little boy.

I recall attending one birthday party for our friend's son, and William stayed in our van almost the entire 2 hours building an elaborate 'invention' with a box of bungee cords; he was in his own little world. No amount of coaxing was going to get him out to play and he didn't even want to. He explained his bungee cord invention to me, and I must say it was quite an elaborate and well thought out engineering feat.

So here we are in February 2009. William is now 6 years old. A mother just knows. We first reached out for serious intervention in the summer of 2006, when we were expecting our daughter, Danielle. Will's meltdowns had progressed to aggression and I just couldn't take the kicking, spitting and hitting anymore; especially with a newborn on the way. William was, and is, the sweetest little child with a heart of gold and we just knew there was something beyond our control at work in his head. We had read books on proactive discipline measures and we tried our best, but there was something that just wasn't clicking with Will. No amount of consistency and predictability seemed to change any of his often times irrational behaviours. We thought we were going crazy and began questioning ourselves. Why did it seem to be so easy for everyone else? We knew that parenting was hard work, but we just couldn't understand why many of our consistent, proactive and positive discipline practices would continue to end in a meltdown. And we were (and still are) so tired of people telling us that tantrums and obsessive behaviours are normal parts of childhood - we realize that! But Will's intensity, duration, unpredictability and frequency were what concerned us the most; these were not 'normal age appropriate tantrums' nor were his obsessions and need for order in the realm of most other children we observed. We are not crazy, nor were we looking for a problem that didn't exist. Trust me when I say that we wished for calm and predictability more than anyone we knew! We are intelligent people with so much love and drive to be the best parents. Why was it that we felt we were defending and explaining our concerns to everybody? It truly seemed that nobody listened.

Trust me. A mother just knows.

We had a child and youth worker visit us from Crossroads Children's Centre in Ottawa. She put some behavioural strategies into place that would help Will manage himself, and help us manage him. We voluntarily signed up for parenting classes, and we continue to use those strategies as our own sanity; it gave us a vocabulary in our home that we all understood. Will's sister, Danielle, is over 2 years old now and even she 'gets it' when Will is in meltdown mode. No amount of great parenting is going to change the way his brain is wired, but perhaps our parenting can provide him with useful strategies to help calm him and bring him back from the brink of his meltdowns in the future. It breaks my heart when I see the worried look on our daughter's face when her loving brother is having one of his outbursts, but we have addressed that and Will knows enough to go to his 'safe spot' (a tent in his bedroom) when he is feeling overwhelmed or frustrated.

A WILL OF MY OWN (Cont'd)

William is now in SK and it is a struggle most days to get him excited about school. He is no longer riding the regular school bus, it was sensory overload for him and his safety was becoming an issue. The final straw came when the Vice Principal got a phone call from an exasperated bus driver mid-route. Will was out of control (translation: over stimulated) and was climbing everywhere with no regard to the driver's instructions. Will is not a bad child, but he is easily over stimulated. The freedom a regular school bus provided him proved to be too much for him to handle. Numerous proactive interventions had been put into place leading up to this incident, but the VP having to physically intervene in the situation was the final red flag. Instead, he is picked up and dropped off in a 'special transportation' van and this has worked perfectly for William - no more incidents.

There is nothing worse than listening to your son say how much he dislikes school - especially when both my husband and I are teachers. We are working closely with the school in order to make Will's time there as positive and as painless as possible. An IEP (Individual Education Plan) is in place, but ultimately it will be up to my husband and I to ensure that the IEP suits his needs and progress at any given time. The Kindergarten years are much more important than we realize, the experiences in those precious months are imprinted on a child forever. We only hope that he will be embraced and recognized by his future teachers and peers as the creative, sensitive and sweet (albeit hyper!) little gentleman that we know and adore. We want our son to love learning, but sometimes for a child with Asperger's, the school environment is hell on earth. For William, much of his anxiety for the school environment is showing up in silly and inappropriate behaviours. The school is doing a wonderful job of addressing and managing this with social stories and extrinsic rewards. As much as some people might disagree with the 'extrinsic' component of rewarding behaviour - walk a mile in my (or most!) child's shoes and perhaps you'll see that he is not quite capable of appreciating the 'intrinsic' aspect just yet. After all, he is only 6 years old. We'll work on his appreciation for the intrinsic value of acceptable behaviour for many years to come. We teach high school and we still see many students motivated extrinsically! It is a maturity issue that can long persist into the teen years. In the meantime, we are hoping to foster a confident and well rounded child who will work hard and appreciate what life has to offer!

Despite our best efforts at stimulating Will's heart health, he had to drop out of Jiu Jitsu classes because the environment, in his own words, "made his brain hurt". It was becoming very apparent that Will needed a 1:1 instructor just to get through the class. As for soccer, well he picked the clovers! And we were strongly advised (told) to never put him in group swimming lessons again; we now pay for privates at a cost of \$20/half hour. He prefers the freedom our backyard pool has to offer, but at least he likes the water. He despises his skating lessons and riding his bike is a chore, but we are still keen on introducing him to as many activities and sports as possible in order to instill in him a love for physical activity. He seems to like running everywhere though! Rarely is he walking from one place to another when he is excited! Perhaps solitary long-distance running will be his niche.

We have created a network of friends that enjoy and accept Will and all of his idiosyncrasies. We have also recently been open and honest about Will's diagnosis. Some people state "really? We never see that other side of William" to which I say, "Count yourself lucky!" But at least if they ever experience one of his meltdowns, they will know. Whether or not they minimize the diagnosis is beyond our control, but all we ask for is a little understanding and some empathy for the strength that our family draws on each and every day when we raise our wonderful son.

A WILL OF MY OWN (Cont'd)

Some examples of his quirky behaviours are when he saw a friend at the local grocery store, Will dropped down and started doing snow angels in the middle of the floor. On another occasion, we knocked on a friend's door for a scheduled play date and when the door was opened, Will dropped down on all fours and began to crawl around yelling out 'goo goo gaa gaa'. Some might say that this is simply a 'boy being a boy' but I would have to disagree since these are daily occurrences and they are constantly happening in social situations. In many, many ways, Will is a typical 6 year old boy but in many, many, many, many more ways - he is not.

Trust me. A mother just knows.

Will has incredible - although possibly limited - potential and it is the collective responsibility of my husband and I, our extended families, our friends, the school and the greater community to embrace his gifts and guide him in his challenges. I have no doubt that our William will design some amazing buildings or bridges in his lifetime. Or perhaps he will be a writer or computer genius! Whatever it is he is good at and loves, we will support him. When he is passionate about something, his attention to detail is first rate and he creates and produces incredible things! Our greatest concern is his inability to play the 'social game' that is everyday life. The social world is much more complicated than most of us realize, and as much as I don't like the term 'disability' - it is a truth that my husband and I cannot turn a blind eye to. Will is disabled in many ways, and we are seeking multiple therapies to help him cope with, not cure, those shortcomings. At the same time, we are going to foster the many gifts that accompany his disabilities so that he can shine in his own unique ways. After all, I believe that it is the dream of most parents to instill in their children "a Will of their own."

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Nicole S. Fenty, Melissa A. Miller and Andrea Lampi

Embed Social Skills Instruction in Inclusive Settings - 20 WAYS TO . . .

There is a current trend to include students with or at risk for learning and behavior problems in the general education curriculum (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Typically, in general education classrooms, the focus is on remediating academic skill deficits rather than social behavior problems (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993). Although students with social skills deficits are increasingly participating in the general education curriculum, teachers are hesitant to devote academic time to social skills development (Korinek & Popp, 1997). The result is a reliance on pull-out programs that occur in isolation, which rarely result in successful generalization and maintenance of target skills (Forness & Kavale, 1996; Lewis, 1994). Many researchers believe that the key to promoting appropriate social behaviors is to incorporate social skills instruction in the academic curriculum (Korinek & Popp, 1997). Teachers in inclusive settings can achieve this by monitoring the social contacts of students with disabilities, implementing activities that develop positive peer relations, and explicitly instructing children in need of further social skills development (Ramsey, 2004). Instructional strategies that combine social and academic learning in a meaningful way can help students who are at risk for school failure (Korinek & Popp, 1997). The following strategies can be used to embed social skills instruction in inclusive settings.

To view the 20 Ways, go to <http://isc.sagepub.com>.

Keelan Learns How to Ski with the Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing



The Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing (CADS) is a volunteer based, non-profit organization having the objective of promoting alpine skiing and snowboarding for persons with a disability. The National Capital Division (CADS-NCD) is a member organization of CADS and oversees the programs and services operating in the regions of Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec.

CADS-NCD supports six formal programs in the region. Ski Hawks Ottawa, at Camp Fortune, for the visually impaired on Wednesday evenings, the Racing program committed to developing racers at the grass roots level, to help create the elite racers and winter Paralympians of the future which takes place on Saturdays at Mont Cascades; the weekend Edelweiss program for all disabilities which is the largest with over 300 participants; and smaller programs for all disabilities at Mont Cascades on Saturdays, Calabogie on Sundays, and Pakenham on Thursdays and Fridays after school and on Saturdays and Sundays.

Sessions run from the first week in January for 8 weeks, but it is advised to register in November as space is limited and so that sufficient volunteers and equipment can be organized. Returning participants do not get priority as the program accepts registrations on a first come, first serve basis. Check out the details at www.cads-ncd.ca and click on the location at the top for the appropriate program contact.

Volunteers should be intermediate or better skiers and will be trained in the techniques developed by CADS to assist a skier. Certification includes CSIA methodology and CADS certification levels, 1, 2, 2A and 3 and improvement clinics are held on a regular basis at Edelweiss. Please pass this information onto anyone who may be interested in volunteering as the program participation total is determined by the number of available volunteer skier support.

As my daughter was already skiing with friends at Mont Cascades, we chose to join the smaller Mont Cascades program that was celebrating its 5th anniversary. Keelan was one of three new skiers for the 2009 season taking the group to twelve with fifteen volunteers. We had tried ski school a year previously but had only been able to afford three, one hour lessons and the instructor had said it would take many more lessons than with a normal child to have a competent skier. When Mike Rochette the Coordinator at Mont Cascade had said Keelan would be skiing with two instructors from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with an hour off for lunch and we were being provided with a lift pass and could borrow skis for a price of \$145.00, I had to ask if that was per week. In fact the \$145.00 is for all 8 weeks and includes CADS membership and insurance for ages 6 to 17 years and \$175 for those 18 years and older – the program is available to adults not just youth.

Melissa was Keelan's allocated Ski instructor and he took to her immediately, on the 3rd week it was just the two of them as a 2nd instructor wasn't required. The poor girl spent all her time skiing backwards, trying to keep him focused on the task of being in control in a snowplow. They fitted his skis with a clamp which held it into a pizza shape, so that if his mind did wander he didn't put his skis together and bomb down the hill or cross them and end up in a heap. We also encountered some very cold weather and arranged to go up only on the afternoon one Saturday and the following Saturday when it was predicted to be -33 C we gave advance notice that we were wimps and wouldn't be going that Saturday which Melissa said was a good call as it was just too cold for such a young beginner.

Keelan Learns How to Ski (Cont'd)



The following Saturday Melissa again was joined by a 2nd instructor and they had a relatively non eventful morning trying to keep him focused. We don't know if it was the Sausages he had for lunch but something just clicked in the afternoon and he was skiing in control on his own. Melissa would lead the way with her arms out to indicate which way she was turning and Keelan would follow. His confidence soared and after that it was more about slowing him down than getting him to ski – he could go from the top to the bottom of the beginner slope in just under a minute!

On the 8th and final Saturday, the group would only be skiing in the morning. A slalom race circuit was organized and all the skiers had two opportunities to try to get the best times. Keelan's first run was 34 seconds and his 2nd 31 seconds which didn't win him any trophies but a good time for his first season. At Lunch a party was held in the upstairs private room of the lodge restaurant, with quite the feast laid on free for members and volunteers and at a nominal cost for family members. All Skiers were presented with a medal by their instructors and a photographer that had been taken by a

Professional photographer the previous week. The Skiers with the three top times for the Slalom were given trophies and appreciation awards were given to volunteers. Funds are raised for each locations program through a ski-a-thon and each skier was given 1 raffle ticket for each \$5 raised they had raised. These were used for raffle prizes donated by local companies and some Ottawa 67 tickets donated by Children At Risk. All tickets were then added back in the pot for a draw for the grand prize of a plasma TV which we didn't win.

We tried to ski as a family that afternoon but Keelan is skiing just a bit too fast and I doubt that my stress levels could cope with my heart constantly in my mouth for too long. Luckily my husband is tall enough and competent a skier to intercept him so we made it down without incident. We are looking forward to registering again for next year to go from skiing with confidence to skiing in full control and being able to stop when requested rather than the current objective of getting down the hill as fast as possible which was OK on the beginner hill but not on the much steeper, more crowded main drag.

Some additional pictures and video clips are available in support of this article at the Children at Risk website. I now regret telling Keelan that a snail could ski faster as you will hear in one clip. Also the instructor in the video isn't Melissa but Amy who stepped in when Melissa went down with the flu and also injured her arm and was out for the rest of the season.



Learn to Move, Move to Learn – Sensorimotor Early Childhood Activity Themes by Jenny Clark Brack, AAPC 2004
Reviewed by Maureen Bennie, Director, Autism Awareness Centre Inc.

Author Jenny Clark Brack has written an excellent resource for providing best practice occupational therapy services in preschool and early childhood settings. Ms. Brack is a pediatric occupational therapist with over 14 years of experience in school settings. The knowledge she shares in this book will provide anyone working with young children in early childhood settings how to implement a sensory integration program.

The program philosophy is based on 4 points – the sensory integration model is used for activity selection, each group session is theme and literature based, a transdisciplinary approach is used (team members collaborate and share rules), and all group activities are performed in an inclusive environment.

Brack begins her book with an explanation of the sensory systems and how they work. There is a checklist provided for the identification of signs and symptoms of sensory integration and processing dysfunction. School readiness skills are addressed – how to get the children ready for school using a sensory model. The model consists of sensory issues, motor skills and social/emotional, cognitive, language and oral motor skills.

The program is structured using a developmental sequence that consists of seven activities all relating to a selected theme. Each session is 45 – 60 minutes in length. This may sound long for young children, but there are such a variety of activities that no one activity lasts longer than 10 – 15 minutes. Each activity begins on the floor with circle time. Verbal instruction, visual demonstrations, and physical models are provided for the children prior to each activity.

The breakdown of the session looks like the following: warm up, vestibular, proprioception, balance, eye-hand coordination, cool down, and fine motor. If adaptations need to be made or if time is limited, Brack provides the tools to do this in chapter 4. For example, the 30-minute lesson would have 4 activities – warm up, proprioception, cool down (which is a book), and fine motor.

Brack devotes an entire chapter to dynamic problem solving. Her most quotable line from the book is, “If it doesn’t work it’s evaluation, if it works it’s therapy!” Collaboration with other team members, leadership roles, monitoring and adjusting group activity levels is explored.

Planning process tools are provided such as looking at ways to meet individual student goals through activities (make it functional), other suggestions for documentation and how to create your own lesson plans. The equipment and materials list outlines what is needed for activities, all of them being simple such as bean bags, jump ropes, or a balance beam. There is a lesson plan outline provided and a reproducible template in the appendix.

The themes cover seasons, holidays, basic preschool concepts such as shape recognition, and personal care such as dental health. These activities will carry the program through the school year and take much of the guesswork out of planning. Children’s books are suggested for each cool down activity. The appendix has lesson plan templates, assessment sheets, the definition of the body positions mentioned in the lessons, recommended children’s books and black line drawings of objects for the lesson plans.

Learn to Move, Move to Learn – Sensorimotor Early Childhood Activity Themes is an essential resource for inclusive preschools and early childhood classrooms to develop sensorimotor skills. Ms. Brack gives educators and occupational therapists the tools to build a solid program by using interesting theme based activities.

Learn to Move, Move to Learn – Sensorimotor Early Childhood Activity Themes (Cont'd)

In January 2009, Jenny published her second book entitled *Learn to Move, Moving Up: Sensorimotor Elementary-School Activity Themes*. In a comprehensive introduction that covers current trends in education and occupational therapy, the book overviews many evidence-based practices as well as yoga, music, and Speed Stacks. Throughout, the emphasis is on involving the child's team for the best possible outcomes.

The centerpiece of the book consists of 30 sensorimotor, theme-based lesson plans that include literacy and curriculum suggestions for teachers, and suggests ways that they can be incorporated into busy elementary school schedules and environments. As in Brack's first book, the carefully developed lesson plans offer activities structured around seven elements designed for both learning and fun: Warm-Up, Vestibular, Proprioception, Balance, Eye-Hand Coordination, Cool-Down and Fine Motor.

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