CARD’s 9th Annual Autism Conference
Practical Evidence-Based Strategies for Positively Impacting the Lives of Individuals on the Autism Spectrum

On Friday, October 29, 2010, school personnel, family members, and community professionals from 35 New York state counties attended The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities’ 9th Annual Conference at the Holiday Inn on Wolf Road in Albany, NY.

Dr. Robin Brewer, Associate Professor in the School of Special Education at the University of Northern Colorado and noted publisher and author, gave the keynote presentation entitled “What Works? Effective Classroom-Based Strategies for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.” With the added knowledge base she has received as a behavioral consultant at the Colorado Department of Education and through her extensive research experience, Dr. Brewer instructed participants in identifying and understanding how to select and implement scientifically based instructional and behavioral strategies for students on the autism spectrum.


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Geneva Centre for Autism Poster Presentation

The Geneva Centre for Autism held its 2010 International Symposium on Autism this past November in Toronto, Canada. The Symposium featured presentations by leading researchers in the field, an expo highlighting educational and developmental tools, as well as art and music showcased by individuals with autism.

At the research poster session, CARD presented a study conducted by principal investigator, Lindsay A. Washington, which examined typically developing children’s attitudes among first-grade students towards a peer with behaviors indicative of autism. The results of this study have thus far found that the students did not express significantly different behavioral intentions towards a peer with autism than towards a typical peer. Also, the results indicated that female students were as likely as male students to accept a peer with autism. Data for this research study will continue to be collected throughout the spring.
Parent Education Program for Families of Children Newly Diagnosed with Autism

The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities in collaboration with Capital Care Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics got off to a great start with a much needed no cost education program for parents of children (12 months to 5 years) recently diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder who reside in the Capital District or a surrounding county. The program is funded by a grant from the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities and consists of 5 two-hour group sessions covering critical topics such as Autism 101, How to Choose Treatment, Medical/Developmental Issues, Accessing Resources and Living with ASD.

The first session took place on November 9th 2010 with several families attending. CARD and Capital Care Developmental-Behavioral Pediatric staff led the evening by sharing important information about autism, such as what are common signs of autism, what does autism look like in every day life, how is autism diagnosed, what causes autism and some current trends. In addition to sharing vital information, the evening was marked by lively and engaging interactions between the session facilitators and the participants, with the facilitators answering questions as well as listening to the caregiver’s personal experiences related to their child’s autism. Since this first evening in November, three more sessions have taken place, including a second start-up session on December 7, 2010 with more new families attending. These start-up sessions are offered on a regular basis in addition to the monthly session covering one of the four critical topics related to how to choose treatment, medical/developmental issues, accessing resources and living with ASD.

If you are interested in more information, please, contact Dr. Kristin Knapp-Ines at 518-442-5418 or visit the CARD Albany website: http://www.albany.edu/autism

Annual Distinguished Guest Lecture on Autism

Annually, CARD Albany invites distinguished autism experts to present on the latest cutting-edge research in the field, in areas such as genetics and brain imaging.

Two lectures are offered: one for physicians and other medical professionals and another for parents and non-medical professionals. Lectures last approximately 90 minutes, with an additional 30 minutes for questions and discussion. Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits are provided for medical professionals through a joint sponsorship with New York Medical College. The Distinguished Guest Lectures on Autism are free of charge.

This year’s Guest Lecture will be presented by Robert T. Schultz, Ph.D. Dr. Schultz is the Director of the Center for Autism Research at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) affect as many as 1 in 110 children, making them more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. This presentation will begin by reviewing the current psychiatric nomenclature on ASD, with discussion of potential changes that will occur with the DSM-V. It will also present a review of current research on social perceptual deficits in ASD. It has long been recognized that ASD is strongly heritable; these data will be reviewed, including classic twin studies, as well as more recent genome wide association studies. Much data has accumulated over the last decade using MRI to define ways in which the structure and function of the brain in ASD differs from typically developing children. These data will be reviewed, with a special emphasis on functional MRI studies of brain differences during social perceptual tasks.

For more information about future Guest Lectures, please visit our website: http://www.albany.edu/autism
For many students with Asperger Syndrome, getting accepted to a college is not a challenge. However, they do not possess the complex communication, social and executive functioning skills that are essential to a positive transition to college. Once in college, many students experience significant struggles with a new environment that requires them to regulate their lives, self-advocate to compensate for their disability and independently identify and obtain supports that are needed.

While many colleges are beginning to understand that there is a need to provide accommodations and supports, that go beyond the typical scope of academia, to students with Asperger Syndrome, it is a slow process. This book is an excellent resource for college personnel seeking information about Asperger’s. It offers down to earth explanations as well as real scenarios of the challenges that students face in college due to the characteristics of their disability. It touches on many areas and phases of the college experience. It includes practical strategies and worksheets that can be used immediately in the classroom and also address housing, life in a residence, safety and employment issues.

This book should be looked at as more than a resource for college professionals. Many of the chapters in this book are great topic starters and transition ideas for IEP development as well as for parents preparing their child to start the college experience. Accommodations and modifications can be utilized and placed on the IEP well before the students enters college. The appendix is full of checklists, forms and organizers that students can learn to utilize BEFORE they head off to college. This will ease the transition process as well as providing students with valuable tools to increase success.

Introduction to this book during the high school experience also addressed the one down side I found to the book. That is that college professionals are required to seek out information about college students with Asperger’s Syndrome in order to benefit from it. This book, or at least the resources inside it, would be great gifts to provide to college disability service programs and even to individual professors when students make their initial visits to the college they have chosen.
**CARD Albany Welcomes New Staff Members!**

**Nancy Lashway Damoretcki, M.S. Ed., CAS**

Nancy Damoretcki received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education and Special Education from the State University of New York at Geneseo, a Master of Science degree in Reading at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY and a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Educational Leadership from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh. Her professional experience includes working with students who have learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral problems, and developmental disabilities, including autism, for over fifteen years. She gained experience working with autism spectrum disorders by working as a Special Education Itinerant Teacher where she focused on providing educational and behavioral intervention services to preschool students. Most recently, Nancy worked for four years as the chairperson for the Committee on Special Education and Preschool Special Education in a public school setting. She provided training, support and guidance to students, parents, staff members and community agencies for students classified through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Nancy has been on the Advisory Council for the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities for two years as well as a volunteer for Special Olympics.

**Lauren Simon-Friedfel, M.S.,CAS**

Lauren Simon-Friedfel received both a B.A. degree in psychology and an M.S. degree in Educational Psychology and Methodology from the University at Albany, State University of New York. She also completed a Certificate of Advanced Study in School Psychology and is now a New York State certified School Psychologist. Lauren initially gained experience working as an in-home therapist utilizing the techniques of applied behavior analysis to teach academic and daily living skills to a child with autism. During her internship at Fonda-Fultonville Central School District, she administered assessments, provided counseling services, and developed functional behavior assessment/behavior intervention plans for students in grades K-12.

Most recently, she worked as the school psychologist at Crossroads Center for Children, a nonprofit school for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, where she coordinated and completed multidisciplinary evaluations for children referred through early intervention programs and school district special education committees. She has also been involved in providing training on various topics including behavior management, best practices in assessment, and psychometrics.

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Throughout the day, conference attendees were given the opportunity to look through a variety of resources at the book fair sponsored by the Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza. As part of registration, participants were each given a DVD of the Center for Autism's 4th Annual Statewide Conference in Syracuse, NY.

We would like to thank all our presenters, The Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza, The Holiday Inn on Wolf Road, as well as our participants, for making this event a continued success. We look forward to another wonderful conference Friday, October 21st, 2011 at the Holiday Inn on Wolf Road.

**Autism Requirement Course Offered Online**

The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities is pleased to offer an online version of “Responding to the Needs of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders”. When successfully completed, this 3-hour training satisfies the requirement for special education teachers and administrators licensed or certified on or after February 2, 2007 as required by the New York State Legislature in Chapter 143 of the Laws of 2006.

Anyone interested in taking the course should visit CARD’s website for guidelines, instructions and to download a registration form: [http://www.albany.edu/autism](http://www.albany.edu/autism)