



CENTER FOR AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York

College of Arts and Sciences Department of Psychology

Expansion and Funding Announcement

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For the past 4 years, the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD Albany) has been providing evidence-based training and support at NO COST to families and professionals throughout the Capital Region. In addition, CARD Albany has been involved in pioneering research projects designed to enhance quality of life for children and families affected by autism. The New York State Legislature, led by Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and his colleagues Senators Hugh T. Farley, Elizabeth O’C Little, Stephen M. Saland, and James L. Seward, assisted the Center in securing \$1 million in funding to expand the services the

Center currently provides in 10 counties (Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren and Washington) to an additional 2 counties (Hamilton and Schoharie). The ongoing support of the NYS Legislature has resulted in improved services for schools and families in our area, and will be critical in eventually expanding the program into a full regional network of centers throughout New York State.

Autism was added as a special education classification in 1991 and is now the 6th most commonly classified disability in the United States. With an increasing number of children being diagnosed with

autism (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that up to 500,000 individuals between the ages of 0 to 21 have an autism spectrum disorder), demands on special education programs to provide specialized services are mounting. A tremendous need for services has been identified in local school districts, and last year alone CARD Albany provided 44 school, community, and parent trainings to over 1,100 individuals. Since the program's inception in 2002, over 3,500 parents, siblings, educators, and community professionals have participated in a variety of different programs designed to improve outcomes for children with autism.

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Third Annual Benefit: Casino Night

Place your bet on CARD! The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities hosted their third annual benefit on Friday, May 19, 2006. This year’s benefit was a Casino Night at Birch Hill in Schodack, NY. In addition to exciting casino games such as Blackjack, Craps, Roulette and Texas Hold ‘Em poker, the Center also sponsored a silent auction and raffle.



Benita Zahn from News Channel 13 served as CARD’s Mistress of Ceremonies. We were also delighted to have Joan Wick-Pelletier, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University at Albany speak about CARD’s programs. Other guest

speakers included Jeffrey McLellan, CASDA Executive Director, and chair of the Albany-Schenectady Advisory Council, and Gail Aiken, a parent of an individual with autism and chair of the Saratoga-

Warren-Washington Advisory Council. Each of CARD-Albany’s supporting New York State Senators, including Honorary Co-Chair Elizabeth O’C Little, were recognized.

Many of our loyal families, community members, and special guests came out to support the continuing efforts of the Center for Autism to bring quality programming, training, and research to the communities we serve. A portion of the proceeds from this year’s benefit will be used to host a family summer picnic! Thanks to all for making this year’s benefit a success!

- SAVE THE DATE -

CARD's Family Picnic

August 2, 2006 from 4-8pm

This event is made possible by funds raised at our annual benefit.



As part of Autism Awareness month, the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities hosted a special presentation on Wednesday, April 19th for parents. Dr. Luke Tsai from the University of Michigan presented on the use of medication in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Dr. Tsai is not only a medical doctor and professor with years of experience treating young people with Pervasive Developmental Disorders, he also is a father of a young man with Autism. The program, entitled *Taking the Mystery Out of Medications in Autism/ Asperger's Syndrome* was held at the Price Chopper Room in Schenectady, NY. Parents and family members from around the region attended this informative night, and learned a great deal about the use of medications in children and adults with Autism and

April Was Autism Awareness Month!

Related Disabilities. Dr. Tsai presented again the following night, April 20th, at Four Winds Hospital in Saratoga Springs. This event, co-hosted by Four Winds, was an exciting opportunity for local doctors, school nurses, and other medical professionals to learn more about the use of medications in children and adults with Autism and Related Disorders. Dr. Tsai provided vital information on current issues in the field, as well as answered questions from both parents and professionals. He was a great addition to our list of activities for Autism Awareness month. In addition to Dr. Tsai's presentation at Four Winds, CARD-Albany, along with the help of our undergraduate students, kicked off our first campus-wide Autism Awareness program. Our goal was to provide students and professionals at the University with the opportunity to learn more about Autism

and CARD's presence on campus and in the community. Together we were able to initiate our first bottle drive to raise funds for our recreational programs while promoting awareness on the University's campus. Our undergraduate students played an integral role in disseminating information to the campus quads and in re-affirming CARD's presence on the campus. To wrap up the month's efforts, Dr. Christodulu provided the University students with a presentation on Autism Spectrum Disorders while explaining the various services CARD provides. Over all, it was a great effort to promote autism awareness at the University and help students learn more about CARD's presence in the community and on campus! Thank you to all who participated!



Sibling Research Study

The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) is proud to be offering a research study for siblings and parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. This study is designed to help families of children with autism improve their knowledge, communication, and support within their families. The child portion of the workshops will follow a *Sibshop* model, including games and discussions in a relaxed environment (Meyer & Vadasy,

1994). Parents will also engage in lively activities and discussions with CARD staff members. Participants will attend four, two-and-a-half hour sessions, part of which involve the parent and child working together, and part of which occur separately. The dates for the first group will be July 8, July 22 and August 5, and August 19, 2006. The second group will meet on August 8, 2006 from 5:30-8:30pm. All meeting will be held at the

East Greenbush Library. Criteria for selection include not having participated in a training of this nature prior to the study and the completion of surveys to aid in the collection of data. In addition, the child (sibling) must be between the ages of 7 and 12 to be eligible for the study. If you are interested in learning more about this research project please contact CARD at 518-442-2574.

Make and Take Workshop

Communication difficulties are a common issue of concern for children on the spectrum. Children may have difficulty understanding spoken communication or have a hard time transitioning from one activity to another. One of the characteristics of children with an autism spectrum disorder is that he/she is usually a visual learner. Visual supports can help children make sense of their environment and enable them to understand others more readily. The supports are utilized in order to capitalize on this strength so that children may become more independent.

The purpose of the Make and Take Workshop was to provide the tools and resources to develop visual aids, such as schedules, choice boards etc, for parents, teachers, and other professionals to use with children with an autism spectrum disorder.

Participants had the opportunity to develop up to 3 boards and choose applicable picture cards from an assortment of options that matched the skill level and interest of the child.

This event was the first of its kind and was successful beyond expectation! Over 100 parents and professionals joined CARD – Albany staff and

students to develop visual supports. The feedback provided by the participants was overwhelmingly positive and left with finished products that can be implemented at home, in school and/or in the community very easily with a little bit of preparation and instruction for the child.

We look forward to hosting more Make and Take Workshops in the future! A special thank you the SUNY undergraduates who worked so diligently in developing the cards. Your hard work really made a difference in the lives of many!

Parent Education Series and Autism Training Initiative Update!

CARD Albany's two new training series, the Parent Education Series (PES) and the Autism Training Initiative (ATI), are off to a great start! The first PES was held in Albany from November 2005 to March 2006. It focused on teaching parents the principles of Positive Behavior Support. We received such positive feedback that we decided to schedule another series in Greenville which began in February and ran through June. Parents not only received group training on how to prevent and intervene effectively in

their child's problem behaviors, but also received individualized assistance throughout each training session. Future PES topics are currently under development and new sessions will begin in Fall 2006!

The Autism Training Initiative has also been a great success. Two school districts- Windham- Ashland- Jewett in Greene County and Hoosick Falls in Rensselaer County- have participated this spring. CARD staff presented on the topics of Instructional Methods and Activities and Peer Mediation and

Social Interaction. Groups consisting of teachers, paraprofessionals, administration, and related staff participated in a morning presentation and then were able to receive direct assistance on individual students in the afternoon. Again, this training series has been so successful that we are currently scheduling school districts into Spring 2007. If you are interested in learning more about either of these two training initiatives, please visit our website at <http://www.albany.edu/psy/autism/autism.html>

Mark your calendars for the upcoming PES and ATI!!

PARENT EDUCATION SERIES: FALL 2006

September 19, October 11, November 8,
November 29, December 13
10am-12pm

Glasby Room at the Saratoga Springs Public Library

Please contact the Center to register!

AUTISM TRAINING INITIATIVE: FALL 2006

Wells: September 5, October 6, November 17

Amsterdam: October 5, November 2, December 7

Schenectady: September 21, October 12, November 7

Berlin: September 26, October 24, November 28



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Upcoming Events

July

July 8th: Sibling and Parent Research Study

East Greenbush Library

July 12th: Catskill Game Farm

July 13th: School Team Training at Questar III BOCES

“Adapting Instructional Materials and Strategies”

July 19th: Empire State Aerosciences Museum

July 19th: School Team Training at Catskill Elementary

“Autism Spectrum Disorders”

July 22nd: Sibling and Parent Research Study

East Greenbush Library

July 26th: FunPlex Fun Park

August

August 2nd: CARD Family Picnic

August 4th: Mac-Haydn Theatre

August 5th: Sibling and Parent Research Study

East Greenbush Library

August 7th: Great Escape

August 8th: Sibling and Parent Research Study

East Greenbush Library

August 19th: Sibling and Parent Research Study

East Greenbush Library

August 22nd: School Team

Training at Whitehall Elementary

“Adapting Instructional Materials and Strategies”

August 30th: CARD Open House

Book Recommendations and Reviews

As a resource center, CARD – Albany reviews and utilizes information from numerous books on various topics. Here we would like to highlight a few that have been helpful in gaining knowledge and strategies that we are then able to pass along to parents and professionals we support. We hope that you find this information helpful during your quest to acquire new, useful information.

Peer Play and the Autism Spectrum: The Art of Guiding Children's Socialization and Imagination. By Pamela J. Wolfberg.

“In *Peer Play and the Autism Spectrum: The Art of Guiding Children's Socialization and Imagination*, Pamela Wolfberg turns her award-winning research into a practical manual for practitioners and caregivers seeking to address the unique and complex challenges children on the autism spectrum experience. This practical guide offers an introduction to the basic principles, tools and techniques that comprise the Integrated Play Groups model, designed to support children of diverse ages and abilities on the autism spectrum (novice players) in mutual play experiences with typical peers and siblings (expert players). Small groups of children regularly play together under the guidance of an adult facilitator (play guide) through a carefully tailored system of support. At the same time, an equally important focus is on teaching the peer group to be more accepting, responsive and inclusive of children who relate and play in different ways. This innovative book is full of forms, checklists and other tools to facilitate implementation.”

Asperger's...What does it Mean to Me?: A workbook explaining self awareness and life lessons to the child or youth with high functioning autism or Asperger's (Structured teaching ideas for home and school)_by Catherine Faherty.

“The first chapter introduces autism and explains the ways that you and your child would be writing in the book. The chapters to follow focus on an important aspect of life i.e.: communication, understanding, and friends. The chapters are broken into two parts, *workbook for the child to fill out* and *for parents and teachers*. The workbook attempts to describe ordinary circumstances of everyday life, pointing out typical behaviors of children with autism, and why his/her experience may sometimes differ from others. The second part of the chapter is primarily for parents and teachers. This part supplements the workbook pages with related concepts, ideas, and practical suggestions for home and school.”

The Sibling Slam Book: What It's Really Like To Have A Brother Or Sister With Special Needs by Don Meyer (Editor), David Gallagher (Foreword)

“Give teenagers a chance to say what's on their minds, and you might be surprised by what you hear. That's exactly what Don Meyer, creator of Sibshops and author of *VIEWS FROM OUR SHOES* did when he invited together a group of 80 teenagers, from all over the United States and abroad, to talk about what it's like to have a brother or sister with special needs. Their unedited words are found in *THE SIBLING SLAM BOOK*, a brutally honest, non-PC look at the lives, experiences, and opinions of siblings without disabilities.

Formatted like the slam books passed around in many junior high and high schools, this one poses a series of 50 personal questions along the lines of:

‘What should we know about you?’

‘What do you tell your friends about your sib's disability?’”