

## **Annual Report to the Pathfinder Membership**

For the year ending March 31, 2004:

**SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF THE PATHFINDERS FOR AUTISM RESOURCE CENTER.** In less than a year since opening the Resource Center on May 19, 2003, our website pages have been visited more than 33,000 times, our database of resources has been searched over 2000 times and Resource Center Coordinator Linda Pearl has directly assisted 272 families that contacted her via email or telephone. While the focus of the Resource Center is to provide families in Maryland who have children with autism with access to medical, dental, therapeutic, recreational, educational and other resources, we have also been contacted numerous times by people from out of state and occasionally, from out of the country (including one from Angola, Africa seeking information on how to set up a Resource Center!).

**AWARENESS CAMPAIGN.** With the launch of the Resource Center, we recognized the imperative to make families aware of its availability. Accordingly, we developed a media awareness campaign late in our (March) fiscal year that would run during April, National Autism Awareness Month. The campaign featured Board Vice President B. J. Surhoff, Honorary Board Member Michael Phelps and Cal Ripken in both radio and television public service announcements highlighting the availability of the Resource Center. Board Member Polly Surhoff also visited the Orioles broadcast booth during the month to further help get the word out.

Additionally, Pathfinders scheduled meetings to make public officials, particularly in the school system, and other important contacts aware of this new resource for families. Such contacts included:

- Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools
- Dr. Carol Ann Baglin, Assistant State Superintendent of Schools, Division of Special Education
- Marjorie Shulbank, Special Initiatives and Parent Support Specialist, Maryland State Department of Education
- Dr. Eric Levey, head of the Committee on Children with Disabilities of the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

We also met with various officials from counties in the state.

**OTHER PROGRAMS.** Pathfinders continued to fund two internship programs at Kennedy Krieger Institute, one for college students and one for post-doctoral fellows, in order to increase the number of trained professionals working in the field of autism. Also, Pathfinders was able to arrange a day at the Timonium State Fair for a number of families who have children with autism.

CONTINUED FUNDING SUCCESS. Along with emphasizing the availability of the Resource Center, we also focused on funding it. Another highly successful golf tournament was directed by Golf Committee Chair Ray Brusca and the Oriole Wives held two auctions at Camden Yards which raised over \$142,000 for Pathfinders.

SUMMARY: Launching the Resource Center was a major, long awaited goal of the Board and we are thrilled with its early success in terms of activity. Most importantly, however, users of the Resource Center find the service helpful. As the mother of one 13 year old boy with autism communicated to Resource Center Coordinator Linda Pearl, "Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me this morning. It was like finally seeing the proverbial light at the end of one confusing tunnel."

Reactions such as that are extremely gratifying to those of us at Pathfinders, for indeed our mission remains, as always,

**"To find a path for our children."**

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Pathfinders, Inc.,

Brian R. Mund  
President  
July, 2004