



PATHFINDERS

FOR AUTISM

The Pathfinder

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Summer 2007

Improving the lives of individuals with autism - and their families - through research, referrals, and resources since 2000.

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Earlier Diagnosis of Autism

In a study published in the Archives of General Psychiatry (July 2007), Dr. Rebecca Landa and researchers from Kennedy Krieger Institute showed that autism can be diagnosed at close to one year of age.

The study, which evaluated social and communication development in autism spectrum disorders (ASD) from 14 to 36 months of age, revealed that approximately half of all children with autism can be diagnosed around their first birthday. Earlier diagnosis of the disorder allows for earlier intervention, which can make a major difference in helping children with autism reach their full potential.

The researchers examined social and communication development in children starting at 14 months of age. Half of the children with a final diagnosis of ASD made at 30 or 36 months of age had been diagnosed with the disorder at 14 months. Through repeated observation and the use of standardized tests of development, researchers identified, for the first time, disruptions in social, communication and play development that were indicative of ASD in 14-month-olds.

Dr. Rebecca Landa, lead study author and director of Kennedy Krieger's Center for Autism and Related Disorders, and her colleagues identified the following developmental issues for parents and pediatricians to watch for:

— **Abnormalities in initiating communication with others:** Rather than



requesting help to open a jar of bubbles through gestures and vocalizations paired with eye contact, a child with ASD may struggle to open it themselves or fuss, often without looking at the nearby person.

— **Compromised ability to initiate and respond to opportunities to share experiences with others:** Children with ASD infrequently monitor other people's focus of attention. Therefore, a child with ASD will miss cues that are important for shared engagement with others, and miss opportunities for learning as well as for initiating communication about a shared topic of interest. For example, if a parent looks at a stuffed animal across the room, the child with ASD often does not follow the gaze and also look at the stuffed animal. Nor does this child often initiate communication with others. In contrast, children with typical development would observe the parent's shift in gaze, look at the same object, and share in an exchange with the parent about the object of mutual focus.

— **Irregularities when playing with toys:** Instead of using a toy as it is meant to be used, such as

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Public Policy Updates

National

■ In March 2007, Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Wayne Allard (R-CO) introduced the Expanding the Promise of Individuals with Autism Act (EPIAA) designed to provide demonstration grants for autism treatment and services. The EPIAA bill would authorize \$350 million in new federal funding for autism-related programs to serve families complementing the research dollars authorized by the Combating Autism Act passed in 2006 (see below.)

■ In June 2007, the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee approved funding for the Combating Autism Act as part of its fiscal 2008 spending bill. Specifically, the Subcommittee provided funding of the CAA authorized \$53.5 million for programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

■ The Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee also provided \$1 million for implementation of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) and has required the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to provide a report by July 1, 2008 on its implementation of the research-related provisions of the Combating Autism Act, including funding levels for research recommended by the IACC's strategic plan.

■ Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ), Mike Doyle (D-PA), and Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) have circulated a letter among their congressional colleagues requesting their support of \$15 million for research on autism in the Fiscal 2008 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill.

Other States

■ Pennsylvania House Speaker Dennis O'Brien (R-Philadelphia County) introduced an Autism Insurance bill that would create a mandate for insurance companies to cover autism therapies, care and services. This legislation has passed the House and now moves to the Senate. The bill is expected to serve as a model for other states.

Upcoming Events

For details and information on these and other events, please see our Calendar of Events at www.pathfindersforautism.org.

A Night at Camden Yards

Saturday, August 25, 7:05 pm, Bullpen Party 5:30 pm

Watch the Orioles take on the Minnesota Twins and celebrate B.J. Surhoff's induction into the Orioles Hall of Fame. B.J. ranks in the top 10 of the club's all-time list in both RBI's and batting average. B.J.'s dedication to the game is surpassed only by that to his family and to helping the many families in Maryland living with autism. Join us in celebrating B.J.'s dedication both on and off the field.

- Game Ticket (upper reserve)- \$13.00
- Game and Bullpen Party ticket - \$35.00
- Already have tickets – Bullpen Party only \$22.00

Bullpen party starts at 5:30 pm and ends with the first pitch. B.J. will try to join us after any pre-game commitments with the Orioles. Bullpen Party includes beef barbeque, kosher hot dog, pasta salad, chips, soda, beer, and dessert. A portion of ticket sales will benefit Pathfinders for Autism. To purchase tickets by check, please contact Event Chair, Glenn Carr, at 410-269-1237 or e-mail glenn carr@aol.com. To purchase tickets on line via credit card, visit <http://www.acteva.com/go/pathfinders>.

Mt. Washington Tavern Guest Bartending

Wednesday, September 26, 6:00 pm – 2:00 am

You have to eat, right? Come out to the Mt. Washington Tavern to raise funds and awareness for Pathfinders for Autism and let B.J. Surhoff serve you a cold one. The Orioles Hall of Famer, his wife, Polly Winde Surhoff, and Steve Geppi of Diamond Comics will be serving up the fun along with some other very special guests. Contact Rebecca Rienzi (410) 769-8221 or e-mail rienzi@pathfindersforautism.org for more information.

Sign Up for e-mail Alerts...

Pathfinders is pleased to offer our newsletter electronically (via email) and alerts on breaking news, invitations to special events, and autism-specific information. To sign up, please send an email to info@pathfindersforautism.org or see our website: www.pathfindersforautism.org.

Art Therapy: Drawing the Inside Out

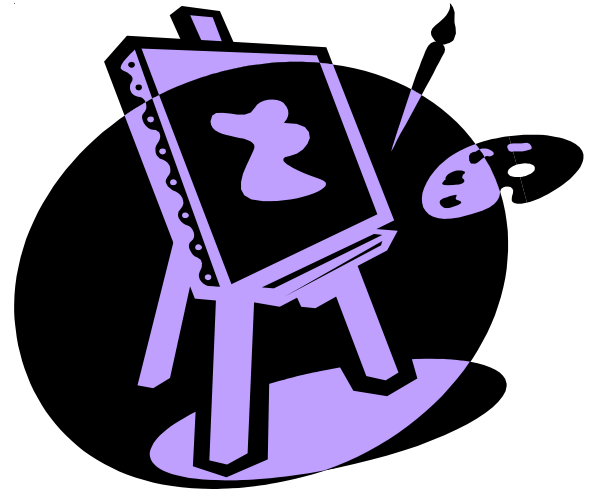
By Cathy Goucher ATR-BC, LCPC

Art therapists are mental health clinicians specially trained in using art materials and therapeutic techniques to work with a variety of individuals and groups, including those diagnosed with autism and developmental disabilities. In working with individuals with autism, art therapists utilize art-based, clinically-driven techniques targeting several areas: increasing communication and social skills, developing an awareness of self and others, and facilitating sensory integration

As an art therapist working with individuals with autism, I first enjoy learning their unique approaches to working with art materials: drawing repetitive references to favorite TV shows; filling reams of paper with large, quickly drawn unique characters, as if frantic to communicate; drawing mechanical objects or maps, as if looking for direction in their attempts to navigate in the world; or pleurably working with sensory materials for the satisfaction of making tangible contact with the world. Such examples don't even come close to exhausting the unique creative energy of individuals with autism.

Art therapy then becomes a stage for inviting change and growth: introducing a dialogue bubble into a finished work, asking what a character might have to say; introducing watercolor pencils as a replacement for colored pencils in an effort to break from the repetitive response; slowing the pace of work, so that the full communicative potential of the artwork can be realized; or using a mirrored surface on which to manipulate sensory materials so that the individual can see himself as he interacts with the environment.

In a group setting, art therapy is generally focused on helping the members to use their art processes and art works to socially connect with each other. Group members might be asked to find



a compromise on what art material or on what theme they might work with that session. They might work together to create a group sculpture or mural, developing and practicing social skills as they do so. Another group's members might simply work with sensory materials in the company of one another, while the art therapist promotes self-aware behaviors, such as making a materials or placement choice, and facilitates social interaction wherever possible.

Talent is not a prerequisite for participating in or benefiting from art therapy. Art therapists are trained in assessing what art materials and methods might best meet an individual's needs and abilities and work to promote growth from that point. (The most qualified art therapists have attained post-Master's degree credentials ATR-BC, indicating that they are registered, as well as Board Certified, art therapists). Through this approach, the individual is able to work from his or her strengths and, over time, becomes more willing to accept the unfamiliar and grow.

Resources for more information:

American Art Therapy Association www.arttherapy.org

Art Therapy and Autism www.art-therapy.us/autism.htm

To locate an art therapist in your area, visit www.atcb.org

Cathy Goucher ATR-BC, LCPC, received her Masters from George Washington University, Washington, DC. She also holds as license as a Clinical Professional Counselor. She provides group art therapy within the therapeutic integration program at Trellis Services' Clinic in Hunt Valley, MD, as well as maintains a small, independent private practice for individual clients at that same location.

Save the Date!

Pathfinders for Autism is pleased to be a sponsor of the Maryland Respite Care Coalition's 10th Annual Respite Awareness Day

"A Decade of Awareness"

Monday, October 22, 2007

8:00 am – 4:00 pm

A conference for caregivers, family members, professionals and advocates.

Maritime Institute Conference Center

Linthicum Heights, MD

For information, contact:

John Garrett at jgarrett@securecareservices.com or
Connie Urquhart at 410-767-5600.

Pathfinders for Autism Resource Center

Statistics

Since opening May 2003:

Personal Contacts
1,623

Website Visitor Sessions
242,497

Average Website Visits Per Day
221

*If you have a question or need help, please call
Linda Pearl, Pathfinders for Autism
Resource Center Coordinator
at 410-769-9500 or toll-free at 866-806-8400.*

Pathfinders provides information and resources to parents and professionals. We strive to keep this information current and comprehensive. Please continue to tell us about your favorite local resources. We particularly need to know about mainstream recreation and camps that work well for your family members. We are also seeking healthcare providers of various specialties that work well with adults on the spectrum.

And don't forget to let us know about those community life savers such as autism-friendly hair stylists or places to buy items required for your child's special diet.

Please call or email Linda Pearl, Resource Center Coordinator, at 410-769-9500 or email info@pathfindersforautism.org with the names of your favorite resources. We will obtain their permission before we list them in our online, searchable database.

Training Initiative Update

In 2007, Pathfinders for Autism announced a new strategic emphasis on Training and Education. We are working in partnership with Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS), local parent support groups, pediatricians, and community service providers to gather and disseminate best practices and training on a range of lifespan issues. Pathfinders has sponsored several well-received trainings for front-line staff with the Association of Counseling and Development Baltimore County; the League for People with Disabilities; Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS), Workforce Technology Center; and DORS Counselors.

For information on upcoming training sessions and events, please contact Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism's Director of Outreach & Community Partnerships at (410) 769-8221 or e-mail rrienzi@pathfindersforautism.org or visit our Events Calendar at www.pathfindersforautism.org.

Did you know...?

A Social Story™ is a short narrative, written about a situation, skill or a concept that is designed to promote understanding of the social expectations of that subject. Social Stories™, created by Carol Gray (www.thegraycenter.org), are often helpful to children of all ages and adults with autism spectrum disorders. Social Stories may be written by parents, caregivers, therapists, friends, or anyone who wishes to explain the social scripts of a given situation. Social Stories are created using specific criteria which can be found on the Carol Gray website or in her books and videos. Once you understand the concepts for writing Social Stories, they can be customized to the interests and abilities of the individual, by using appropriate vocabulary and pictures. You can find a sample Social Story, *Going To The Movie Theater*, written by Eva Williams and Elaine Williams, in the Articles section of the Pathfinders for Autism website. Please send in any Social Stories that you have created so that we can share them with others.

Imagine the Possibilities: Autism Day 2007

Pathfinders for Autism was pleased to once again sponsor "Imagine the Possibilities: Autism Day" on Sunday May 20, 2007 at the World of Possibilities Disabilities Expo. The Autism Pavilion featured several autism-specific displays with information on services, products, parent support groups and resources. In addition to our own display, Pathfinders sponsored table space for several local parent support groups, parent resources and the IAN Project. Many thanks to Dr. Kathy Niager (Clinical Diagnostician and Director of Trellis Services) who presented on behavioral management Techniques and to Dr. Paul Law (creator of the Interactive Autism Network Project) who discussed the innovative research program.

Baltimore ComedyFest for Autism Awareness Generates Lots of Laughs

Is it okay to laugh for Autism? It is when you are Greg Hall, founder of the Baltimore ComedyFest for Autism Awareness, director of the Early Monday Morning Show Improv Troupe and father of a fourteen-year-old son with autism. For the second year, Hall led the effort to host a 3-day festival featuring dozens of comics at the Mobtown Theatre in Baltimore. Once again, proceeds from the event were generously donated to Pathfinders.



Greg Hall, Baltimore Comedy Fest Organizer

Event coverage included 98 Rock, Jerry Gietka's Arts and Entertainment on WCBM and Steve Rouse's morning show on 101.9 Lite FM. The event was also featured in the Baltimore Sun, Towson Times and the Baltimore Examiner. Significant air time and print space was not only dedicated to promoting the event, but to discussing autism and how it touches so many people's lives. Additional promotion swept the Internet due in large part to the efforts of the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance. Special thanks to the Towson Jaycees, who volunteered at the three-day event. Greg Hall is currently finishing up his theatre season and taking the summer off to pursue several video/film projects. His Early Monday Morning Show (comedy improv troupe) will return to the Mobtown Theatre for their 8th season in September and the 3rd Annual Baltimore ComedyFest for Autism Awareness will be held the first weekend in April 2008. Details and updates can be found at www.earlymondaymorningshow.com

"...knowing first hand how difficult it is to get help or understanding for kids with autism, I wanted to do something to make some noise and get people involved. There's so little we know about autism and every day can make such a huge difference." – Greg Hall

"I wanted to let Marylanders see just how much great comedy talent we have here at home... knowing first hand how difficult it is to get help or understanding for kids with autism, I wanted to do something to make some noise and get people involved. There's so little we know about autism and every day can make such a huge difference."

The ComedyFest certainly made some noise... hundreds turned out for the jammed packed weekend event to see acts such as Maryland headliners Mike Aronin, Doug Powell, Mike Storck, and Erin Jackson. Of the six shows, half were sold out. Each show opened with a powerful video that Hall and partner John Kinhart produced explaining the facts and emotions dealing with autism.

"I'm hoping by our third or fourth year, we have clubs and theaters all across Maryland getting involved with the BCF [Baltimore ComedyFest]," says Hall. "Spending an entire weekend laughing and helping to support families statewide would be quite a feat."

Catonsville High School Awareness Day

The St. Paul's School for Girls' (SPSG) Disabilities Awareness Club spoke on Pathfinders' behalf at the Catonsville High School's Annual Disability Awareness Day. The group researched the material and prepared a 15-minute Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, which they delivered before nearly 100

students and faculty in three classes. The audience was very interested in the topic, with many of the students already knowing someone affected by autism. Pathfinders for Autism staff was also on hand to answer questions and discuss Pathfinders' resources. Many thanks to LuAnn Blackman and SPSG Disability Awareness Club members for their dedication to getting the word out about Autism!

Bowie Baysox "Autism Awareness Night"

Pathfinders for Autism joined several other local autism groups at the Bowie Baysox's Autism Awareness Night on Friday, April 27. Mason Surhoff (along with his dad, B.J. Surhoff) threw out the first pitch. The event featured discounted tickets, special seating arrangements, pre-game and between inning activities and interactive information tables. Over 1,000 guests were in the stands to hear Pathfinder's Executive Director, Dawn Koplos, speak about autism and to watch our early detection public service announcement.

Autism Research

On June 19, 2007, Dawn Koplos, Pathfinders for Autism Executive Director, made a presentation to 50 autism researchers at the 2nd Annual Interactive Autism Network Conference in Baltimore. Dawn presented from a "parent's perspective" about participating in IAN research by completing user-friendly questionnaires and the wealth of valuable information presented on the community section of the IAN website.

WHAT IS IAN?

IAN, the Interactive Autism Network, is an online interface between parents and researchers designed to accelerate the pace of autism research and is housed at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and funded by Autism Speaks.

Families of children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can share information in a secure, online setting and become part of the nation's largest online research effort. Through secure online questionnaires, parents can share information about their child's diagnosis, behavior, family background, environment, services and therapies. Parents can then view how their answers compare against responses of other participants.

IAN also offers a Community section, a comprehensive library and meeting place focused on autism research. Visitors can learn about the latest research, become more informed consumers of research, and join in a worldwide collaboration of people dedicated to finding answers. For more information, contact Interactive Autism Network, Department of Medical Informatics, Kennedy Krieger Institute, (443) 923-4140. www.ianproject.org.

EARLY DETECTION... continued from page 1

picking up a toy fork and pretending to eat with it, children with ASD may repeatedly pick the fork up and drop it down, tap it on the table, or perform another unusual act with the toy.

— **Significantly reduced variety of sounds, words and gestures used to communicate:** Compared to typically developing children, children with ASD have a much smaller inventory of sounds, words and gestures that they use to communicate with others.

Dr. Landa's study revealed that autism often involves a progression, with the disorder presenting between 14 and 24 months of age. Some children with only mild delays at 14 months of age could go on to be diagnosed with ASD. Dr. Landa and her colleagues observed distinct differences in the developmental paths, or trajectories, of children with early versus later diagnosis of ASD. While some children developed very slowly and displayed social and communication abnormalities associated with ASD at 14 months of age, others showed only mild delays with a gradual onset of autism symptoms, culminating in the diagnosis of ASD by 36 months.

If parents suspect something is wrong with their child's development, or that their child is losing skills during their first few years of life, they should talk to their pediatrician or another developmental expert. This and other autism studies suggest that the "wait and see" method, which might be recommended, could lead to missed opportunities for early intervention during this time period. For more information on the study and Dr. Landa's work at the Kennedy Krieger Institute, visit www.kennedykrieger.org.



Participants Needed for Pregnancy Study

The Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Epidemiology (CADDE) at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) at the Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI) are starting an exciting research study. The study will look at environmental factors and substances in the body to see whether they are associated with an increased risk in the development of autism. It is hoped that this study will help plan for future studies and ultimately help to better understand the genetic and environmental factors that cause autism. Eligible participants are mothers who are in their 22nd week of pregnancy or earlier who already have a child with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The study will follow these moms through their pregnancy. Moms are

asked to bring their child with ASD to KKI for a play-based assessment, to complete a number of questionnaires, and a biweekly diary. They are also asked to come into the clinic once per trimester to collect samples such as blood, hair, and saliva. At delivery the following will be collected: blood from the umbilical cord, blood from the newborn heel stick, and the placenta. If a mom is interested, when her baby reaches age two, he or she will be evaluated at CARD. The 2-year developmental evaluation is not required to participate in the study.

Do you have a child with ASD? Are you currently no more than 22 weeks pregnant? Do you want to be a part of this research? If so, please contact CADDE at 1-877-868-8014 or cadde@jhsph.edu.

6th Annual Golf Tournament Raises Funds & Awareness

The 6th Annual Pathfinders for Autism Golf Tournament held on May 21, 2007 at Hayfield's Country Club in Hunt Valley was another huge success -- raising over \$165,000 to support the work of Pathfinders.

Once again, the tournament was sold out and included dinner and a live auction (special thanks to Rick Opfer Auctioneers) with autographed sports memorabilia from Brian Roberts, Jay Gibbons and other Orioles players.

Many thanks to Raymond Brusca of Black & Decker for again chairing this amazing fund raiser. Over the past six years, Ray and his committee have raised more than \$700,000 on behalf of Pathfinders for Autism..

We offer special appreciation to Bruce Schindler of Bob Davidson Ford and Brian Mund and his family for being our Corporate and Family Sponsors.

One of the highlights of this event each year is the opportunity to hear Mason Surhoff (son of B.J. and Polly Surhoff) speak to our guests about his life experiences and offering his appreciation for their support of Pathfinders for Autism. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the following contributors and to our Board Members and friends who volunteered their time to make the day one to remember! Watch for details on next year's event (May 2008!)



B.J. Surhoff (left) with his son Mason Surhoff

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Auction Items

The Baltimore Orioles
Charm City Cakes
Diamond Comics
Hayfields Country Club
Mizuno
Cal Ripken Jr.

Other Prizes

American Visionary Art Museum
Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum
Baltimore Coffee & Tea
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
Basignani Winery
Black and Decker
Boordy Vineyards
Glarus Choclatier
Lets Dish
Lynne Brick's Health and Fitness Club
Lyric Opera House
Ma Petite Shoe
Tenzo Artisan Chocolate & Pastry
The Brewers Art
The Milton Inn
The Rotunda Cinematheque
The Senator Theatre
Towson Message Therapy



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Would you like to help Pathfinders for Autism raise funds to support programs that help families?

Consider hosting a "Third-Party Event" !

A "Third Party Event" is one that is conceived and carried out completely by you (and your volunteers) to benefit Pathfinders for Autism. Some of our most successful events have been volunteer driven, including the Baltimore Comedy Fest, a "Cut-a-thon" at a local Hair Cuttery, and last year's "Rock for Autism."

From hosting a dinner party, bake sale or car wash, to encouraging a local retailer or restaurant to donate a percentage of their sales one evening, there are countless things you could do to benefit Pathfinders. For more information, please contact Rebecca Rienzi, (410) 769-8221 or e-mail rrienzi@pathfindersforautism.org, to discuss your ideas! We look forward to hearing from you!

PATHFINDERS FOR AUTISM RESOURCE CENTER

HELP LINE: (410) 769-9500

Toll-free (866) 806-8400

www.pathfindersforautism.org

"Our mission is to find a path for our children."

