



Report to the Pathfinder Membership

For the year ending September 30, 2006:

RESOURCE CENTER USAGE: As of September 30, the Pathfinders for Autism Resource Center has been open for 3 and 1/3 years, yet nearly half (48%) of the personal contacts--with those who called or emailed-- occurred in the past twelve months! Demand for our resource information—and more detailed information that can be obtained by contacting Resource Center

Coordinator Linda Pearl-- continues to increase. The website has now been visited 184,000 times since inception—an average of 150 visits per day!

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS IN THE AUTISM COMMUNITY. Pathfinders is very interested in coordinating with other autism organizations to further the collective goals of the autism community:

In October 2005, Pathfinders partnered with Cure Autism Now (CAN) to help raise over \$500,000 for autism research.

In January 2006, Pathfinders revealed our new user-friendly website and licensed the software (free of charge) to the Autism Project of Palm Beach County to help families seeking autism information in south Florida.

In April (National Autism Awareness Month), Pathfinders partnered with parent support groups and local chapters of the Autism Society of America (ASA) to run a statewide awareness campaign featuring “Early Detection” advertisements and television public service announcements. In May, Pathfinders hosted “Imagine the Possibilities—Autism Day” at the World of Possibilities Expo at the Timonium Fairgrounds-- thus expanding the event to three days--providing free vendor space for autism groups and arranging for presentations by several nationally recognized speakers.

In August, Pathfinders co-sponsored four Family Fun Nights at Port Discovery in Baltimore. Families from all areas of Maryland, Washington D. C., Pennsylvania and New Jersey--233 people in all—were able to enjoy free admission to Port Discovery. Special arrangements were made by our partner Port Discovery for those nights and ongoing changes (signs, color coded pathways, etc.) were made subsequently to make the attraction more “friendly” for individuals with autism and/or other disabilities.

Representatives from Pathfinders joined representatives from the National Association for Autism Research (NAAR), Cure Autism Now (CAN), and Dr. Craig Newshaffer of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to meet with aides for Senator Mikulski and Senator Sarbanes to encourage their support of the Combating Autism Act and inclusion of autism research funding in the Department of Defense budget. The bill has since passed and authorizes nearly \$1 billion for autism research funding.

Pathfinders continues to serve on the Advisory Panel of Maryland State Department of Education’s Early Detection / Autism Screening Pilot Project (created through first-in-the-nation-legislation to improve the early detection of autism which was supported by Pathfinders during the 2005 Maryland legislative session.

Pathfinders also supports Dr. Paul Law’s Interactive Autism Network, an internet facilitated effort to obtain feedback from families of individuals with autism that is sponsored by Autism Speaks and Kennedy Krieger Institute. Pathfinders has been assisting Dr. Law’s project with recruiting volunteers for focus groups, interviews, and beta testing the software

NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION. Pathfinders' representatives met with Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS) to discuss training needs for their staff who work with individuals with autism (including those who serve students transitioning from high school to employment). In January 2007, Pathfinders will lead a "professional development" workgroup to bring best practices and autism-specific training to agency staff, community service providers and family members of individuals with autism. This is part of a new strategic initiative developed by the Board to focus broadly on the need for training of all those—parents, teachers, medical personnel, public servants such as police and firemen, service providers, etc.—who interact with individuals with autism. In this regard, we created:

A NEW STAFF POSITION: Director of Outreach and Community Partnerships. Subsequent to the end of the fiscal year, Rebecca Rienzi was hired to be responsible for working with the Maryland State Department of Education, the Division of Rehabilitative Services, the American Academy of Pediatricians-Maryland Chapter, local parent support groups, and community service providers to gather and disseminate best practices information and training on a range of lifespan issues – from improved developmental screening techniques for pediatricians to training those who assist adults with autism in vocational training and employment. Rebecca will also be responsible for "getting the word out" about the information provided by the Pathfinders for Autism Resource Center.

BROAD BASED FUNDING SUPPORT: Not only did we have another hugely successful Golf Tournament, sponsored by Corporate Sponsor Bob Davidson Ford and Family sponsors B.J. and Polly Surhoff, that raised over \$120,000, but we got independent support from others in the community, including:

The Hair Cuttery of Cherrydale Shopping Center,
Baltimore County Bar Association,
ComedyFest 2006, a three day event, and
Rock for Autism, featuring several local Baltimore bands.

Our sincere thanks goes out to all our supporters!

IN SUMMARY: With new staff and lots of new ideas, we are excited to launch our "Training & Education" initiative. Nonetheless, one thing remains unaltered—our mission:

"To find a path for our children."

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

Brian R. Mund
President
December, 2006

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