

# The Sun

Newsletter

January–March 2011

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## Our mission

Autism Delaware will work to create better lives for people with autism and their families in Delaware.

## Support for the newly diagnosed family

by Lisa Poyta

When a young child is newly diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, the experience can be overwhelming and frightening for the entire family. For some, the diagnosis may come as a shock; for others, it may bring a sense of relief after months of unknowns. In either case, families typically have many unanswered questions and a host of needs to be met. Most questions concern services: What services are available? How do we access them? Frequently, newly diagnosed families turn to the Internet first to get information about autism and services—only to find a dizzying array of resources and conflicting advice. At Autism Delaware, newly diagnosed families can find answers.

### Available services

Autism Delaware provides newly diagnosed families with a range of useful statewide services. These include online support groups, parent coffee hours, and social events in which families gather, share ideas, and support each other. Autism Delaware also helps connect the parents of newly diagnosed children with mentor families who have experience with local support services and school programs.

Experienced staff members are also available to help newly diagnosed



families. Because many have children on the spectrum, these staff members understand the options for education, care, and therapy throughout Delaware. Newly diagnosed families can also contact Autism

Delaware to request a new parent package containing basic information about autism, a Delaware resource guide, and a copy of the quarterly newsletter.

Other resources include workshops, conferences, and recreational activities. Autism Delaware also sponsors speakers and maintains local and national resource links on its website, www.delautism.org.

Currently, Autism Delaware is working on improving access to information by upgrading the website and developing a more customized resource directory that will be available on a CD.

### Needed services

Health-care coverage for autism-related services is one of the greatest needs of newly diagnosed families. Insurance is needed to supplement therapies provided by school programs as well as for children who are home-schooled or ineligible for services through the Delaware Autism Program. In 2010, Autism Delaware led the effort to draft

Continued on page 11, column 1

## The Sun

A publication of Autism Delaware

### Main office

924 Old Harmony Rd. Suite 201. Newark DE 19713

**Phone:** 302.224.6020

**Fax:** 302.224.6017

### Southern Delaware office

16394 Samuel Paynter Blvd. Suite 201. Milton DE 19968

**Phone:** 302.644.3410

**Email:** [delautism@delautism.org](mailto:delautism@delautism.org)

**Website:** [www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org)

### Officers

**President:** Rob Gilsdorf  
[robdelautism@aol.com](mailto:robdelautism@aol.com)

**Vice President:** Marcy Kempner  
[marcy.kempner@me.com](mailto:marcy.kempner@me.com)

**Treasurer:** Scott Young  
302.255.8300

**Secretary:** John Fisher Gray  
[john.fisher.gray@post.harvard.edu](mailto:john.fisher.gray@post.harvard.edu)

### Staff

**Executive Director:** Theda Ellis  
[theda.ellis@delautism.org](mailto:theda.ellis@delautism.org)

**Associate Director:** Teresa Avery  
[teresa.avery@delautism.org](mailto:teresa.avery@delautism.org)

**S. Delaware Service Coordinator:** Dafne Carnright  
[dafne.carnright@delautism.org](mailto:dafne.carnright@delautism.org)

**Communications Coordinator:** Carla Koss  
[carla.koss@delautism.org](mailto:carla.koss@delautism.org)

**S. Delaware POW&R Coordinator:** Melissa Martin  
[melissa.martin@delautism.org](mailto:melissa.martin@delautism.org)

**Volunteer Coordinator:** Melanie Matusheski  
[melanie.matusheski@delautism.org](mailto:melanie.matusheski@delautism.org)

**Asperger's Resource Coordinator:** Heidi Mizell  
[heidi.mizell@delautism.org](mailto:heidi.mizell@delautism.org)

**Office Assistant:** Deanna Principe  
[deanna.principe@delautism.org](mailto:deanna.principe@delautism.org)

**Office Manager:** Margie Rowles  
[margie.rowles@delautism.org](mailto:margie.rowles@delautism.org)

**Policy & Events Director:** Kim Siegel  
[kim.siegel@delautism.org](mailto:kim.siegel@delautism.org)

### The Sun Editorial Committee

Theda Ellis    Melanie Matusheski

Teresa Avery    Jen Nardo

Carla Koss

Autism Delaware is interested in a variety of viewpoints about autism and emerging research, but reference to any treatment, therapy option, program, service, or treatment provider is not an endorsement. We publish information only for informational purposes and assume no responsibility for the use of any information. You should investigate alternatives that may be more appropriate for your specific needs.

## From the president



**Rob Gilsdorf**

Foundation and expanding Autism Delaware statewide, hardly a dull moment went by. I am sure that 2011 will prove to be both a challenge and a success as well, and I look forward to working with you all as we face the year with renewed energy and purpose. Head on and head strong!

On the home front, Judi's and my son Andrew will transition out of school this year into supported adult employment through POW&R (Autism Delaware's adult services program). The process has been a long journey, and we realize that a great many unknowns remain. But uncertainty has been a way of life ever since Andrew was diagnosed. It is our new normal, our reality. I just wish that, when this journey began, we knew that Andrew would do so well. It would also have been comforting to know that not only would we survive some very tough days but we would also enjoy some exceptional days. We have been very lucky.

What we learned along the journey is that healthy denial is underrated—not the kind of denial where you ignore the world you live in, but the kind of denial that keeps you focused on

What an exciting and challenging year 2010 turned out to be! From working with the state on tough budget decisions to joining forces with the Lower Delaware Autism

improving your child's future. From the start, Judi and I denied the accepted norms, that "Andrew would remain unmanageable," that "Andrew would never progress," and that "the world around Andrew would never be able to support him." And out of our denial sprang ways to help Andrew grow. We were also able to focus in a time of crisis and face an overwhelming, uncertain, and frightening situation. Our denial moved us to get involved in Andrew's school, our community, and in Autism Delaware. And our denial gained us friends and supporters we could only dream of.

We have learned a lot in the last 16 years and gained a lot through Autism Delaware. And while uncertainty remains a constant in Andrew's life—as in all our lives—we have faith that Andrew will not just survive but thrive in the future. He will be strong not only as a result of his experiences over the last 16 years but also because he is inherently smart and capable—as are all of our children!

From our years raising Andrew comes our belief that the most significant asset we can bring to our community is ourselves, our experiences and our willingness to support each other. So, my advice to you: Reach out, use every opportunity that Autism Delaware offers to help you raise your child and support your family, and help us create a world where we can raise all our children to successfully reach their potential. And then, email your comments and suggestions to me at [robdelautism@aol.com](mailto:robdelautism@aol.com). Please take a minute to drop me a note. I look forward to hearing from you.

### A service of Autism Delaware

**POW&R**  
PRODUCTIVE OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR WORK AND RECREATION

**Katina Demetriou**, POW&R Director  
302.224.6020 Ext. 206  
302.824.2252 (cell)  
[katina.demetriou@delautism.org](mailto:katina.demetriou@delautism.org)

**Karen Anderson**, Community Specialist  
302.224.6020 Ext. 209  
302.824.2253 (cell)  
[karen.anderson@delautism.org](mailto:karen.anderson@delautism.org)

# Drive for Autism celebrates 10 years

by Artie Kempner

The Drive for Autism is 10 years old! It seems like only yesterday that we were planning the first outing at the Cavalier Country Club. Jeff Sluman of the PGA Tour held a clinic for the 78 players in the inaugural event. We raised \$23,000, and after expenses, we put about \$13,000 in the Autism Delaware coffers.

Co-chair Pat Murphy and I were ecstatic about the event and planning the 2002 event when I got a call from MBNA's vice president of Motorsports, Dave Elgena. I had met Dave on the NASCAR circuit, and he had heard about all the work that Autism Delaware was doing in the community. We set up a meeting at MBNA headquarters—and Dave brought his whole team to brainstorm!

"I think we can help you raise a little more than \$13,000 next year," Dave said, suggesting that we bring in celebrities from all sports arenas. "I'm confident we can turn this into a \$100,000-a-year event."

Dave and the MBNA Motorsports team did more than deliver celebrities. They also opened their Rolodexes. Less than four months later, the Drive for Autism was held at the Deerfield Country Club with 35 celebrities and 125 players—and we raised more than \$150,000!

Today, MBNA is gone, but Dave along with MBNA alumni Frank Andrews, Karl Fischer, and Leonard Entel continue as

key members of our committee. Two more noteworthy supporters over the last 10 years are Jim Warden of Robovision, who deserves praise as our largest personal donor, and Bernie Van Ogtrop, my next door neighbor and the nicest guy you could ever meet. They've teed up at every event!

And finally, this event would not be as successful as it is without the exceptional efforts of Cheryl Frampton, Deanna Principe, Margie Rowles, Immanuel Jackson, and the rest of the Autism Delaware staff and volunteers.

The Drive has become more than a golf tournament or fundraiser; it's a tradition, an annual get-together of friends, the ultimate "fun-raiser." Year in and year out, we're blessed with the participation of an extraordinary array of celebrities and players. Even during difficult economic times, many have stepped up to support the autism community.

Over the years, the Drive for Autism has raised nearly \$3.5 million! And because of the generosity of our wonderful



**Mark your calendar**

**May 12, 2011**

**2011 Drive for Autism**

sponsors and donors, we are able to keep our expenses under 18 percent. That's less than half of any other celebrity golf event's expenditures.

In 2007, using some of the Drive's proceeds as seed money, Autism Delaware established an adult services program, Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation. POW&R now serves more than 20 adults on the autism spectrum—changing the paradigm in which people with autism now live in Delaware.

The Drive has also been a big contributor to research being done by Autism Speaks, the Organization for Autism Research, and other initiatives, and has aided the Parent Information Center, Practice Without Pressure, Autism Society of America, and other worthy organizations. The Drive also ensured that funds were available to successfully initiate Autism Delaware's merger with the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation.

## A better future in southern Delaware

This past fall, Autism Delaware launched a new fundraising campaign on the heels of the nonprofit's merger with the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation. Formerly known as the Founder's Campaign, the Southern Delaware Services Initiative is aimed at providing a better future for people affected by autism in Kent and Sussex Counties. One of the goals of the campaign is the statewide expansion of POW&R (Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation)—aimed at fulfilling Autism Delaware's commitment to providing adult services in Kent and Sussex Counties by July 2012. Financial support from this campaign is critical for creating much-needed southern Delaware programs, such as parent mentoring, recreation, and information and referral services, as well as for funding the established camp, swim, and junior golf programs.



We are asking supporters for an annual contribution over a three-year commitment. Individual commitments range from \$25 a year to \$900 or more, and businesses are offered special contribution levels designed to provide added visibility in the community as well as the opportunity to support Autism Delaware.

In addition to financial support, initiative members are asked to provide critical insight into communications and programming in Kent and Sussex Counties. To this end, an annual meeting has been designed just for initiative members, and e-newsletters will keep the membership informed about the key issues in their back yard.

To become an initiative supporter, contact Autism Delaware's main office at (302) 224-6020. Or visit [www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org), and click the "Southern Delaware Services Initiative" button.

**Transition**

# Start planning early for adult life with an ASD

by **Melissa Tice Martin**

Transition is an important topic for any young adult with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and his or her family. While the aim of researchers, educators, and service providers is to achieve a successful, seamless transition, families and individuals with an ASD often refer to the transition experience as “a move from intensive supports to the unknown” or as “falling off a cliff.”

What can be done to help individuals and families achieve a more successful transition?

At Autism Delaware, families are taught the steps needed to achieve this goal. In the process, an understanding of transition emerges through the elements that define best practice within model programs. Support includes parent mentoring, advocacy, and adult services through POW&R (Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation).

The most important step in a successful transition is “Start early.” Recognize that transition does not begin at 21 but rather in early adolescence. In Delaware, your child’s first transition-based individualized education plan (IEP) takes place at 14. This first step helps formulate a workable baseline of existing and yet-to-be-learned skills that are important in adult life. With this early planning, your child’s IEP will reflect appropriate goals and define which skills must be addressed within the time-limited resources provided by the school.

Basic desirable skills that should be developed within the transition IEP include the following:



- gaining work experience in the community (volunteer or paid)
- learning to follow schedules (daily and particular tasks)
- learning basic word-to-activity prompts, and achieving as many basic reading and comprehension skills as possible
- sustaining on-task behavior
- maintaining low levels of problem behavior (important for community-based employment and activities)
- eating with minimal supports (Some meal-related social skills may require ongoing support.)
- acquiring self-care skills (especially independent toileting)
- acquiring the ability to fill leisure time with appropriate materials and activities
- learning to follow directions and to request assistance from a peer or supervisor when needed

The next time you meet your child’s transition IEP team, take some time to discuss your child’s present level of performance. Review the basic desirable skills listed above, and with these skills in mind, work with your child’s team to set goals and develop the transition plan.

**New members**

# Welcome!

**Autism Delaware membership**  
**The benefits**

- Voice your needs through a statewide network of autism advocacy.
- Learn your options with access to up-to-date information.
- Get the support you need through groups and events.

Berton Ashman, Jr.  
Geoff Avery  
Evelyn Baez  
Nancy Bellinger  
Maureen Brinkley  
Kyle Bryan  
Amber Burks  
G. Creston  
Campbell  
Tim Campbell  
Tonya Cassell  
Jennifer Cinelli-Miller  
Michael Cirillo  
Michael W. Cobb

Sara Crabill  
Pat Foley  
Mark Goodwyn  
Tom Hamer  
Myla Haug  
Peter G. Hayes  
Nik Heleszi  
Nicholas J. Hoeschel  
Peter Irungu  
Charles Jennings  
Gilbert Kimble  
Charles Lasley  
Richard Levett  
Tasha Moore  
David Morrow

Kelly Needles  
Victoria Page  
Kelly Panetski  
Nancy Petrucci  
Patricia Powell  
Jennifer Regelski  
Tom Schick  
Steven Scott  
Elizabeth Slippey  
Leslie Smith  
Ellyn M. Toomey  
Nancy Wilkinson  
Carol Williamson  
David Zamara

**For more info**

If you need help with your child’s transition, contact Autism Delaware at (302) 224-6020.

Or send an email to [delautism@delautism.org](mailto:delautism@delautism.org).





**Strategy for younger children**

# Power cards

by **Dafne Carnright**

Of the range of tools currently available to assist younger children living with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), power cards help reinforce a skill or social understanding by working with a child's special interests or favorite media character. Considered a visual aid, power cards will help your child make sense of a social situation or language by serving as a prompt when the child doesn't remember what to do. Power cards can help a child generalize the skill to other settings as well. Writes author Lisa Gagnon in *Power Cards*, "I soon realized that [my daughter] Claudia would do things for Big Bird that she would never consider doing for me."

To make a power card, begin by writing a brief short story about how your child's favorite character solves a problem. Be sure to use the type of words that the character would use. Then, break down the story into three to five steps. For example, to reinforce a bedtime routine, you might write "At bedtime, Dora the Explorer always brushes her teeth. Then, she...."

Then, write these steps on a small card. The card itself should be made of sturdy paper (like an index card or card stock) and be no larger than a baseball card. And be sure to add a graphic of your child's favorite character to the card. For durability, laminate the card at your local mail or copy center.

Once you create the power card, read the story to your child, and in a positive and fun way, introduce the power card and explain how to use it. Tell your child to carry the card in a pocket or backpack or attach it to a book or desk—anyplace the card may be needed.

Power cards are not for everyone. Special interests are unique to children with autism and Asperger's syndrome, but power cards aren't appropriate if a child

- engages in the challenging behavior only once.
- is in crisis or having a meltdown over the skill.
- has sensory issues, such as difficulty tolerating certain noises, smells, or tastes.
- does not have a strong special interest.
- is extremely challenged cognitively.
- appears not to understand spoken language.
- does not have a positive relationship with the adult introducing the power card. (The card's strategy is not a punishment and must be viewed as positive to work.)

**The next legislative session starts January 11.**

Of course, Autism Delaware will advocate in Legislative Hall, but our voice is only as loud as those for whom we speak—the people and families affected by autism and those who serve and love them. So, make a New Year's resolution: Be an advocate in 2011!

For help on how to become an advocate, visit [www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org). (Choose the Advocacy bar at the top of the screen; from the menu, choose "Get Involved!") There, you will be able to download *An Advocate's Autism Action Kit*, which includes updated talking points on various topics, such as insurance coverage, adult services funding, and school issues, as well as some ideas for the many ways that you can take action. Below is a summary of these ideas:



- **Contact your legislators to express your views and ask for their support.** Many legislators visit with their constituents at least once a month during a coffee hour in the district. The action kit contains personal and office contact information for all your legislators. Write a letter. Send an email. Call their offices.
- **Write a letter to the editor.** The action kit contains email addresses for almost every newspaper in Delaware. In a letter to the newspaper's editor, share with the community how certain policies impact people affected by autism.
- **Come to Legislative Hall.** Make appointments to see your legislators in their offices. The fact that you, a constituent, took the time and made the drive shows your legislators how important autism's issues are to

## Legislative corner

you. Also, feel free to call our Newark office in advance of your legislative appointment if you'd like a staff person to accompany you or discuss your visit with you. Or join us during our appointments with legislators.

- **Invite your legislators into your home.** If you have a loved one with autism, you know how obvious autism's impact is in the home. Invite your legislator for coffee or a meal—and, if you like, invite your legislator's family as well. Let them see firsthand why the autism community needs support. If you would like other autism-affected families in the district to join you, let us know, and we will identify and invite them for you.
- **Participate in Autism Delaware legislative initiatives.** Remind your legislators what is important to the autism community with customized valentines available in February. Also, join us at Legislative Hall on Smart Cookie Day—March 30. Typically at this time, a resolution is introduced to recognize April as Autism Awareness Month. We will visit each legislator's office, drop off chocolate chip cookies, and thank each legislator for his or her support. To request valentines or *R.S.V.P.* for Smart Cookie Day, contact Kim Siegel at (302) 224-6020.

**Having trouble downloading a copy of *An Advocate's Autism Action Kit*?**

Contact Kim Siegel at (302) 224-6020. Or email her at [kim.siegel@delautism.org](mailto:kim.siegel@delautism.org).

# PARENT PARENT

Written by parents for parents

"Dante meets enough criteria to be considered on the autism spectrum and, therefore, is eligible for enrollment in the Delaware Autism Program."

As I sat with my wife Rosemarie and representatives of the Brennen School DAP, I started to cry. In my gut, I knew that the people evaluating Dante, our then-2-1/2-year-old son, would come to the same conclusion we had, yet we held onto an inkling of hope: They would tell us Dante is a typical child and won't need the help of the DAP. Life will be challenging enough, we thought, without growing up with autism.

Dante, now 5 1/2 years old, is a twin who hit all of his developmental milestones on time until shortly after his first birthday. While his twin sister Marina continued to progress on schedule, Dante began to lag. Most people, including our pediatrician at the time, chalked it up to "girls develop faster than boys" or "he is a twin and will catch up on his own."

At 19 months, Dante was evaluated by Child Development Watch and labeled "developmentally delayed," making him eligible for occupational therapy,

speech therapy, and early childhood education. A few days a week, Rosemarie and Marina took Dante to therapy, or a therapist would come to our home. The therapists

always encouraged us to let Marina watch and sometimes even participate in Dante's sessions. In turn, Marina became part of our family-wide effort to help Dante through his early challenges.

Marina continues to support Dante, but sometimes she becomes jealous of her brother's praise or frustrated with his behavior. I'm hopeful that, as she gets older, Marina will gain a better understanding of Dante's challenges as well as a better comprehension of the fact that we love her and Dante equally.

Encouragingly, Rosemarie's and my families and friends have supported us in many ways—from babysitting Marina when we take Dante to appointments to being understanding and patient during Dante's occasional meltdowns.



Left to right are Dante, Dan, and Marina Eaker.

They have also rallied around us, joining us for autism walks, donating time and money to autism events, and collecting box-tops-for-education labels to support the DAP and Dante's school.

In addition to our families and friends, Delaware's autism community functions as a fantastic support system. Through Autism Delaware and the DAP, we have met many wonderful families who share our experiences and remind us that we are not alone.

I'm happy to say that Dante has made tremendous progress since his diagnosis. Because of the early intervention and his support system, Dante has evolved from full time at the Brennen School to a fully integrated kindergarten class at the McVey School. He is articulate, has a great sense of humor, and a smile that will light up the room. Despite my early concerns about my son growing up with autism, Dante is going to be just fine.

—Dan Eaker



## Autism Delaware Board of Directors

# Election results

Congratulations to new Autism Delaware Board of Directors member

Susan Patel. Susan has extensive volunteer experience with the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation. And with a bachelor's degree in political science, Susan has also worked with the Sussex County Parent Advisory Council (SusPAC) and served on Autism Delaware's Legislative Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee. One of her goals, as a mother of a son with autism, is

to encourage more parents and community members to advocate in favor of important autism community issues.

Susan's other experience includes work as the volunteer coordinator at The Matheny School for people with cerebral palsy and as Fall Gala coordinator for COSAC (now known as Autism New Jersey).

"None of these jobs has given me as much satisfaction as working with students, parents, and business people in planning services

for people with autism," notes Susan in her nomination submission. "I believe 'it takes a village' (to borrow Hillary Clinton's phrase) to serve people with autism across their life spans, but we can do it, and I am enthusiastic about helping Autism Delaware succeed. Whether I am on the board or not, I will always work with legislators, business people, and our school administrators, advocating for high standards in education, better services for families, and jobs and homes for adults with autism."

## One statewide event!

# INSIDE Autism Delaware

What do you get when you merge the former Lower Delaware Autism Foundation's Race for Autism with Autism Delaware's Walk for Autism? One statewide event—the 2011 Walk-Race for Autism!

**Our goal:** to raise awareness and \$175,000 for the services needed by Delawareans affected by autism and their families. With your help, it can be done:

**Run!** For those who asked for a running event, this is for you. A half-marathon and 5K are scheduled for April 10 in Lewes. Prizes are awarded according to age group and finish.

Runners, the sooner you register, the smaller the registration fee! Fees are staggered according to your chosen distance and date of registration. To register, call (302) 224-6020.

**Walk!** Both sites have a walk: a 5K in Lewes on April 10 and a two-mile trail in Wilmington on April 9.

Walkers, you pay no registration fee but are strongly encouraged to fundraise. Raising at least \$100 qualifies you for a prize. How do you fundraise?

- **Become a team!** Team members can support fundraising efforts in many ways. As a team, you can encourage each other. Or engage in a friendly competition of "Who can raise the most." Also, consider throwing a party once your fundraising goal is reached.
- **Put the "fun" in fundraising!** Create a team, and get into the spirit of fundraising by printing matching

### 2011 Walk-Race for Autism

**April 9 @ Bellevue State Park, Wilmington**

**April 10 @ Irish Eyes Pub & Restaurant, Lewes**

T-shirts. On event day, carry signs, or wear a picture of your loved one with autism. Plan a mini-fundraiser, such as a bowling party, and collect contributions to Autism Delaware.

**Party!** All runners and walkers are invited to join the post-event celebration. Come and enjoy some good food

and music. Children can take part in scheduled activities. And be sure to browse the exhibits manned by vendors and autism and disability services.

**Sponsor!** In addition to participant fundraising, Autism Delaware relies on the generosity of corporate sponsorship. And we recognize these sponsorships in ways that can reach thousands of people statewide. Sponsorships are available at levels suitable to any organization.

Many sponsorship packages also include a booth at the event. Even if you choose a lower level of participation or not to be a sponsor, purchase a booth at one or both sites to exhibit your goods and services.

**Volunteer!** To be a success, we need volunteers at both sites—especially in Lewes: Help with pre-event planning. Set up and take down the site on event day. Or take part in day-of-event activities.

Find the perfect volunteer opportunity! Send an email to [melanie.matusheski@delautism.org](mailto:melanie.matusheski@delautism.org)

**Autism Delaware**

**(302) 224-6020**

**[www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org)**

## Scholarships and stipends

Every spring, Autism Delaware awards a variety of scholarships and stipends to eligible individuals. The goal is to acknowledge the unique expertise these individuals bring to the autism community and let them know how much we value them. In turn, we hope to retain these highly skilled professionals who teach and support our children. We also want to support our parents and caregivers in improving their child-rearing skills through workshops and conferences.

Apply now for the following:

**Gray Memorial Scholarship**—This

\$1,000 scholarship is available to an eligible University of Delaware undergrad or grad student who plans to become a professional in the autism community.

**Para-to-Educator Stipend**—This \$1,000 stipend is available to an eligible paraprofessional who, in the past year, completed his or her education to become a teacher of children with autism.

**Adult with Autism Scholarship**—This \$1,000 scholarship supports an adult with an ASD who wants to attend college or a postsecondary educational program.

**Conference Stipend**—This \$250 stipend is available year round to Autism Delaware members who want to attend an autism or autism-related workshop or conference. Stipends may be applied to registration, travel, hotel, child care, or any other related cost. Stipend recipients must submit their receipts and be able to write an article about their experiences for *The Sun*.

Except for the year-round conference stipend, all other applications are due by February 28, 2011. To download a copy of the application, visit [www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org), and click on "Scholarships."

# Plan for camp now

by Heidi Mizell

Now is the perfect time to start planning your child's summer break because summer camp options fill up fast and may be limited for some children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). To help assure that your child's summer break is a successful experience, here's some general advice from camp directors at the YMCA, New Castle County Community Services, and the Mary Campbell Center:



**Be up-front about your child's presentation, needs, and behaviors.**

Granted, your child's diagnosis is not your child's presentation, but many parents avoid giving full disclosure in fear of being rejected from a program. Realistically, if your child has more intense needs and requires more staffing, it's better to share this information with a program's director at the time of your application. The camp's director will let you know what can be provided because the director wants not only for your child to succeed but also to boost the camp's reputation as a viable summer program.

**Plan and prepare as soon as possible.** The first day of camp is not the time to discuss your child's presentation, needs, and behaviors. **Remember:** Most camp counselors are teens or young adults. Although they may be studying to be teachers and therapists, they have been trained to work with children at "summer camp," and there may be a learning curve concerning your child's needs. Share what you think will help your child succeed at camp. Refer to a teacher or paraprofessional for suggestions, too.

Basically, you have two camp settings to consider for your child with an ASD:

- **traditional camp setting with minimal supports**—This option is possible only if your child can communicate his or her needs and will not wander off unattended. Even if your child does not transition easily, consider a traditional camp setting—for the entire summer!

Weekly special interest camps are also great for children with unique interests. Your child may find it difficult to adapt to new children and facilitators, but specialty camps are doable: Ask the camp director for the weekly and daily schedules. Make a copy, and let your child know what to expect. Talk to your child about being flexible with changes. (Rainy days may mean swimming gets replaced by an inside field trip.) To prevent a meltdown, ask for a rainy day schedule for your child to follow.

Continued on page 11, column 2

## CALENDAR of EVENTS

### January

**Jan. 1**—Autism Delaware and POW&R offices closed.

**Jan. 11**—Parent Coffee & Conversation Hour. Autism Delaware main office. 7:00 P.M. The coffee is on us!

**Jan. 15, 29**—Teen/Tween Game Night. Autism Delaware main office. 6:30–8:30 P.M. Social activity for 9–19 year olds with Asperger's syndrome. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell—(302) 224-6020—heidi.mizell@delautism.org.

**Jan. 19, 26**—Lego Club. Autism Delaware main office. Time TBA. Opportunity to build social skills through play. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell—(302) 224-6020—heidi.mizell@delautism.org.

**Jan. 20**—College living experience. Special Olympics office. University of Delaware. 619 So. College Av. Newark. 7:00 A.M. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell—(302) 224-6020—heidi.mizell@delautism.org.

**Jan. 20**—Seaford Parent Coffee & Conversation Hour. Holiday Inn Express. 210 North Dual Hwy. Seaford. 9:00–10:00 A.M. Meet in the breakfast area for coffee only.

**Jan. 30**—Rec4All Winter Ball. Rockwood Carriage House. 4671 Washington St. Wilmington. 1:00–3:00 P.M. Make snowflake decorations, snack on cocoa and cookies, and enjoy a fun event especially for people with disabilities. Register online at [www.nccde.org/happenings](http://www.nccde.org/happenings). Or contact Heidi Mizell—(302) 224-6020—heidi.mizell@delautism.org.

### February

**Feb. 2, 9, 16, 23**—Lego Club. Autism Delaware main office. Time TBA. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell—(302) 224-6020—heidi.mizell@delautism.org.

**Feb. 8**—Parent Coffee & Conversation Hour. Crossroads Restaurant. Kirkwood Hwy. at Limestone. Wilmington. 9:00 A.M. Coffee is on us!

**Feb. 10**—Speaker Series. Sussex Consortium. 520 DuPont Av. Lewes. 7:00 P.M. (following the 6:00 P.M. SusPAC meeting). Featuring Vincent J. Varrassi, MA, LDT-C, on transition to college for individuals with an ASD.

**Feb. 12**—Milford Skating Party. Milford Skating Center Roller Skating Rink. 1 Park Av. Milford. 5:30–7:30 P.M. Sensory friendly rink!

**Feb. 12, 26**—Teen/Tween Game Night. Autism Delaware main office. 6:30–8:30 P.M. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell—(302) 224-6020.

**Feb. 15**—Dover Parent Coffee & Conversation Hour. Holiday Inn Express. 1780 North DuPont Hwy. Dover. 9:00–10:00 A.M. Meet in the breakfast area for coffee only—and the coffee is on us!

### March

**Mar. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30**—Lego Club. Autism Delaware main office. Time TBA. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell—(302) 224-6020—heidi.mizell@delautism.org.

**Mar. 8**—Parent Coffee & Conversation Hour. Autism Delaware main office. 7:00 P.M. The coffee is on us!

**Mar. 12, 26**—Teen/Tween Game Night. Autism Delaware main office. 6:30–8:30 P.M. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell—(302) 224-6020.

**March 16**—Milford Parent Coffee & Conversation Hour. Georgia House Restaurant. 18 So. Walnut St. Milford. 9:00–10:00 A.M. Meet in the upstairs banquet room for coffee only—and the coffee is on us!

**March 30**—Smart Cookie Day. Legislative Hall. Court St. @ Legislative Av. Dover. 1:00 P.M. Share cookies with your legislators, and witness the passing of the resolution to name April as Autism Awareness Month. *RSVP:* Kim Siegel—(302) 224-6020—kim.siegel@delautism.org.



## Smart Cookie Day

March 30, 2011  
1:00 P.M.

Legislative Hall  
Court St. at  
Legislative Av.  
Dover



Share cookies with your legislators, and witness the passing of the resolution to name April as Autism Awareness Month.

## Bowling night

New location in the new year!

Bowlerama  
3031 New Castle Av.  
New Castle DE 19720-2297

Still every Wednesday!  
Still 5:30–7:30 P.M.!



To register, email Karen Tuohy at karen.tuohy@redclay.k12.de.us. Or call (302) 633-3316.



## 2011 Walk-Race for Autism

One statewide event—two different sites!

April 9, 2011  
9:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M.

Bellevue State Park  
800 Carr Rd.  
Wilmington

April 10, 2011  
7:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M.

Irish Eyes Pub  
213 Anglers Rd.  
Lewes

### Form a team!

Get in the spirit of the event with a team of family members, colleagues from work, neighbors, and friends. Share your message on walk day by wearing matching T-shirts, carrying signs, or wearing a picture of your loved one with autism.

Team members not only make the day more enjoyable but also put the “fun” in fundraising. As a team, encourage each other’s fundraising efforts with a friendly competition of “Who can raise the most.” And don’t forget your walk-day celebration!

For more ideas, call (302) 224-6020.



## Speaker Series

Featuring  
Vincent J. Varrassi



Join Vincent J. Varrassi, MA, LDT-C, as he covers transition to college for individuals with an ASD.

**Date:** February 10, 2011

**Time:** 7:00 P.M.  
(following the 6:00 P.M. SusPAC meeting)

**Place:** Sussex Consortium  
520 DuPont Av., Lewes

## Parent Coffee & Conversation Hour



**Jan. 11.** Autism Delaware main office. 924 Old Harmony Rd. Suite 201. Newark. 7:00–8:00 P.M.

**Jan. 20.** Holiday Inn Express. 210 North Dual Hwy. Seaford. 9:00–10:00 A.M.

**Feb. 8.** Crossroads Restaurant. 4579 Kirkwood Hwy. (at Limestone Rd. intersection). Wilmington. 9:00–10:00 A.M.

**Feb. 15.** Holiday Inn Express. 1780 North DuPont Hwy. Dover. 9:00–10:00 A.M.

**Mar. 8.** Autism Delaware main office. 924 Old Harmony Rd. Suite 201. Newark. 7:00–8:00 P.M.

**Mar. 16.** Georgia House Restaurant. 18 South Walnut St. Milford. 9:00–10:00 A.M.

## Recognizing outstanding effort

Autism Delaware and the autism community are supported every day by many wonderful people who make a difference. Whether they chair fundraising events, organize social events, or raise public awareness and advocate for change, volunteers and community leaders help improve the quality of life for all Delawareans living with autism spectrum disorders.

### A benefit of membership

To nominate a volunteer, leader, or employer for a 2010 award, you must be an Autism Delaware member.

To become a member, visit [www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org). Or call (302) 224-6020.

Please help us recognize these individuals and their outstanding effort. Tell us who should be this year's recipients of the following awards:

- Outstanding Autism Delaware Volunteer
- Outstanding Leader in the Community
- Outstanding Employer

Download a nomination form at [www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org), and mail the completed form to Autism Delaware, 924 Old Harmony Rd., Suite 201, Newark DE 19713—by February 28, 2011.

If you need a copy of the form mailed to you, call the Autism Delaware main office at (302) 224-6020. And be sure to call in time to make the deadline!

### To our volunteers

Late summer and fall are particularly busy times for you. Your effort helped make a success of the summer picnic, programs in Sussex County, GoFISH, autumn auction, Fall Festival, and the Holiday Train.

You have also supported the Thanksgiving card to legislators, contacted potential speakers, and supported our office staff.

Because of you, Autism Delaware is able to provide as much as we do.

**Thank you—a lot!**

### Premier

**DuPont Company**  
**Peggy & Edgar Woolard**

### Silver

**Rob, Judi, Christi**  
**& Andrew Gilsdorf**  
**John & Betsy Fisher Gray**  
**ING Direct**  
**Artie & Marcy Kempner**  
**Tom & Nancy Sager**  
**Morgan Stanley Smith Barney**  
**WSFS**

### Bronze

**Artisans' Bank**  
**Fox Rothschild LLP**  
**Thomas & Sarah Goodrich**  
**McCarter & English, LLP**  
**Morris James LLP**  
**Jeff & Sarah Rogatz**  
**Wilmington Trust**

### Gold

**Dr. Warren & Mrs. Theda Ellis**  
**Barclays**  
**Skadden, Arps, Slate,**  
**Meagher & Flom LLP**  
**Young Conaway Stargatt**  
**& Taylor, LLP**

### Patron

**Tom & Pam Allingham**  
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**Tom & Marie Forrest**  
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**Peninsula Oil**  
**& Propane**  
**Rockford Cabinets**  
**& Millwork**



**To our sponsors who so generously  
contributed to the success of the 2010  
Autumn Auction for Autism, thank you!**

**For more info**  
**[www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org)**  
**(302) 224-6020**

**Support for the newly diagnosed family** (Continued from page 1)

legislation requiring insurance companies to cover basic therapies for autism, including applied behavior analysis (ABA) and speech, physical, and occupational therapies. We hope to see our efforts come to fruition in 2011.

If you would like more information on this subject, contact our Asperger's resource coordinator, Heidi Mizell, at heidi.mizell@delautism.org. If you are interested in getting involved in advocacy for ABA and other services, contact our policy and events director, Kim Siegel, at kim.siegel@delautism.org.

**Add your voice**

Autism Delaware needs to hear from newly diagnosed families so we can understand and meet your diverse and unique needs. Please contact us today at (302) 224-6020, or email us at delautism@delautism.org.

**Plan for camp now** (Continued from page 8)

• **special-needs camp**—Consider the environment of any special-needs camp your child attends. For example, if your child attends a small classroom setting during the school year and the camp's groups will be large, talk to the camp director about transitioning your child in slowly. A larger number of children also means more noise. If your child is noise-sensitive, send your child to camp with noise-reducing headphones. (EarPlanes are reusable ear plugs that cost around \$8.00 at a drug store.) And if your child is accustomed to noise but needs downtime to regroup, send your child to camp with a music-listening device, like an iPod.

**For more info**  
**(302) 224-6020**

**8th Annual Autism Research & Intervention Conference**

**Keynotes highlight early identification and post-high school outcomes**

Presented by the Organization for Autism Research (OAR), the 8th Annual Autism Research & Intervention Conference took place at the end of October in Arlington, Virginia, and covered evidence-based education and intervention across the life span of an individual with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). According to Melissa Martin, Katina Demetriou, and Teresa Avery, Autism Delaware staff members who attended the conference, research was presented in areas as diverse as dating on the spectrum and computer-assisted instruction. Two keynote addresses illustrate this range.



Noting advances in the early identification of autism, a researcher at the Autism Center of Excellence at the University of California, San Diego, delivered Friday afternoon's closing keynote address. Karen Pierce, Ph.D., discussed her team's use of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and eye-tracking studies in sleeping infants. Working with pediatricians in their area, the team developed a one-year well-baby check-up approach that allowed the researchers to quickly and easily explore autism as it occurs in the population and to look at whether on-site screening and assessment in a pediatrician's office is practical. The approach was successful at identifying infants between 12 and 24 months old who were at risk for an ASD. Although the research team is in the midst of multiple studies on early

identification, the team thinks it's unlikely that any single marker (either behavioral or biological) will be able to identify all cases of infants at risk for autism. Rather, multiple markers may work together to create a "signature" of risk.

Discussing outcomes after high school for those affected by autism, Paul T. Shattuck, M.S., M.S.S.W., Ph.D., of the George Warren Brown School

of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, gave Saturday morning's opening keynote. Shattuck's research methods involved surveys of large audiences, and the questions in the survey included "What services are U.S. youth using after high school?" and "What are the correlates (or closely related or complementary circumstances) of service use?" The study found that the use of services drops off after high school—despite the fact that services are still needed. And some groups, such as African-American youth and very low-income families, are less likely to receive services at all.

**About the Organization for Autism Research**

Founded in 2001, OAR is managed by the parents and grandparents of children and adults affected by autism. The organization sets out to use applied science to address the issues faced daily by parents, families, and individuals living with autism and their teachers and caregivers. Find OAR online at [www.researchautism.org](http://www.researchautism.org).



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www.delautism.org

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Becoming a Silver, Platinum, or Lifetime Member will make you a part of a select group of individuals who has demonstrated special leadership and a deep commitment to making a significant difference in the fight against autism. As a leader in the support of autism and autism research, you will receive special recognition in our newsletter or other documents.

Please make your check payable to Autism Delaware.

Mail payment and application to:  
Autism Delaware, 924 Old Harmony Rd., Ste. 201, Newark DE 19713

Prefer to pay by credit card? Call us at (302) 224-6020.

All membership fees and contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

My membership fee is ..... \$  
I would also like to contribute this amount ..... \$  
Total amount enclosed (Add both amounts.) ..... \$

Yes! Please add my name to the mailing list to receive Autism Delaware's newsletter, *The Sun*. (This option is only for families who do not receive *The Sun* through DAP distribution.)

Other (Please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

I am a:  Parent  Family member  Service provider  Educator  Medical professional  Individual with autism

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Enroll me in the following category:  
 Individual \$20  Family \$25  Professional \$50  Silver \$100  Platinum \$300  Lifetime \$500  
 I am a new member.  I am renewing my membership.

Annual membership application