

Steps to Success...

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Bittersweet event is almost here...

The Autism Project of Rhode Island is hosting a one-of-a-kind fundraising event that will definitely leave a great taste in your mouth and could also rev up your engine. Please join us for a light dinner, experience award winning chocolate delicacies by renowned pastry chef Andrew Shotz and dance the night away at Rosecliff to the sounds of the Fat City band. Tickets for the event are \$75.00. To order please call Mary at the Autism Project at 401-785-2666.



The Autism Project of Rhode Island is raffling off a custom street bike in conjunction with this event, valued at over \$100,000.00 courtesy of XDream Cycle of Warwick, designed by Scott Ford who has been building motorcycles for many years. This one of a kind "autism friendly" motorcycle comes with a slammed frame as well as a super-wide 300 series rear tire and custom one-off wheels, a 110HP super charged engine and 6 speed transmission. To order tickets for the bike visit www.bittersweetapri.org or call the Autism Project at 401-785-2666. Tickets are \$100.00 and the drawing will take place on March 10, 2006.

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“...and the winner is...”



Why not join us for a great evening and find out for yourself?

From the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

Where does the time go? I can't believe that it's February already and we are finalizing plans for our *Imagine Walk and Family Fun Day*, spring trainings and social skill groups and CAMP!

We have much more to do. For inspiration (and stamina!), I look to our families and draw upon our strengths. Given the challenges we face, our families have a deep appreciation for the joy of accomplishment; we value making genuine connections; and we understand the long-term nature of this journey. These underlying principles guide our work.

Like our kids, the Autism Project of Rhode Island has tremendous potential. And like our kids, we have a challenging future ahead of us. The number of children diagnosed with autism who need our services continues to rise at an astonishing rate. Costs are increasing dramatically while funding sources are being slashed.

We need your help.

I ask you, as someone who cares deeply about the issue of autism, to generously support our progress. Please consider attending our upcoming *Bittersweet* event at Rosecliff Manor in Newport, or putting together a team for our Walk, or swinging a golf club at our annual tournament so that together we can make sure that every child with autism has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential.

Here's to a record breaking year of growth in the availability of quality programming for all children with an autism spectrum disorder.

Fondly,

Jeanne Quinn

Executive Director

The Autism Project of RI offers social skills groups for children of all ages!

2 ½- 5 years old-Rat A Tat Tat

Rat A Tat Tat is a music and language group that works on the foundations of communication and socialization. Children will be given opportunities to communicate, sing, laugh and move in a fun and safe atmosphere. Classes are held on Saturday mornings.

6-10 years old- Leaps & Bounds

Leaps & Bounds allows children to explore functional play, group dynamics, friendship and enhanced social relations. Within the naturalistic setting the staff will capitalize on teachable moments and social communication skills will be taught as they occur. Classes are held on Saturday mornings and Monday evenings.

10-19 years old-The Club

The Club is designed for school age youth to enhance life skills, form friendships, improve self-worth and pursue interests in structured and unstructured settings. A relaxed atmosphere for creating new friendships, chilling out, and trying new interests will be the setting for groups. Classes are held on Friday evenings.

For more information, class schedules or registration forms, please contact Bethany Tassoni at (401) 785-2666 X 108 or e-mail at bethany@theautismproject.org

Some fees for groups may be covered by Rhode Island Medical Assistance.

Looking for a Few Great Teams!

Let the Walk begin! Can you believe it's time for the Imagine Walk and Family Fun Day 2006?! It seems like just yesterday we were enjoying the balmy weather at Goddard State Park with friends, family, therapists, professionals, et al.

We are excited about some changes for this year's Walk. We will be relocating to a bigger field within Goddard Park to better support our growing number of participants. We are also working to encourage more team participation. To assist you we are again running a contest that rewards the top three teams with FREE training at The Autism Project of RI.

We are also promoting a very successful way for individuals and teams to raise money. It's called Firstgiving, and it is an online fundraising page. Join the many teams and families who used this innovative tool to increase their support of The Autism Project of RI and their many important programs for children with autism.

Previously called Justgiving, Firstgiving is an online tool that lets you personalize your request and contact more friends, family members and colleagues to support your efforts. Here are some tips on how to make it happen.

1.) Create your fundraising web page – it takes less than 5 minutes. You choose:

- The type of fundraising web page (Imagine Walk and Family Fun Day, Annual Golf Tournament, Personal Occasion, In memoriam etc.)
- A personalized web address for your page
- Your personal message
- An image to include on your page – of your child or family
- A message to include in the system-generated “thank you” e-mail that will go out to your donors

Firstgiving puts it all together in your own fundraising web page that you direct your supporters to. Go to

<http://firstgiving.com/Design/1/samples.asp>

to see samples. You'll be able to update and keep an eye on your fundraising page when you log into your Firstgiving account. Our pages are free to fundraisers and donors.

2.) Done with your page? Don't stop now - tell your supporters. Send e-mails to:

- Family, Colleagues, Neighbors
- Board members
- Parishioners
- Friends
- Teammates
- Message board & blog readers Etc., etc!

3.) Start collecting online donations on behalf of your cause.

- Donors receive your email with the link to your personalized page
- They can then make an online donation using a VISA or MasterCard
- Donations are secure. Firstgiving uses Secure Socket Layer encryption certificates from VeriSign, the leading provider of digital trust services
- Donor names and contribution amounts are listed on your page, along with any messages they want to leave for you
- Automatic “thank you” e-mails are sent to contributors once donations are submitted, one from you and one from the nonprofit you're supporting

4.) Donors have the option to:

- Leave comments
- Tell their friends
- Indicate if their company can provide a matching gift
- Create their own fundraising page

5.) Less work for your cause = less administrative costs. All donations are sent *directly* to the nonprofit!

Lessons in Learning...

Well hopefully everyone has gotten through the holidays intact and now we have the rest of the long winter to look forward to. I must admit when school was cancelled because of snow on the first day back to school after vacation I almost wept. Vacations can be difficult for many of our children as there is not the same level of structure provided by school at home, combined with being house bound.

Winter is a difficult time for many of us, we are not always able to go outside to take a walk, ride a bike or go to the playground and often we do not get the exercise our bodies need.

For some children on the spectrum this can be problematic, our kids often need to move their bodies to help with arousal levels and sensory needs. Here are a few ideas to keep the whole family active and chase away the winter blues.

- Exercise tapes, such as Richard Simmons's Sweating to the Oldies or Sesame Street's Elmcize is a way the whole family can get up and dance.
- Roller or Ice skating at an indoor rink, great for gross motor and balance. The Newport Yachting Center and the City of Providence both have outdoor rinks with rentals.
- Many Special Olympic teams offer basketball, snowboarding, skiing, snowshoeing, power lifting, aquatics and volleyball for winter sports.
- Swimming is always a favorite. Many YMCAs and Boys and Girls clubs offer family swim. Even if you're not a member often you may pay a nominal fee to swim.
- The Sensational Child (www.sensationalchild.com) has a wonderful play area to try out and explore the very unique products they offer.
- Little Gems Gymnastics (Smithfield 232-0763) Teaches flexibility, memory development, eye-hand and gross motor coordination.
- Musical Dreams (821-1713) Self expression through dance and music for children with special needs.

And, if you'd like to venture north, many ski areas offer adaptive programming for our children. Check out Loon Ski Resort, Smuggler's Notch and the New England Handicapped Sport Association at Sunapee, New Hampshire.



Patrick Quinn getting a skiing lesson at Sunapee

National Conference Coming Soon to RI



Get ready Rhode Island, the Autism Society of America's National Conference is coming to Providence. Save the dates,

July 12-15, 2006

for information packed days and nights. More information to come!

From the Development Corner

KUDOS:

The Autism Project of Rhode Island would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Eileen Dunn and Lucille Bush of CVS Pharmacy for allowing The Autism Project of Rhode Island to participate in the CVS Downtown 5K on September 11, 2005. Due to our participation in this event we received a \$10,000.00 donation from the proceeds of the CVS Golf Classic to help us support our programs. Many thanks to Charlie Braglie, Race Coordinator, team captains, Jim Golden and Jim Zimmerly and all those volunteers who so generously gave up their time to help us with this event. Hope to see all of you again next year.

Upcoming Events...

Saturday, February 4th

Please join Noah's Ark for a Winter Animal Workshop!

Come to the Cold Spring Community Center, 100 Beach Street, North Kingstown, RI 02852. On Saturday, February 4th From 1 – 4 pm. Price is \$15 per child which includes the animal workshop where each child gets to make-their-own-stuffed-animal plus face painting, storytelling, coloring and more! Proceeds to benefit The Autism Project of RI.

For more information please contact

Christine 401-952-3316 or Marie 401-617-9706

www.noahsarkworkshop.com



Friday, February 10th

The Stadium Theatre in Woonsocket presents **Jazzy Love Notes** at 7:30PM. Come enjoy a romantic evening filled with jazz music, prizes, silent auction and fun. Featuring the sensational jazz group, The Chaplin Brothers performing live with internationally recognized jazz guitarist, Mark Whitfield, Sr. and his New York band. Tickets are \$20.00 and are available at the door. To purchase tickets prior to the event please call 401-762-4545. All proceeds benefit the Autism Project of RI and Hugs & Halos.

Thursday, January 26th-Sunday, January 29th

Our "Autism Bike" will be on display at The Rhode Island Auto Show at the Regal Car Care Booth. Come take a look at this magnificent bike if you are at the show. Or you can see the bike on Saturday, February 11th at the Warwick Mall from 9AM to 10PM.

Friday, March 10, 2006

The Autism Project of RI is hosting "**Bittersweet**" on Friday, March 10, 2006 in Newport at historic Rosecliff Mansion. The event will be a celebration to commemorate eight years of service and support to children with autism and their families.

Some of the highlights of the evening include a silent auction; chocolate sampling created by Andrew Shotz; one of the "10 Best Pastry Chefs in America," hor d'oeuvres, open bar, and music by Fat City.



Guests also have the opportunity to take a chance to win a custom designed motorcycle donated by



XDream Cycle of Warwick. Festivities begin at 7pm and tickets for the event are \$75.00 and are available on line at www.bittersweetapri.org or by contacting The Autism Project at 401-785-2666.

April 30, 2006

Mark your calendar for **April 30, 2006** for our **4th Annual Imagine Walk and Family Fun Day** at Goddard Memorial State Park in Warwick. Registration begins at 9:00AM. Please join us for this unique interactive experience where we utilize red flags to communicate awareness of autism. The walk is followed by a family fun day where we will host activities for all children and feature events appropriate for autism and special needs children.

What better way to show your support and create awareness of autism than to participate in this event. Last year we were more than 1500 strong! Your patronage of this event brought many new programs to both children and their families this year. You can participate in this event by organizing a team, volunteering or just bring your family and enjoy the day. To pre-register, please visit info@theautismproject.org.

To solicit donations via email you can use our online service, Firstgiving. The service is very easy to use. Go to :

www.firstgiving.com/autismproject

and follow the prompts. To volunteer for the event please contact Bethany Tassoni at Bethany@theautismproject.org or call 785-2666.

We look forward to seeing all of you again this year.

The Autism Project of Rhode Island would like to thank the following for Donations made In Memory of Doroty Gladu:

The Industrial Revolution Quilt Guild

Central Falls High School

She was the mother of our member Susan Venditelli

DHS Update

The Katie Beckett workgroup continues to meet and work on specific tasks to update Katie Beckett. To date, there is a draft document of the new application for Katie Beckett. There is also a Parent Questionnaire that is revised and both are more user friendly. The workgroup also learned what other states with Katie Beckett are doing. It is the goal of the group to learn from other states, examine our own states needs and present an improved draft of new Katie Beckett eligibility in a few weeks.

Dawn Wardyga, Family Voices, RIPIN, is facilitating the group and DHS staff is helping. The workgroup continues to focus on expanding criteria to consider safety issues, daily living skills and social/communication needs. We are also discussing how the state will support children and their families when they don't meet the criteria.

It's Time for Camp!

Our staff is very busy organizing another year of camp. *Move, Think, Create and Communicate* is a two-week summer camp program for children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or related communication disorder. The program is rich with visual supports, structured teaching methods, sensory based activities and traditional camp activities like swimming, arts and crafts, and nature walks.



Friends and marshmallows

For the fourth year, camp will take place at the Boy Scouts of America Champlin Scout Reservation, a beautifully wooded rustic campsite complete with a pond and a swimming pool, located in Cranston, RI. Our camp will be staffed by Camp Director Connie Rinehart, an accomplished and experienced Communication Specialist, who manages the camp curriculum and is on staff during the two weeks of camp. Lead camp counselors are all educators from Rhode Island public schools. Additional staff is selected for their skills and abilities to work with children with ASD.

Camp is scheduled to bridge the gap between the end of Extended School Year (ESY) programs and the start of the new school year. Our campers enjoy a safe, fun camp environment that includes the following: visual supports that enhance language comprehension and prediction; sensory-based activities that enhance a camper's ability to take advantage of language and communication opportunities;

relaxation techniques that enhance self-regulation; daily living routines are incorporated into camp activities as appropriate; staff and program content support play skills, social skills and participation in group activities; and, camp facilities (such as the pool and nature trails) offer gross motor activities that satisfy sensory needs and encourage communication

Children from age five (and entering kindergarten) to 17 with an ASD diagnosis or related communication disorder may attend. Groups will be established according to each child's abilities and diagnoses. Space is limited, so we encourage families to submit registration as soon as possible.

Summer camp will run from 9:00am to 2:30pm. Session I is scheduled for August 14 to 18 and Session II will run from August 21 to 25. There will be staggered start and end times to help with automobile traffic at camp. Tuition for camp is \$450 per week. Camperships are available on a limited basis. Tuition may be paid by personal check, VISA, MasterCard or checks from other funding sources.



I can't wait!

For more information about the camp, available camperships, or a registration packet, please check our website: www.theautismproject.org or call The Autism project of Rhode Island at (401) 785-2666.