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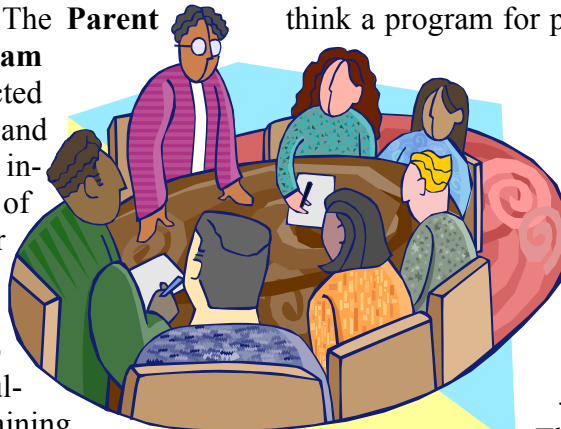
Ms. Connie Rinehart

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APRI Awarded Grant for New Program

We are pleased to announce the RI Foundation approved a grant in the amount of \$52,000 to the Autism Project to support the development and implementation of a pilot program. The **Parent Coaching Program** will be conducted both in Spanish and in English as an introductory level of parent training for parents of children with autism. It is intended to be the first of multiple levels of training offered by the Autism Project.



The goal is to develop a level of training to better serve a population that is underserved for many reasons. They are parents of newly diagnosed children with autism, who, because of emotional, cultural, fi-

nancial or geographical reasons are unable to attend existing trainings. "It's a very difficult time when your child is first diagnosed with autism," commented Joanne Quinn, executive director. "We think a program for parents to learn from other parents will add an important comfort level while serving as a means for them to gain valuable information and skills to support their child as they begin their journey."

The grant is for one year and the program should begin this summer. Spanish-speaking parents of children with autism are encouraged to contact the Autism Project office if interested in participating as a Parent Coach. Please contact Joanne Quinn at 785-2666.

APRI Offices Burglarized On Christmas Day

Several computers were stolen from the offices of the Autism Project during a break-in on Christmas Day. Two desktop computers and four laptops were taken. While our critical data is backed up, there are many items such as lists, settings, e-mails, letters etc. that are not. As a result Melissa and Mary will be spending a lot of time and

energy on the task of getting us back to a smoothly functioning office instead of their more productive labors. In the meantime please bear with us if we are a little slow in responding to your contacts. The police have been here and are working on the case and we hope our insurance will cover most of the physical loss. Thank you for the many phone calls and offers of support.

From the Executive Director's Desk...

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to all of you. I can't believe how fast this first month of the new year is flying by! I hope you are all healthy and happy and wish you well in 2005. We've been extremely busy here at the Autism Project and, consequently, we have much to report on. The newsletter is growing each month with information for you that we hope is helpful.

First, I'd like to report some very good news. The week before Christmas we received word that we were awarded \$52,000 from the RI Foundation for our planned Parent Coaching program! This is so significant, because the Foundation is a great support, both fiscally and as an organization to many non-profits in RI. We've proven our worth to them and I believe it will grow into a very supportive relationship.

This new **Parent Coaching program** will be designed as the first training for parents of newly diagnosed children. Also, it will be offered in both English and Spanish. We are very pleased to be in a position to take all we have learned and teach it to Parent Coaches who will then teach it to parents in a very comfortable and culturally sensitive manner. We are targeting July for a Pilot series. In the meantime if you are, or know of, a Spanish speaking parent of a child with autism who may be interested in participating as a Parent Coach, please contact me.

More good news! Mary Farhoumand and I did the CVS lunch circuit in December to receive a total of \$15,000 from the company! We were awarded \$5,000 for our volunteer work at the CVS Downtown 5K Run and \$10,000 *just because* from the Golf Classic. WELL DONE MARY!!!

The bad new is the office was broken into on either Christmas Eve or Day and computers were stolen. Insurance will cover replacement costs, but the time and effort for both Mary and Melissa to rebuild the info on their computers is infuriating. We did back up the Quick Books and database, and Mary's paper trail is very long, but to get it back to the level of efficiency we had just achieved is going to take time.

Let's end on an up note... we are so lucky to have Connie Rinehart, MS CCC-SLP on board with us. Many of you know Connie from Camp and now she is leading the effort to get our teen social group "The Club" up and running. Welcome Connie. Also, thank you to Ruth Feder and Bethany Korkuk for running our new support group. Information on both new programs is available inside on page 6.

Happy New Year,

Joanne

Just Around the Corner...

Happy New Year! "Just around the corner..." - it wasn't too hard to come up with this as the title for a new contribution to the newsletter. It was relatively easy because I literally told Joanne that I just wanted "a little corner" each month to make the Board of Directors more visible to all of our wonderful supporters and colleagues. It was also easy because I think the title accurately reflects the pride, optimism, anticipation, and enthusiasm the Board is feeling about the work The Autism Project will do in 2005. More advocacy for people with autism is just around the corner... more assistance for families is just around the corner... more appropriate autism-specific training for professionals is just around the corner.

But negotiating corners takes effort. The Board relies heavily on the very talented, passionate and dedicated Advisory Board and staff at The Autism Project to inform our decision making process and in this new year, I'd like to invite all of you to share your thoughts, ideas, and vision about future directions with them. The fulfillment of so many exciting efforts to support people with autism is indeed just around the corner and the Board of Directors for The Autism Project is very happy to help negotiate the journey.

Respectfully,

Kathleen C. Schlenz, MS, OTR/L, BCP
Chairperson, Board of Directors APRI

A Great Place for Lessons in Learning...

Autism Discussion Group

For Professionals and Parents

WHAT:

- Collaboration and brainstorming with APRI staff who have extensive experience and expertise in working with individuals with Autism
- Group problem-solving on your “hot” topic(s)
- Support and follow-up regarding implementation of best practice concepts (i.e.- Physical Structure, Visual Structure, Sensory Integration, PECS, Social Stories, etc.)
- Networking with peers

WHERE: **Autism Project of Rhode Island**
51 Sockanossett Cross Road
Cranston, RI 02920

WHEN: Last Saturday of Each Month
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (coffee and Krispie Kremes provided)
Next Meeting: Saturday January 29, 2004

WHO: The Discussion Group is now open to professionals and parents supporting a child with autism. The Group is designed for on-going instructional support on using strategies to support children, teenagers and young adults with autism.

REGISTRATION: **FREE!** Please call 785-2666 to pre-register and reserve your spot!

From the Development Corner

During the months of November and December the Autism Project was very busy with fundraising activities:

The Autism Project would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the **CVS Corporation** for allowing us to participate in the **CVS Downtown 5K**. Due to our participation in this event we received an amazing **\$15,000.00** donation from the CVS Downtown 5K as well as the CVS Golf Classic proceeds, to help us support our programs! Many thanks to Mr. Jack Kramer, Senior Vice President, Ms. Lucille Bush, Director of Community Relations and Charlie Braglie, Race coordinator of CVS Corporation for selecting our organization to be one of the recipients of their philanthropic efforts.

As always, this fundraising effort would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the 25 volunteers who generously gave up their Sunday to work at this event. We appreciate and thank all of you for your tireless efforts. We would like to especially thank Jim Zimmerly, who managed our volunteers at the event. Thanks so much. We couldn't have done it without all of you! We have been invited to participate again next year and I hope you all will join us on September 11th, 2005.

✦ In November, we raised close to **\$500.00** due to the generosity of the Providence Place Mall for hosting "One Enchanted Evening." Many thanks to all of our volunteers and board members for helping us make this event a success by selling tickets, especially Bernadine Sadwin who sold the most tickets. We will participate in this event again next year, which will be held on the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

✦ The Autism Project of RI also hosted a gift wrapping booth at **Borders** in Garden City. Many thanks to Manager, Bob Ryan, for allowing us this unique opportunity and David Perduto and the students from East Greenwich High School for their help and assistance with this project, as well as to the other volunteers who helped

with this event. Thanks also to Deb Langevin for implementing and managing the event.

✦ In December APRI successfully launched our **Annual/Membership Campaign** in conjunction with the Fein角度stein Challenge. We would like to extend our gratitude to Mr. Alan Shawn Fein角度stein and the Fein角度stein Foundation for allowing our organization to participate in this fundraising effort. We would also like to thank Bethany Tassoni and her son Jackson for serving as our goodwill ambassadors for this campaign. Many thanks to the Johnson & Wales students, who designed the brochure for our organization. The Autism Project of RI would like to welcome all those who recently joined our non-profit family as well as all those loyal supporters who renewed their existing memberships. If you would like to become a member, please contact Mary@theautismproject.org. Your support helps us maintain our programs designed exclusively for children with autism spectrum disorders.

Upcoming Events:

Mark your calendar for **April 10, 2005** for our **3rd Annual Imagine Walk and Family Fun Day** at Goddard Memorial State Park. We hope to see you all there!

Volunteers and walkers/teams are still needed, if you are interested in helping us with this event, or a sponsorship please contact Mary@theautismproject.org.

Our annual wine tasting event, **Wine, Dine and Help Autism**, is back by popular demand and will be held sometime in late April. This year we will host the event at Gian Carlos Ristorante in Woonsocket. The event is once again being sponsored by Michael Andoscia of Waddell & Reed. Unfortunately, seating capacity is limited and tickets will be on a first come basis.

Plans are now underway for our **2nd Annual Drive for Autism Golf Tournament**, sponsored by Waddell & Reed to be held at Exeter Country Club this July. If you would like to participate in this

tournament, or would like more information, please contact Mary@theautismproject.org. The event will be once again chaired by Michael Andoscia.

If you would like to host an event, buy tickets for an event or become a member, please contact Mary in our Development office at 401-785-2666 or at Mary@theautismproject.org for more details.

Autism Merchandise Available

We now have the **Autism Car Ribbon Magnets** available. You can pick them up at our office at 51 Sockanosset Crossroad in Cranston or order them shortly from our website. For every \$5.00 donation (shipping will be additional) you will receive a free magnet for your car.

We will also have the **Autism silicone bracelet** as well as the **Autism label pin** available in our office after January 20, 2005 for a donation of \$5.00 each (shipping will be additional). If you are interested in ordering any of these items please contact Mary@theautismproject.org, supplies are limited and will be given out on a first come basis, feel free to stop by and pick up your merchandise to avoid the shipping charges. Someone will be available to help you from 9:00AM to 2:30PM, Monday through Thursday.



New Fundraising Tool Helps Meet Walk Goal

A new and exciting fundraising tool will be available to assist Walk participants meet their individual goals for this year's *Imagine Walk and Family Fun Day*. We are expected to be live by January 17, 2005.

Just Giving is an organization that creates individual donor pages to support fundraising activities. Each walker or team of walkers will be able to customize a personal fundraising page that informs potential donors about the *Imagine Walk*, what their personal goal is, and where they are in meeting their goal. The page also provides information about the Autism Project and the person with autism they are walking to support.

The service is online, easy to use and very powerful. Go to www.justgiving.com/AutismProject on or about January 17. "We're very excited to add this tool to our fundraising efforts for the *Imagine Walk*," commented Mary Farhoumand, director of development. "The Walk is our biggest fundraiser of the year and this is an easy means of increasing support."

Information on the **Just Giving** program will also be available on our website at www.theautismproject.org.

**Autism Society
of North Carolina
Bookstore
AFFILIATE**



New Programming at APRI

The Club— Teen Social Group Set to Begin in February

A pilot series of a new Club for adolescents with High-Functioning Autism and Asperger Syndrome is scheduled begin. Working in collaboration with the Kent County YMCA, APRI will offer this seven week “social skills group” beginning in February.

“We are very excited about this program,” commented Connie Rinehart, program administrator. “It’s a unique opportunity for a group of teens to gather in a social situation and have success because the supports will in place.”

The seven week series will begin the first week in April. There will be two groups of eight teens each within the age range of 11 to 17 years old. Each group will meet one night each week at the YMCA for Karate lessons and Friday night at the Autism Project’s office in Cranston.

“We want to build this program to grow and become a place where our teens and young adults will know they can go on a Friday night for a safe social fun evening,” said Rinehart.

For more information and a registration form, please call the office and ask for Connie at ext. 103.

Support Group for Parents of Newly Diagnosed Children Offered

Ruth Feder, MSW and parent of a child with autism and Bethany Korkuc, APRI intern, will host a parent support group for parents who are new to the journey of autism. The monthly meeting will be held the third Wednesday of the month at The Autism Project from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. beginning January 19, 2004. Please join us for coffee and pastry.

Meet Connie Rinehart Our Program Administrator

Connie Rinehart joins the Autism Project team in a multifaceted role. She will continue to be our summer camp director for *Move, Think, Create, Communicate*, supervising and implementing all aspects of camp. In addition, Connie will join Cheryl Cotter and consult to public schools and provide trainings to local agencies as needed.

Connie will be instrumental in collaborating with the Kent County YMCA for our pilot program, *Freedom Club*, a social club for teenagers with Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism.

A member of the Advisory Board for four years, and a speech and language pathologist, Connie brings great talent, knowledge, humor and compassion for our children to the Autism Project. We are excited about her addition to the Project as well as the Autism Project’s vision for the future.

Updated Calendar Available

The Autism Coalition Calendar for January to June is now available on our website for download. www.theautismproject.org/resources

From the Intern’s Desk

Thank you to all who have taken the time to participate in my survey looking at parent perception of special education services. Your time and perspectives are greatly appreciated. I am hoping that the information attained will allow us to look into the strengths and weaknesses of the services currently available. Also, I have extended the time frame for interviews so if you are interested in participating, but didn’t get the chance due to the holiday buzz; please contact me at 785-2666.