



Gala: Tickets Go On Sale for Pieces of the Puzzle Gala

By Kim Manning

Save the date of April 5 and mark down “night to remember!” The Howard County Autism Society presents the Third Annual Pieces of the Puzzle Gala to be held at the Ten Oaks Ballroom in Clarksville, a new location for the gala.

It is with great anticipation that we plan our 2008 gala and the only thing that will make the evening even more magical is – you!

Music, dancing, a live and silent auction, and lots of fun will be the agenda for the evening. Come out and support a worthy cause that touches Howard County in a significant way. The past two events have sold out quickly so make sure to get your tickets right away to assure your spot at this year’s gala. The new location will accommodate about 100 more people than last year’s venue.

You may purchase tickets by visiting the HCAS website at www.howard-autism.org, or by sending your check to: Howard County Autism Society, 10015 Old Columbia Road, Suite B-215, Columbia, MD 21046. The cost of the tickets is \$100 each.

A special addition to this year’s

(Continued on page 2)



Buttery Popcorn for Breakfast? Special Kids Enjoy Special Movie Event

By Beth Benevides Hill

Milk Duds and pretzel bites may not appeal to *everyone* for breakfast, but the familiar smell of buttery popcorn couldn’t be missed on an early November morning as a steady stream of nearly 300 kids and parents entered the AMC Columbia Theater for a special showing of “The

Bee Movie.”

Coordinated by Howard County Autism Society parent Marianne Ross and AMC Columbia’s general manager Dan Harris and human resources manager Jeannie Fronapfel, the theater was filled with excitement as children with special

(Continued on page 2)

What’s Inside

President’s Farewell Column	3	What’s New at the Autism Society	8
Executive Director’s Message	4	Gala Sponsorship Opportunities	9
Workgroup Visits Schools	4	IAN Height, Weight Study	11
Autism Resource Guide	5	Asperger’s Research Project	12
Did You Know...?	5	Upcoming Events	13

2008 Gala News: Tickets Go On Sale



(Continued from page 1)

festivities will be the drawing of the winner of the HCAS Harley Davidson raffle. Can't you just see yourself out on the open road this spring riding your very own Harley motorcycle? Only 1,000 tickets will be sold, so you've got a 1 in 1,000 chance if you buy just one ticket.

Raffle tickets cost \$100 each, or \$250 for three tickets. They can be purchased at the Harley Davidson of Maryland showroom at 7010 Troy Hill Drive in Elkridge, online at www.howard-autism.org or by emailing raffle@howard-autism.org.

You can see a photo of the motorcycle, a 2007 FXD Dyna™ SuperGlide®, on page 6.

So, dust off your dancing shoes and pull out the black tie (optional!) and come join us for lovely evening that will help HCAS fulfill its mission to provide support, promote awareness, and advocate for change for those in our community living with autism.

For information on becoming a gala sponsor, see pages 9 and 10.



HCAS had an information table at AMC Columbia Theater for a sensory-sensitive showing of *The Bee Movie* for kids with special needs.

Special Needs Movie Event a Big Hit

(Continued from page 1)

needs and their families enjoyed a one-of-a-kind movie-going experience.

In an effort to address sensory concerns, the lights stayed on and the volume remained much lower than usual throughout the showing of the movie. Children were free to walk around, dance, rock, wiggle in their seats, sing, talk, hum, spin—it was their time to be free, have fun, and feel happy! And parents were able to relax knowing that the person sitting next to them already “got it.”

“It was great to feel comfortable and not to worry about being misunderstood,” said one parent who came with her child from Rockville. “Everyone was so kind and understanding.”

Many others responded

similarly to the short feedback survey. Comments ranged from “excellent” and “wonderful” to “this was the first time we’ve been to the movies in years!”

Members of HCAS greeted families as they entered the theater and staffed a display table with informational brochures, membership forms, autism awareness bracelets, magnets, and more. Several moviegoers stopped by the table to find out more about the group or to make a donation to what they felt was a worthy cause.

Given the unanimously positive feedback from attendees, as well as the support and cooperation of AMC Columbia, the HCAS is enthusiastically planning similar events. A second movie was scheduled for December 15, with a showing of “Alvin and the Chipmunks.”



The Howard County Autism Society is moving Feb. 1!

New Address: 10280 Old Columbia Road / Columbia, MD 21046

Phone number to be announced.

President's Message

Let me start by thanking all of our parent volunteers, board members and Autism Society staff who have worked tirelessly during 2007 to raise public awareness about autism, assist others in finding needed resources for their loved ones with autism, as well as offering acceptance and support to those individuals and families who are on an autism journey through life.

This is my final message in the role of co-president of the Howard County Autism Society. As of January 1, I have become the immediate past president, and have turned over my duties to Beth Hill, who will serve as co-president with Stephanie Maric. I will still continue to serve on the board, as a parent volunteer, to assist our awareness and outreach efforts in the Howard County autism community.

I am both inspired and proud of our accomplishments during 2007, which included opening our Autism Resource Center as a parent resource. During 2007, we also successfully implemented the Project Lifesaver program with the Howard County Police Department, and furthered our partnerships with both the Howard County Library and the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue for training and resources.

As well, we continued our ongoing collaboration with the Howard County Public School System to improve services for students with autism, with the monitoring of the early intervention efforts and the creation of a reimbursement program for supplemental in-home ABA instruction. We have also been participants in a new joint committee made up of Autism Society parents and HCPSS staff to review and make recommendations for improving services and pro-



A Farewell Message from Outgoing Co-President Debbie Clutts

gramming for students with autism in the primary grades.

Through the diligent efforts of our Executive Director, Kim Manning, we were able to obtain grant funds to pilot the Fitness First program, in collaboration with the Columbia Association, and Project T.E.A.M., a peer buddy program being piloted with the HCPSS in county high schools. Project T.E.A.M. will further participation of youth with

autism in all school activities, including after-school programs.

I would be remiss without mentioning the success of our first annual One Step Closer Autism Walk, which was held in October 2007 at Centennial Park, with over 400 members of our community walking in support of the HCAS and people living with autism. The sight of hundreds of adults and children walking to support our efforts to better the lives of those with autism in our community was truly inspiring!

On that note, I thank you for your support and friendship during my three years as co-president! Reflecting back, we have made substantial progress as a non-profit grassroots parent group, in helping so many affected by autism. Much has been accomplished, but much is left to be done. I look forward to continuing our journey with autism with my friends in the Howard County Autism Society!

*Kind regards,
Debbie Clutts
2008 Past President*

Thank You For Contributions To HCAS

Anuradha Mahalingam
Steve Wampler
Christine and Michael Sparks
Francene Cowell
Phillis Gray
Mr. and Mrs. Doman McArthur
Angela Moore Jewelry and
Tracie Feron
Pump it Up!

The Howard County Autism Society gratefully acknowledges the following donations made in memory of Gilbert Cohen, father of Shari Chase.

Barbara Yellen and Phillip West
Mr. and Mrs. Garrett Whitman
Lisa Orenstein and the "Cherry Hill Friends"
Wendy Gottlieb
Vincent and Tina De Maria
Ruth Bressler
Carol and Vin LaHiff

From the Executive Director's Desk

Happy New Year! It's always exciting to start a brand new calendar...one that doesn't have any coffee spill stains, one that hasn't been slathered with White-Out to correct mistakes, and one that is open to a world of new possibilities and experiences! That's how I feel about 2008 – the sky is the limit for the Howard County Autism Society!

We had such a fruitful year in 2007 and have established so many new partnerships and friendships within the community, and now we will have the opportunity to see where these collaborations might lead. Whether it's in the area of school issues, recreational needs, job and housing concerns, or a host of other important topics, it is clear that we have much work to be done; but, equally clear is that we have so many organizations and people within our community that truly care and want to join with us in finding real and meaningful solutions.

I don't know about you, but I find that very encouraging and highly motivating – watch out Howard County, I think I'm getting a second wind!

I am thrilled to announce our new office location, 10280 Old Columbia Road in Columbia, that will allow us to better serve the needs



Executive Director Kim Manning

of our membership and community. Our Autism Resource Center will now be housed in a fully dedicated room where you are invited to come and read, research, enjoy our media center, or talk to someone who can help answer questions. Don't hesitate to bring your children, as a play area will be set up for their enjoyment and your peace of mind!

Our new home becomes official on February 1, so stop by and say hello. Now that we have a large reception area and receptionist desk, we would love to have you volunteer to man the front desk, help take phone calls, and generally become involved in the day to day life of the Autism Society. You can ask about volun-

teer opportunities by calling 410-290-6231.

I'd like to officially welcome the new members who have been elected to serve on our Board of Directors. I especially want to pay tribute to our outgoing Co-President, Debbie Clutts. Debbie's hard work and unfailing dedication to this organization have set a very high standard of service that I continually aspire to. I count it an honor to serve beside such dedicated and talented men and women. We still need lots of involvement on the various committees of the board. Maybe you could consider serving on the program committee, advocacy committee, public relations committee, finance committee? Maybe there is a need we haven't thought of yet and you have a great idea you've been tossing around?!

I'd love to hear from you; my goal for 2008 is to see more membership involvement than ever to help our organization be responsive and reflective of our community. So, don't be shy, give me a call or send me an email and let's see what we can do to make Howard County the most autism friendly community in the nation!

Kim Manning can be reached at kmanning@howard-autism.org.

Elementary Autism Workgroup Conducts Observations at Schools

Several parents and board members from the Howard County Autism Society are serving on the Howard County Public School System's Elementary Autism and Related Disabilities Workgroup, which includes many teachers, administrators and specialists. The workgroup broke

into small teams to visit several county schools this winter to observe general education, inclusion and Academic Life Skills settings.

The workgroup plans to draft recommendations for improving services in grades one through three. The committee is an outgrowth of an earlier HCPSS com-

mittee that focused on intensive early intervention services for autism. The committee is seeking information from teachers and administrators about collaborative planning, staff training, methodologies, supports, and resources in their schools.

Marina Shread

2008 Howard County Autism Reference Guide

Compiled by the Howard County Autism Society



The following local government and nonprofit agencies provide information, referrals, and/or services to families and individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

- **Howard County Autism Society: 410-290-6231, www.howard-autism.org.**
- Howard County Public School System Family Support and Resource Center (information, library and workshops): 410-313-7161.
- Howard County Disabilities Services: 410-313-6402.
- Howard County Infants and Toddlers Program, Developmental Screening and Early Intervention Services, ages birth to 3: 410-313-7017.
- Howard County Child Find, Developmental Screening and Early Intervention Services, ages 3 and up: 410-313-7046.
- Howard County Department of Education, Special Education Office: 410-313-6655.
- Howard County Government Information: 410-313-3000.
- Howard County Health Department: 410-313-7500.
- Howard County Head Start preschool program: 410-313-6443.
- Interactive Autism Network at Kennedy Krieger Institute: www.IANproject.org.
- Foreign Information and Referral Network (information for immigrants): 410-992-1923.
- Locate: Enhanced Special Needs Services (helps parents find licensed child care and summer camps for children with special needs): 410-625-1113 or 1-800-390-3372.
- Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (information on state services and funding, list of service providers): 410-767-5600.
- Maryland Disability Law Center: 410-727-6352.
- Maryland State Department of Education autism site: www.AutismConnectMd.org.
- The Parents' Place of Maryland (parent training, support and advocacy for special education and health care needs, plus information in Spanish): 410-768-9100.
- Pathfinders for Autism (information and referral services, database of providers in Maryland): 866-806-8400.
- Parent to Parent (mentoring program for parents of special needs children): 443-562-4772.
- The Arc of Howard County (disability-related advocacy and workshops): 410-730-0638.
- The Resource Network (information and resources on developmental disabilities for parents and professionals): 1-800-390-3372 or www.resourcenetworkatkki.org.

Did You Know That ... ?

...The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) published a new "Parental Rights: Maryland Procedural Safeguards Notice" last summer? If you haven't received a copy yet, you can download it from the school system's web site, www.hcpss.org.

...eSchoolnewsletter, which many county schools use for online communications, publishes a spe-

cial education email newsletter? Visit their web site, at www.eschoolnewsletter.com, to sign up for special education news in Howard County.

...a parent or the school may request an independent facilitator to help them communicate more effectively at IEP meetings? Both sides must agree to voluntary facilitation. For information, please

call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161.

...the Autism Society wants to hear how it has helped you? We would like to publish a few lines about your experience in chapter publications. Please send your comments to newsletter@howard-autism.org, and let us know if we can use your name.

Howard Autism Society Begins Second Year of Autism Trainings for the County's Paramedics

In November, the Howard County Autism Society began its second consecutive year of work in partnership with the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue. HCAS is providing training on autism spectrum disorders to the department's paramedics. Last year, HCAS conducted six

training sessions. It planned to conduct an additional six trainings between November 2007 and January 2008. When completed, all of Howard County's paramedics will have received 2.5 hours of training on how to recognize, communicate with, and serve individuals with autism.



WIN THIS MOTORCYCLE

The Howard County Autism Society is raffling off a 2007 Harley-Davidson FXD™ Dyna SuperGlide® in Pacific Pearl Blue.

Cost: \$100 per ticket, or 3 for \$250
Only 1,000 tickets will be sold!

Buy now before tickets sell out at:
www.howard-autism.org
raffle@howard-autism.org
or Harley-Davidson of Maryland in Elkridge.

Winner announced in April.
See terms and conditions where tickets are sold.

Want to Talk About Special Education with the County School System's Top Officials?

Would you like to discuss special education issues with the top brass from the Howard County Public School System?

You will have two opportunities to do so in January.

The Howard County Special Education Community Advisory Committee (SECAC) is sponsoring a forum with Schools Superintendent Sydney Cousin on January 15 at 7 p.m. at Faulkner Ridge Center in Columbia. To submit a question for Dr. Cousin, please call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161 or email ann_scholz@hcpss.org.

Then, on January 17 at 7 p.m., come to the Howard County Autism Society monthly meeting to hear Dr. James Walsh, director of special education, discuss "Preparing for IEP Meetings: Understanding the New State IEP Format." Instructional facilitator Linda Flanagan and special education teacher Sheila Dwyer also will participate.

The Autism Society meeting will be from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Oakland Mills Interfaith Center on Robert Oliver Drive in Columbia.

Stephanie Maric, J.D.
301-379-9493



Long & Foster – Columbia
10805 Hickory Ridge Road
Direct: 301-379-9493
Office: 410-715-2721

Stephanie.Maric@longandfoster.com

DONATION COMMITMENT:

I will donate \$250 to the Howard County Autism Society for every member referral that results in a sale! (I'll up that to \$500 if I sell your home and help you buy a new home)



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PARENT and HCC-ASA Board Member !

What's New at the Howard Autism Society?

A Development Director, Bigger Resource Center and More

By Marina Shread

The Howard County Autism Society has hired a new part-time employee, **Development Director Cindy Wright**, to plan the Third Annual Pieces of the Puzzle Gala and Auction, among other duties.

Executive Director Kim Manning announced Ms. Wright's selection in early December. She replaces Bob Gillette.

Ms. Wright previously worked for T. Rowe Price as a retirement plan manager before having children. She has two nine-year-olds and one six-year-old.

She is a board member for the Western Howard County Soccer organization and used to co-chair the Cattail Creek Country Club Swim Team. She also has helped with PTA events at Bushy Park Elementary School.

"I enjoy playing tennis and play USTA at Cattail," she said.

Interested in volunteering for the gala or auction committees? Please contact Ms. Wright at cindywright@comcast.net or by calling the office at 410-290-6231.

Also new to the HCAS team is **Dana Riley**, a part-time bookkeeper. She has assumed some of the duties previously performed by the volunteer treasurer.

HCAS Outgrows Office

If you have visited the Howard County Autism Society office recently, you've likely noticed it has outgrown the small one-room space it was using for an Autism Resource Center in 2007.

The Board of Directors recently approved a two-year lease for a larger space in a different office complex on Old Columbia Road, near King's Contrivance Vil-

lage Center.

The new address is 10280 Old Columbia Road. It has three offices, a reception area, and room for a dedicated resource center with materials and books for parents seeking to learn more about autism spectrum disorders. The space is in the same building as the Beacon Institute and Handelman Conference Center — and just down the road from the current office at Executive House.

HCAS will move into the space in February.

HCAS is looking for a **copy machine** for the new office. If you or your employer would like to donate a copier in good working condition, please contact Executive Director Kim Manning at kmanning@howard-autism.org or 410-290-6231.



Fitness First!

A group of Autism Society families is participating in a pilot

program to help develop a family-oriented, autism-friendly fitness program.

About 50 parents, siblings and children with autism meet once a month on a Saturday evening at the Columbia Gym in Clarksville. The HCAS program, called Fitness First, was funded with a grant from the Baltimore Ravens Foundation and launched in collaboration with the Columbia Association.

Children and parents participate in structured activities, including soccer, stretching, basketball and swimming.

Children received fitness booklets in which they can record the times they exercise or play sports between the monthly sessions of Fitness First.

Parents are providing feedback to gym staff about how to work best with their children with autism. The goal is to create a model gym program aimed at families affected by autism.

Gala 2008!



New location, new features, same fun!

Third Annual Pieces of the Puzzle Gala and Auction to Benefit the Howard County Autism Society

April 5, 2008

Ten Oaks Ballroom in Clarksville

Tickets \$100 at www.howard-autism.org

Black tie optional

Sponsorship Opportunities

Howard County Autism Society Third Annual Pieces of the Puzzle Gala

Title Sponsor ~ \$15,000

- Title naming sponsorship for gala
- Company/Name on all promotional items and on front cover of gala program
- Full-page advertisement on inside front cover of gala program
- Company banner prominently displayed at gala
- Banner advertisement and link on website during Autism Awareness Month (April)
- Inclusion in gala press release
- Ten complimentary gala tickets

Partner ~ \$10,000

- Recognition in gala program
- Company logo displayed at entrance on evening of gala
- Full-page advertisement in gala program
- Inclusion in gala press release
- Ten complimentary gala tickets

Benefactor ~ \$7,500

- Recognition in gala program
- Listing on signage at gala
- Half-page advertisement in gala program
- Inclusion in gala press release
- Ten complimentary tickets

Patron ~ \$5,000

- Recognition in gala program
- Company/Name prominently displayed at one dinner table
- Half-page advertisement in gala program
- Eight complimentary tickets

Friend ~ \$2,500

- Recognition in gala program
- Six complimentary tickets

Supporter ~ \$1,000

- Recognition in gala program
- Four complimentary tickets

Donor ~ \$500

- Recognition in gala program
- Two complimentary tickets

Sponsorship Opportunities ~ Reservation Form

Howard County Autism Society Third Annual Pieces of the Puzzle Gala

April 5, 2008

Ten Oaks Ballroom

7:00pm - Midnight

Silent Auction, Dinner, Open Bar, Black-tie optional

Sponsorship Form

YES, I/We will gladly support the 2008 *Pieces of the Puzzle Gala* with the following donation:

- | | |
|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Title Sponsor | \$15,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partner | \$10,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$7,500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$5,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | \$2,500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter | \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donor | \$500 |

No, I prefer not to be a sponsor, but please accept my contribution of \$ _____

Company/Individual Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Enclosed is a check payable to the Howard County Autism Society in the amount of \$ _____

Please bill my credit card (Visa/Mastercard) in the amount of \$ _____

Credit Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Name on Credit Card _____

Authorized Signature _____

Please return with payment to:

Howard County Autism Society
10015 Old Columbia Road, Suite B215
Columbia, MD 21046

The Howard County Autism Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



Research News: *Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders Taller, Heavier Than Peers, says IAN*

Reprinted with permission of Kennedy Krieger Institute, Baltimore, Maryland

New data from the Interactive Autism Network (IAN), a project collecting information online from families of children with ASDs [Autism Spectrum Disorders] all over the United States, show that children with ASDs tend to be taller than expected for their age, and heavier than expected for their height, compared to typical peers.

The IAN Weight and Height Questionnaire was launched on the afternoon of October 22, 2007. Families participating in IAN Research were notified, and got out their scales and tape measures. By the end of the next day, October 23rd, families had submitted height and weight measurements from over 1,000 children. By November 21st, IAN had received data from nearly 2,000 children with ASDs and over 1,200 of their non-affected siblings.

Why is body size an important topic to investigate?

There are at least two major reasons body size, which is measured by head circumference, weight, height, and Body Mass Index (BMI), is an important topic to investigate in autism. First of all, differences in any of these may help point the way to specific subtypes of autism — different kinds of autism characterized by measurable physical, biochemical, or other factors, and which may be due to different causes. In addition, issues related to weight and BMI may be related to the future health of individuals with ASDs.

A recent paper, Clinical, Morphological, and Biochemical Correlates of Head Circumference in Au-

tism, is an excellent example of research tying a certain physical picture in ASD with other important characteristics. Studying 241 individuals with autism, ages 3 to 16, researchers found that head size tended to be large, as well as overall body size, and that those with the largest head size also tended to have more impaired adaptive behaviors, less impaired IQ, motor development, and verbal language, and a family history of allergic/immune disorders. Another study, this one focusing on 28 children with autism and 25 with PDD-NOS, discovered growth of body length was accelerated in very young children with

Interactive Autism Network

autism spectrum disorders.

In a preliminary look at the data, what have we found?

Children with ASDs: Taller, Heavier Than Typical Peers

To compare children with ASDs and their unaffected siblings — who were considered “typical peers” for the purposes of this analysis — IAN used both height and BMI. (BMI is a measure that is used to calculate whether someone’s weight is more or less than would be expected for their height.)

Height

As a group, children with ASDs appear to be taller than their typical peers. Children with Asperger’s Syndrome and Autism, specifically, appear taller than those with PDD-NOS who, in turn, do not differ from typical children in height.

For the purposes of this

analysis, “very short” is defined as being equal to or below the 5th percentile for Height, while “very tall” is equated with being above the 95th percentile.

In late October, about a week into data collection, we conducted an analysis which showed a much bigger difference in height between children with various ASD diagnoses than the current one does.

When we only had 328 children with Autism, 153 children with PDD-NOS, and 142 children with Asperger’s Syndrome to go on, the differences between the children with Asperger’s and those with PDD-NOS, for example, looked fairly large. As we collected information from more families about additional children, more than doubling our original numbers, these differences evened out to reflect a more accurate picture.

This illustrates perfectly why it is so important to have the maximum number of people participating in this or any study. According to the laws of statistics, the more participants in a study, the more likely researchers are to arrive at findings that are not due to chance, but to a real difference in whatever is being measured. The Asperger’s group that seemed extraordinarily taller than the other groups was made up of only 142 individuals, only 40 of who were in the Very Tall group.

Because this group was small, statistics reported about it were less likely to be accurate. Once the number of Asperger’s individuals included in the analysis grew, it was clear they were not quite so much taller than the other children as it had first appeared. Note, however,

(Continued on page 12)



Preliminary IAN Research Data Shows that Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders Taller, Heavier than Their Peers

(Continued from page 11)

that it is still clear that more children with ASDs are above the 95th percentile for height compared to their typical peers. (For those of you interested in statistics and probabilities, the p value for the difference in height categories – very short, normal, very tall-- between children with ASDs and unaffected children was less than .001.)

Body Mass Index

Contrary to expectations that there might be a large number of children with ASDs who are very undernourished due to gastrointestinal (GI) problems, feeding problems, or pickiness regarding foods, preliminary IAN data show no major difference in the number of children with ASDs with a BMI below the 5th percentile as compared to their typical peers.

In fact, the data show that children on the autism spectrum are more likely to be obese than their typical peers. (“Obese” is defined as having a BMI in the 95th percentile or above.) 15% of typical children fall into the obese category, while 23% of children with an ASD do so.

Some of this difference may not be due to differences in body type, but to other factors impacting children with an ASD. In fact, 40% of parents who are concerned that their child is underweight, and 37% of parents who worry that their child is overweight, report that their child has a health problem or is taking medication that contributes to the weight issue. It will therefore be important for researchers to investigate the extent to which the apparent higher rate of obesity in

autism is accounted for by factors such as medication side-effects.

Children with Autism, PDD-NOS, and Asperger’s Syndrome all appear more likely to be obese than typical peers. This is an intriguing result, with both scientific and practical implications. This data may provide support for the findings of the studies mentioned above, for example, and certainly should be taken into account by those guiding individuals with ASDs in their daily choices regarding exercise and nutrition. According to the data, children with ASDs may be at even higher risk for obesity than other children their age.

(For those of you interested in statistics and probabilities, the p value for the difference in BMI categories -- very low BMI, normal,

(Continued on page 14)

CUA Researchers Seek to Create Social Interaction “Game” Teenagers, Adults with Asperger’s and High Functioning Autism Sought for Project

Information from The Catholic University of America Department of Psychology

Investigators at The Catholic University of America are working with engineers and writers at SIMmersion LLC to develop a prototype simulated conversation environment. The purpose of this simulation is to offer persons with Asperger’s Syndrome or high functioning autism a way to practice and improve their social interaction skills.

The simulation functions as a “game” in which the user interacts with a virtual person and tries to sustain the conversation. The game includes online explanations and guidance and uses speech recogni-

tion.

CUA seeks participants who have either Asperger’s or high-functioning autism, and who are 16 to 40 years of age, to help develop and test this simulation. It seeks several individuals to provide input for it to use in developing the prototype game, and additional volunteers to field-test the prototype once it has been developed.

CUA wants participants to attend one to two sessions at the offices of SIMmersion, LLC in Columbia. Participants will receive a \$50 gift certificate to Amazon.com for each session.

People who take part in two sessions also will be asked to practice the game at home in the

interval between their two sessions. The software will be provided to them to load on their own computer. Participants who take part in two sessions will also receive a headset microphone.

The contact person for this study is Cheryl Trepagnier, Ph.D., who can be reached at (202) 319-5780, or by email at trepagnier@cua.edu. (Please put the word “Simulation” in the subject line).

People who would like to participate or receive more information should provide the following information in their message or email: name, e-mail address, telephone number(s) and times at which it is most convenient for them to receive a call.

Upcoming Events



January or February, 2008

Howard County Autism Society annual holiday party, to be held at an indoor pool. Date and time to be announced on the web site, Yahoo! group and by mail. The party was being planned as the newsletter went to press. Free. See www.howard-autism.org for details or call 410-290-6231.

January 14, 2008

“Body Work for Relaxation and Focus” panel. 7:30 to 9 p.m. at Linden-Linthicum United Methodist Church in Clarksville. Yoga instructor Liz Clark, occupational therapist Jamie Levine and acupuncturist John Wysong will discuss “how various bodywork practices can help children who learn differently.” Information: www.gifteddifferentlearners.org. Registration: info@gifteddifferentlearners.org.

January 15, 2008

SECAC Forum with Howard County Schools Superintendent Dr. Sydney Cousin. 7 to 9 p.m. Faulkner Ridge Center, 10598 Marble Faun Court, Columbia. Participants may ask questions about the direction of the school system in regards to students with special needs and other system-level issues. To submit a question, email ann_scholz@hcpss.org or call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161.

January 17, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting with Dr. James Walsh, director of special education for the Howard County Public School System. Also with instructional facilitator Linda Flanagan and special education teacher Sheila Dwyer. 7 to 9 p.m.

Topic: “Preparing for IEP Meetings: Understanding the New State IEP Format.” The Meeting House, Oakland Mills Interfaith Center, 5885 Robert Oliver Place, Columbia. Information: 410-290-6231 or www.howard-autism.org.

February 14, 2008

Howard County Asperger’s Support Group Meeting. Topic: Financial Planning with Lou Doroba of Metlife. 7:30 p.m. Faulkner Ridge Center, 10598 Marble Faun Court, Columbia. Information: 410-730-0068.

February 21, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting with HCPSS Special Education Coordinator Patty Daley. Also with instructional facilitators Anne Hickey, Claire Liddle and Joyce Agness, and autism specialist Shannon Barrett. Topic: “Anxious about Transitioning to a New School, New Placement or New Grade?” 7 to 9 p.m. The Meeting House, Oakland Mills Interfaith Center, 5885 Robert Oliver Place, Columbia. Information: 410-290-6231 or www.howard-autism.org.

March 5, 2008

Adolescent Transition Series: Division of Rehabilitation Services and Adult Service Agencies Workshop. 6-7:30 pm. Faulkner Ridge Center, 10598 Marble Faun Court, Columbia.

March 13, 2008

Howard County Asperger’s Support Group Meeting. 7:30 p.m. Faulkner Ridge Center, 10598 Marble Faun Court, Columbia. Information: 410-730-0068.

March 20, 2008

Howard County Autism Society General Support Meeting. 7 to 9 p.m. The Meeting House, Oakland Mills Interfaith Center, 5885 Robert Oliver Place, Columbia. Information: 410-290-6231 or www.howard-autism.org.

March 27, 2008

The Howard County Autism Society sponsors a Pivotal Response Workshop with Lynn Koegel, a nationally known autism specialist, at Howard Community College in Columbia. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information as it becomes available, see www.howard-autism.org or call 410-290-6231.

April 5, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Third Annual Pieces of the Puzzle Gala and Auction. Ten Oaks Ballroom, Route 108, in Clarksville. Black-tie optional. Gala tickets cost \$100. Features dancing, the raffle of a Harley Davidson motorcycle, and silent and live auctions. To buy a gala or raffle ticket, visit www.howard-autism.org or mail a check to the HCAS office. To become a sponsor or donate an auction item, please call 410-290-6231 or see the flier on pages 9 and 10.

April 9, 2008

Adolescent Transition Series: Social Security Workshop. 6 to 7:30 pm. Faulkner Ridge Center, 10598 Marble Faun Court,

(Continued on page 14)

IAN Research Into Height, Weight

(Continued from page 12)

and very high BMI-- between children with ASDs and unaffected children was .008.)

In the context of other recent research on body size or length in autism, these findings are very relevant. We encourage autism researchers studying these topics to apply for access to the IAN database in order to further explore this issue.

Please Note: These Findings Are Preliminary

The analyses presented here by the Interactive Autism Network (IAN) are preliminary. They are based on information submitted over the internet by parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) from the United States who choose to participate. The data have not been peer reviewed — that is, undergone evaluation by researchers expert in a particular field — or been submitted for pub-

lication. IAN views participating families as research partners, and shares such preliminary information to thank them and to demonstrate the importance of their ongoing involvement.

We encourage autism researchers investigating these topics to apply for access to the IAN database. Contact researchteam@ianproject.org.

References

Sacco, R., Militerni, R., Frolli, A., Bravaccio, C., Gritti, A., Elia, M., Curatolo, P., Manzi, B., et al. (2007). Clinical, morphological, and biochemical correlates of head circumference in autism. *Biological Psychiatry*, 62, 1038-1047.

Van Daalen, E., Swinkels, S.H., Dietz, C., van Engeland, H., & Buitelaar, J.K. (2007). Body length and head growth in the first year of life in autism. *Pediatric Neurology*, 37(5), 324-330.

Editor's message: Tables that illustrated this article, and information about IAN, may be found at <http://www.IanResearch.org>.

NIMH Seeks Children for Antibiotic Research Study

The National Institute of Mental Health has announced that it is sponsoring a treatment study for children with regressive autism, ages 3 to 12, who live within commuting distance of Bethesda.

The purpose of the study is determine whether the antibiotic minocycline taken orally will benefit children with regressive autism. Participants will receive a comprehensive developmental evaluation, physical examination and follow-up assessments.

There is no charge for the evaluations or for medication. Travel assistance is provided.

Parents will receive a summary of findings from testing.

For more information, call 301-435-7962 or email NIMH-ASD@mail.nih.gov.

(Continued from page 13)

Columbia.

April 10, 2008

Howard County Asperger's Support Group Meeting. 7:30 p.m. Faulkner Ridge Center, 10598 Marble Faun Court, Columbia. Information: 410-730-0068.

April 17, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting. 7 to 9 p.m. The Meeting House, Oakland Mills Interfaith Center, 5885 Robert Oliver Place, Columbia. Information: 410-290-6231 or www.howard-autism.org.

More Upcoming Events



May 8, 2008

Howard County Asperger's Support Group Meeting. 7:30 p.m. Faulkner Ridge Center, 10598 Marble Faun Court, Columbia. Information: 410-730-0068.

May 15, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting. 7 to 9 p.m. The Meeting House, Oakland Mills Interfaith Center, 5885

Robert Oliver Place, Columbia. Information: 410-290-6231 or www.howard-autism.org.

June 19, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting. 7 to 9 p.m. The Meeting House, Oakland Mills Interfaith Center, 5885 Robert Oliver Place, Columbia. Information: 410-290-6231 or www.howard-autism.org.

July 9-12, 2008

Autism Society of America National Conference at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. See www.autism-society.org.

About This Newsletter

The Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) Newsletter is published five times during the school year beginning in September. No article may be reproduced without written permission from the HCAS, which copyrights this publication.

Articles in the newsletter represent the views of the authors and not necessarily those of HCAS. The publication of advertisements does not indicate any endorsement by HCAS.

How to Submit an Article, Essay or Photo for Publication

Submit an article, book or conference review, calendar item, or recipe to **newsletter@howard-autism.org**. We welcome contributions from parents, siblings, and people with autism spectrum disorders. Submissions for the the March/April issue are due by February 10, and for the May/June issue are due by April 10.



ASA Options Policy

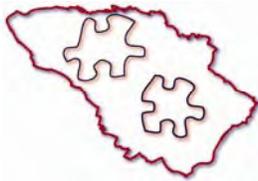
Howard County Autism Society follows the national Autism Society of America's Options Policy, which reads in part: "With appropriate education, vocational training and community living options and support systems, individuals with autism can lead dignified, productive lives in their communities and strive to reach their fullest potential."

The ASA believes that all individuals with autism have the right to access appropriate services and supports based on their needs and desires." To review the entire policy, see <http://www.autism-society.org>.

As always, all articles in this newsletter represent the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the HCAS. We recommend that you discuss any new treatment with a professional.

HCAS Newsletter Advertising Rate Card Available

Our advertising rates are available on the HCAS website at <http://www.howard-autism.org>. Please e-mail advertising@howard-autism.org for information on how to submit classified or camera-ready ads for this newsletter. The newsletter is published five times during each school year beginning in September.



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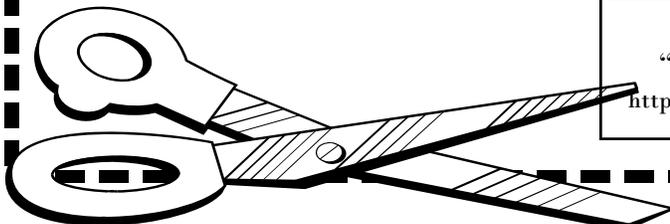
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If you prefer your donation to be private, please check here. _____.

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<http://www.howard-autism.org/hccasa/membership/membership.html>



Howard County Autism Society (HCAS)

Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) is a chapter of the Autism Society of America, which was founded in 1965 to help parents, family members, professionals, and caregivers learn about autism, PDD, and related disorders, and how to effectively deal with these disabilities. We are one of about 200 chapters in 48 states across the country.

HCAS is dedicated to increasing public awareness about autism and the day-to-day issues faced by individuals with autism, their families and the professionals with whom they interact. The national society and HCAS share the common goals of providing information and education, supporting research and advocating for programs and services for people with autism spectrum disorders.

HCAS works in Howard County to advance awareness of persons with autism, PDD, and related disorders. We provide:

- support for parents
- information and referral
- advocacy on behalf of persons with autism/PDD and their families
- presentations by experts on autism/

- PDD, disability rights, etc
- an active connection with the national society
 - monthly meetings
 - social activities

**HCAS Information
and Referral Line
(410) 290-6231**

Combined Federal Campaign #: 3038

Join the Yahoo e-Group

HCAS has an e-group where you can post questions about doctors, dentists, schools, family support services, etc. To join, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AutismSocietyHoCo/> or send an e-mail message to: AutismSocietyHoCo-subscribe@yahoo.com

Update Your Address

To join our chapter mailing list or update your information, please send an email to kmanning@howard-autism.org.

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