



Wrightslaw Offers Legal, Advocacy Help

By Marina Shread

Whether you're facing your first or your tenth IEP meeting, whether your road to special education has been smooth or rocky, chances are you could learn something from Peter and Pamela Darr Wright.

Together they make up Wrightslaw, a popular brand of conferences and self-help books about special education law and advocacy.

They will come to Howard County this fall to present the Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy Boot Camp, two days of seminars on federal special education law, No Child Left Behind, academic and psychological testing, and advocating for students with disabilities.

The event, sponsored by the Howard County Autism Society,

will be held November 14 to 15, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Ten Oaks Ballroom, 5000 Signal Bell Lane, in Clarksville.

Wright, who struggled with attention deficit and learning disabilities himself, is the attorney who represented Shannon Carter in a landmark special education case before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1993 — and won.

His wife, Pamela Darr Wright, is a psychotherapist who lectures on effective strategies to use when advocating for children in special education meetings.

Parents, have you ever wondered if the school team was right when it told you “the law doesn't let us do that”?



Do you really understand the tests given to your child to determine if he has a disability and to measure his progress? Are you sure those tests are being interpreted correctly?

Do you wonder if your child is entitled to services he's not receiving?

Do you wish you could be more effective in IEP meetings?

If so, this workshop may be for you.

Pete Wright is an engaging speaker who makes what is essentially a legal seminar both interesting and easy to understand. He gave a similar seminar in Howard County two years ago to a packed audience. He will take participants through the laws affecting their children and students, teach them

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2008 AUTISM WALK

It's not too late to walk the walk, with the Howard County Autism Society!

By Ginny Bickell

Come join the One Step Closer Autism Walk on September 13 at Centennial Park on Route 108 in Ellicott City. This family-friendly event is both a fundraiser and a chance to raise autism awareness. There will be food, drinks, vendors and fun for the kids. The theme, “One Step Closer,” reflects the organization's commitment to bridging the gap between the



2007 Autism Walk

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Advocacy Program Moves to HCAS

Provides Parent Support, Workshops for Special Needs

By Beth Benevides Hill

The Howard County Autism Society was recently awarded the Family Advocacy and Parent Education (FAPE) Program Grant by the Howard County Department of Citizen Services for 2008-2009. The grant was established in 2002 to help Howard County families who have children with disabilities understand the special education delivery system.

FAPE is not an autism-specific program. The program serves all families who have children with special education needs by providing individualized support, as well as offering workshops on special education topics.

The grant, previously administered by Parents Place of Maryland, has been directed since 2002 by special education advocate Julie Foley. Parents for Parents, Inc., will administer the FAPE grant during the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Ms. Foley and Kim McKay, co-founders of the cross-disability parent support organization, will serve as co-directors of the grant.

"The grant goals remain the same—parent support and workshops," said Ms. Foley. "I attend many IEP meetings, meet with families who are in the 'diagnostic' phase, and also help families find community resources. I have helped families obtain non-public placement, and my passion is to help underserved parents."

Ms. Foley reports that the services provided by the FAPE program will expand in the coming

year. There are plans to offer more parent advocacy training through the newly established Parent University.

The Parent University will be an intensive training course for parents who commit to providing support for the FAPE program by talking to other parents about their experiences and support networks. "I would love to see this evolve into parents attending IEP meetings with other families," said Ms. Foley. "The demand for this service continues to grow." Parent University programs will be offered at the HCAS Autism

Resource Center and will begin in late winter.

Previously, workshops hosted by the FAPE program featured topics such as inclusion; understanding No Child Left Behind; understanding learn-

ing disabilities; "The Dance of Partnership"; and IEP basics. Ms. Foley also participated in state-wide task forces, including most recently a taskforce on the revision of COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations).

In an effort to continue expanding outreach, Ms. Foley will continue her ongoing collaboration with the Howard County Public School System to improve transition-planning services for youths with disabilities. As a result of her work, the school system last year received funds from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council for "Project Discovery," a program that provides

FACTS ABOUT FAPE

- For families of children with any disability, not just autism
- Provides support to parents, workshops
- Offers "Parent University" training course
- Co-directors are Julie Foley and Kim McKay
- Call 410-465-1193

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<http://www.howard-autism.org>

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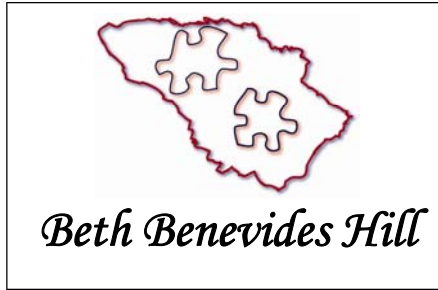
President's Message

A few short weeks ago, we welcomed more than 100 people to the summer pool party. It was a beautiful night, not just for swimming but for bringing families together. We came together as friends on similar paths and were given an opportunity to relax, have fun, and *just be*—no worries, no expectations. Evenings like this can be hard to come by; yet we all need them from time to time. My son, Kyle, will tell you his favorite thing about the evening was the waterslide. For me, it was the constant smile on his face, the squeal in his voice as he waited patiently for his turn on the slide, and the view of hundreds of other kids and parents just like us.

If you missed the summer pool party, please join us for another social event—the fall walk, the winter pool party, the spring gala, or the monthly movie. Attend one, attend them all! There are many opportunities to connect with others. Please take part and have fun! I promise you will not be disappointed.

In addition to seeing our strength in numbers at the pool party, we were given a unique opportunity in July to show our strength as one voice advocating for improved services from the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks.

As many of you are aware, one of our members' sons wandered away from his companion at summer day camp on June 23 and went missing for at least 30 minutes.



Miraculously he was found unharmed. But the frightening reality of a seven-year-old child walking along Route 100 in Ellicott City just seconds from entering Route 29 sent chills through every parent. HCAS immediately offered assistance to Rec and Parks to address the incident collaboratively and positively.

On July 16, HCAS Executive Director Kim Manning and I met with the director of Rec and Parks, several of its superintendents and managers, the superintendent of recreation licensed childcare, and Susan Potts, manager of therapeutic and accommodation services. County Executive Ken Ulman and Council Member Jen Terassa also attended.

The two-hour meeting resulted in ten action items for the department to address. Among them were more intensive training of camp counselors and companions on autism spectrum disorders, the creation of a parent speakers' bureau, development of new resource materials, revision of current training manuals, and expansion of the parental input forms. We also recommended opportunities for parents and children to

meet with camp counselors and companions prior to camp opening.

Several HCAS board members completed a thorough review of Rec and Parks' current materials on autism, companion programming, registration forms (specifically the parental input form), and the missing child protocol. Numerous revisions and additions were suggested. It is also planned that HCAS will participate in many of the new trainings related to autism, the speakers' bureau, and an ongoing review of the inclusion services.

This is just one example of ongoing efforts to improve services in the community. There are many other opportunities and needs for advocacy such as this. If you are interested in participating in our advocacy efforts, there is a place for you! Please just let us know.

Thank You For Donations to HCAS

Chick-fil-A at Columbia Mall
Jen Friday, Silpada Designs
Glenwood Lions Club
Dorsey Search Dolphins team
Robert Bacon
Ashley Steinrucken
Forrest and Susan Mountford
Microsoft Giving Campaign
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Executive Director's Message

Fall Greetings!

It's hard to believe that summer is over and we are starting another school year, isn't it?! Time is flying, our kids are growing up, and the mandate of making Howard

County the most autism friendly place to live in this country continues to be our motivation here at the Howard County Autism Society.

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Grant News from Executive Director Kim Manning

(Continued from page 3)

We've had a busy summer, so let me catch you up on a few things. I had the pleasure of attending the 39th annual Autism Society of America national conference in Orlando, Florida. This year's theme was "Shaping a World of Possibilities." The week-long event highlighted the strides each of us have made to create options for our citizens on the autism spectrum and the challenge we now face to make these options accessible to all. It is exciting and inspiring to hear what chapters, and organizations, are doing all over the nation to provide opportunities and education to individuals on the autism spectrum and to make a difference in their communities. I came home with many ideas that are still bouncing around in my head and, I trust, will ultimately help "shape a world of possibilities" right here in Howard County. I was, once again, humbled by the many accolades that this organization receives when attending the national conference. Kudos and thanks to all of you who work tirelessly to make our county such an outstanding example of inclusion and autism awareness.

Update on Grants

Here's a quick update on what is happening in the area of grants and partnerships we are involved in. We've just completed a grant funded by the Horizon Foundation called "**Project Team.**" This grant was piloted at three county high schools (Centennial, Howard, and Oakland Mills) and provided the resources for teens with developmental disabilities to become involved in the extra-curricular life of their school.

There were 13 student participants and student mentors who were involved in the pilot. Some of the popular activities that students

and peer partners participated in included: school plays, school sporting events, after school clubs such as anime club and environmental club, fundraiser activities, and much more.

Global events with this program were a huge success. These events included: dAP Day with special guest speakers and activities, social skills at the Columbia Gym, and the final celebration at Shadowland. Some of the topics of discussion at these events were self-determination and a student



Coach Jimmy Peters

interest/preference survey about future goals. Parent groups discussed, and learned about, how to set obtainable goals for a child, using person first language, and summer recreational and employment opportunities.

Fitness First to Finish Year-Long Pilot Program

Our **Fitness First** program, which is a collaboration between HCAS, the Baltimore Ravens and the Columbia Association, finishes its one-year pilot in September. We've had a ball meeting together the third Saturday of every month, hanging out and having fun at the Columbia Gym.

We've had approximately 15 families involved in the program. Adults, kids on the spectrum, typical siblings, and our fantastic group of volunteers — led by

Jimmy Peters — spend a couple hours together learning new skills (basketball, soccer, physical fitness drills), swimming, talking, and snacking! What's not to love about that line-up?! The kids have done great and seem to genuinely enjoy Fitness First Saturday. I cannot say enough about the dedicated volunteers who have graciously given their time to make this program such a triumph.

A huge thank you goes out to Jimmy Peters, who called me more than a year ago and wanted to get together to talk about how he could use his years of coaching experience to make a difference in the lives of kids with autism. From that discussion, Fitness First was born, and Jimmy has been the driving force behind its success.

Doctors in Howard County to Receive "Physicians Toolkit" in 2008

By the end of 2008, pediatricians and primary care doctors throughout the county will receive a "Physicians Toolkit," which will help with early diagnosis of autism, give families and practices information about resources and services within the community, and provide awareness information.

This grant is a partnership between HCAS, the Horizon Foundation, and the Howard County General Hospital. We are in the process of getting input from a wide variety of health care professionals in the area, and will be presenting the toolkit at a number of pediatric events. We want to make sure that every family that receives an autism diagnosis is immediately made aware of services and support they can obtain in our county, and we feel confident that this toolkit and the personal contacts that are being

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After the Diagnosis and the Preschool Years

For me as a mom, life after the diagnosis was similar to grieving for a relative who has passed unexpectedly. First there was shock, and after that extreme sadness. Then the questioning began—what did I do that caused this? Was it that glass of wine I drank at six weeks? Was it that one dose of medication? Was God punishing me? Questions, questions, and more questions flooded my mind. Then there was a turning point when it seemed more productive to focus on the future and what potentially could be. My husband Mark and I became like sponges soaking up anything and everything written about Autism and PDD-NOS. We read numerous books, attended Autism Society meetings and conferences to help us comprehend the enormous and ever growing quantities of information about the disability. The spectrum seemed so large, containing the many little points and variances of each individual child. Our neurologist had said Nicholas was at midpoint on the spectrum and could potentially improve to higher points, but that he would ALWAYS be on the spectrum. Sometimes the puzzle of autism seemed so complicated that I would withdraw with mental exhaustion. At other times I felt determined to meet the challenge that was now my life. Regardless of my feelings on any given day, we now had the enormous responsibility of educating our son so that he could function in society.

Our county school system

offered a preschool program for children with autism at the local elementary school where my other two boys attended. We visited the classroom and the first thing I noticed was how starkly plain it was. I had taught in and visited preschool classrooms from my other sons and they were always so full of decorations, let-



Journey Through Autism Second in a series By Cheryl Howard

ters, numbers, puppets and toys—a child's paradise. This room had plain colored walls and was very minimally adorned. The few items on the wall were very functional—(picture schedules, labeled work stations). There were areas described as “sensory” areas where children could go inside of bags or hide out. There was a swing and a small trampoline.

The teacher told Mark and me that children with autism can be

highly distracted or experience sensory overload if there are too many things in their immediate environment. She also said that they need structure in their days which meant predictable schedules. Hearing these reasons on why things were arranged as such reminded me of learning to function within a new culture.

And soon, we would have to learn a new language—the language of PECS.

With the PECS (picture card exchange system), Nicholas learned how to express some of his needs, which at 3 were mostly food related. He had a small red book with velcro cards and the sentence strip “I want _____.” Although he needed time to get accustomed to the system, he was able to use it to express what he wanted. During the second year of preschool, he began to use his voice! We were very

(Continued on page 6)



Author Cheryl Howard and her family.

Journey Through Autism: After the Diagnosis...

(Continued from page 5)

excited that he would be able to tell us “I want _____.” I felt joy and excitement. Perhaps the cards were my way to get to know my little boy.

Nicholas had a very productive year in preschool. We found something that he responded well to, and that was music. Songs such as “Wheels on the Bus” and “Twinkle, Twinkle,” helped him to attend and he tried so hard to form the words and sing along. That same year we discovered the world of ABA therapy. In our contact with other families in the Autism Society, we had heard that ABA therapy was the best way to teach children with autism. We employed a private provider named Marian, whose care and attention helped Nicholas establish eye contact and follow some simple commands. She always came with a special toy that would interest him. He loved toys with sound. He began to watch Sesame Street and Thomas the Tank Engine videos with limited attention. Everyone fell in love with his curly blond hair and blue eyes and seemed to want to take that extra step to help him.

In looking back, I remember a comfort level that we have not felt since. We were doing all that we could to pull Nicholas to that higher level on the spectrum and saw so many glimmers of hope in his eyes! It was a hopeful time!

This is the second in a series by Cheryl Howard, a teacher who has been living in Columbia with her family for two years. The first part was in the May 2008 newsletter and is available at www.howard-autism.org.

Meet Ginny Bickell: New Director of Development Joined HCAS Staff in July

By Beth Benevides Hill

Ginny Lotz Bickell was recently hired as the Howard County Autism Society’s Director of Development and started working in the newly expanded position July 1.

Previously, she served as special events and programs coordinator in the development department of the National Aquarium in Baltimore. Since March 2006, she has been at home raising Malia, her now 15-month-old daughter, and working as a realtor with RE/MAX Advantage Realty.

Prior to the Aquarium, Ms. Bickell was associate director of programs at Envision EMI/Congressional Youth Leadership Council. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in human services from Virginia Tech.

When asked about her interest in working for a non-profit such as HCAS, Ms. Bickell explained that “as a mom, autism is something that concerns me. There is so much confusing information out there. I am glad to be part of an organization that helps families make sense of it all and gain support from others.”

Ms. Bickell’s genuine interest in autism, extensive experience planning and executing



Ginny Bickell and family.

major events and conferences, ability to expand and coordinate a volunteer base, knowledge of planned giving, and involvement in all aspects of donor and membership relations at the National Aquarium made her an ideal choice for the job.

“Ginny brings a wealth of experience in the areas of development and membership services to this position,” said Ms. Manning. “I am excited to welcome her to our team and know that her contributions will help us realize our goal of serving families in Howard County.”

With her husband, Danny, their daughter, Malia, and dog, Freckles, Ms. Bickell lives in the Canton area of Baltimore. Her family enjoys being outside and active, whether it is spending time at the beach or at a park hiking.

“I am excited to be part of such an outstanding organization. I look forward to meeting more of the families we serve and helping to strengthen our organization,” Ms. Bickell said.

Her part-time work schedule is 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. She can be reached at 410-290-3466.

Stephanie Maric, J.D.

301-379-9493



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Office: 410-715-2721

email:
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)



Proud Parent and HCAS Board Member

Programs in the Planning Stages at HCAS ...

The Howard County Autism Society and its Program Committee is planning several speakers for upcoming events. Watch your mail, future newsletters, or the HCAS web site for details as they become available. Future topics may include:

- Teaching children through music with Julia McCready, RECC music teacher.
- Self-care and self-preservation in light of the challenges of raising a child with special needs with Peggy Walton Ph.D., life coach and mother of a son with autism.



Sensory-Friendly Movie Events to Go Nationwide

The sensory-friendly movie event, pioneered in Howard County, is going nationwide.

AMC Theatres has asked the national Autism Society of America (ASA) to join with it as it offers sensory-friendly movie showings in other cities for people with disabilities who have difficulty attending movies because of sensory problems.

As Howard County Autism Society members know, sensory-friendly movie showings began in Columbia last year. HCAS "Volunteer of the Year" Marianne Ross had approached AMC Theatres at the Columbia Mall with a proposal for such events, and HCAS was involved in the efforts.

The theater began showing the films one Saturday morning a month. The lights are turned up, the sound is turned down, and children may talk and move if they need to do so. There are no trailers to delay the show.

The local movie events attracted media attention, along with interest from others at AMC Theatres. An executive with AMC who has a son with autism became interested in seeing how the special movie events could be replicated in other cities. AMC decided to test the sensory-friendly movies in 10 of their top markets.

The first 10 events were scheduled to be held on August 23 in Austin, Texas; Columbia, Maryland; Cleveland, Ohio; Columbia, South Carolina; Indianapolis; Kansas City; Norfolk, Virginia; Phoenix, Arizona; San Diego; and Washington, D.C.

Carin Yavorcik of the ASA contributed to this article.

Project Discovery: Helping Families Plan for Life After High School

By Julie Foley

Having teen-aged children can be daunting, especially if one of them has autism. The thoughts that begin to crystallize are all about life after high school. What happens when the bus no longer pulls up to take him to school? What will we do?

These are the questions that we began to ask ourselves in earnest when our oldest son turned 14. Although we were writing strong IEPs and doing all of the normal rituals associated with transition planning, we were unable to really answer the big question: What will he do after high school?

At that same time, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) organized a work group to explore transition planning for students with significant support needs. I was asked to co-chair that work group. The group consisted of adult service providers, Department of Special Education staff, parents and others who were part of the transition process from schools to the community. What quickly became apparent was that none of us had realistic expectations of what the other agencies were doing. It took several meetings to get us all on the same page, and only then could we begin to dissect what currently existed for transition planning, and what we could do better.

Out of that meeting came a new way of looking at transition planning. The FAPE program (which is funded by a grant from the Howard County Department of Citizen Services through the Howard County Autism Society), The Arc of Howard County, and HCPSS Department of Special

Education co-wrote a grant to the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council for funding to change the way students with significant support needs transition to adulthood. The grant was funded, and is now called Project Discovery.

Project Discovery is a process that will begin transition planning in middle school. The vision of Project Discovery

is to create a transition plan that is unique for each student, highlights the strengths of the student, and showcases his or her talents in a portfolio.

The process begins with family members, friends, community-based connections and the school-based team coming together to discuss the student in the various settings. The school team is expanded to bring in teachers who see the student in different settings, so that the Discovery process looks at the student in many different ways.

From this meeting, or multiple meetings, a plan is developed that focuses on employment and transition to adulthood. The student begins to work on a portfolio that showcases his or her talents and vision. This becomes a resume that he will take to potential employers. Once the student is in high school, he will begin working with the work-study coordinators to find customized employment.

This may be a job in the com-

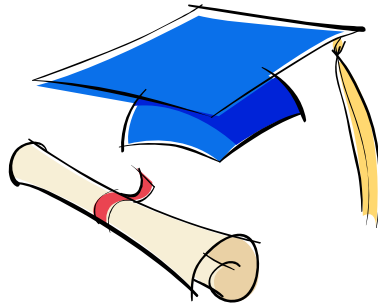
munity that fits his unique talents. Traditional jobs may be broken into smaller components that better fit two students instead of one student.

It was during our Discovery meeting that a general educator pointed us to a path that we would not have otherwise taken. By seeing our son through his eyes, we were able to see talents and skills we hadn't seen before, and more importantly, how to turn this into meaningful employment.

Our transition plan is now completely different than it was prior to being a participant in Project Discovery. Instead of thinking about him in a supported employment situation, we are thinking about him working independently in an office. We now write IEPs that include course work such as yearbook – in order to work on socialization similar to what he will experience on the job – and content classes such as software applications to work on skill acquisition. Through Project Discovery, we've opened up the high school course book and looked at all the courses to see opportunities for skill building where we hadn't looked before.

Project Discovery is a multiple year, phase-in plan that will eventually be implemented in all middle schools in Howard County. If you have questions about this process, contact Julie Foley at Julie@Parentsforparents.org.

Interested in other issues that affect your child after high school? Please consider joining the Howard County Autism Society's Adult Issues Committee, which is focusing on housing and related issues. To join or learn more about the committee, please email Kim McKay at themckayfamily@verizon.net.



HCAS Families Make Waves at Summer Event

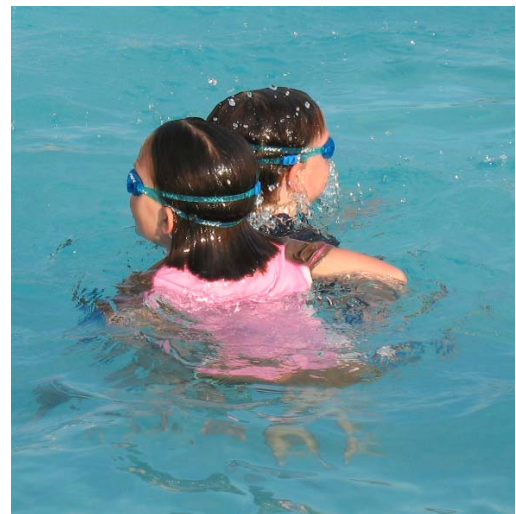


Who doesn't enjoy a pool party during the dog days of summer? Children and adults alike swam, splashed and slid down two large water slides at the Howard County Autism Society's pool party on August 3. About 150 people enjoyed pizza, refreshments and a chance to socialize at the popular event, held at the Lifetime Fitness outdoor pool in Columbia. HCAS extends its thanks to board members Lori Krausz and Debbie Clutts, the Program Committee, and volunteers who planned and ran the party.



By
Marina
Shread

**FUN
IN
THE
SUN!**





The Orioles Bird clowned around with Kyle Mosier at Chick-fil-A.

CHICK-FIL-A FUNDRAISER: Food, Fun and the Orioles Mascot!

On July 10, the Chick-Fil-A in the Mall in Columbia hosted a fundraiser for the Howard County Autism Society.

Cindy Nieves, the manager of Chick-Fil-A and a member of HCAS, was responsible for selecting the organization and for setting up this event. As part of Chick-Fil-A's Spirit Week festivities, a percentage of sales during the dinner hours of 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. were donated to HCAS. Each night during Spirit Week, a different local organization was selected to be represented.

Many HCAS board members attended to show support, to hand out stickers to customers, and to talk about the organization. Chick-Fil-A customers were asked to show their support of the HCAS by wearing a sticker as they ordered their dinner. Everyone we ap-

proached agreed to wear the sticker, and some asked how to learn more about the organization. Those customers wearing a sticker had 20% of the proceeds of their order donated to the HCAS. A total of \$250 was raised for HCAS.

Chick-Fil-A's staff worked tirelessly on this event. Much to the excitement of many of the guests, the Orioles Bird was there from 6 to 7 p.m. for a photo opportunity.

Chick-Fil-A staff members took pictures and planned to post them during their weekly Kid's Nights. There were also games, raffles and plenty of good food.

HCAS extends its thanks to Chick-Fil-A and hopes to work with it again in the future.

Ginny Bickell

Presidential Candidates Give Their Views on Autism and Health Care

The leading presidential candidates have responded to the national Autism Society of America's request for statements on autism and health care. To read the statements from John McCain and Barack Obama, visit www.autism-society.org, click on research, then click on advocacy.

FAPE Program Supports and Educates Parents of Special Kids

(Continued from page 2)

teacher and staff training on transitioning students with significant support needs to adulthood and on parental perspectives in the IEP process.

"It is always fulfilling when parents send me emails or call to tell me that they feel that having me at their meetings has made a difference for their children," states Ms. Foley. "I had one team thank me after the meeting because we were able to make so much progress just by having me there to take notes and keep the meeting on task."

To contact the FAPE program, email Kim McKay at Kim@parentsforparents.org or email Julie Foley at Julie@parentsforparents.org, or call 410-465-1193. To subscribe to the workshop schedule, email the above address with the subject line "workshop schedule," and you will be notified of upcoming workshops along with the dates of the Parent University.

Join Us!

The Howard County Autism Society can use you!
Call 410-290-3466 to find out about volunteer opportunities.



Study Highlights Importance of Early Intervention

By Carin Yavorcik
Autism Society of America

A new study published in the journal *Science* has identified at least six new genes related to autism.

"We're showing, on the one hand, that autism seems to have a large genetic component," study co-author Christopher Walsh, chief of genetics at Children's Hospital Boston, told *Scientific American*. "But, the genes that are involved

are actually those that are involved in responding to the environment and learning." He added that this highlights the importance of early intervention, especially in terms of behavioral therapy.

Researchers studied on 104 families in the U.S. and the Middle East, focusing on those in which the parents had common ancestors, enhancing the role of inherited factors - in 88 of the families, parents were cousins.

"The team found a total of

six mutations affecting genes that had previously not been linked to autism. The mutations came in the form of deletions, where part or all of both copies of the genes were missing in a child with the disorder. All of the genes are known to be involved in parts of the same process: creating and strengthening synapses," states the report in *Scientific American*.

Reprinted from the ASA web site, www.autism-society.org.

Universities Seek Kids with High-Functioning ASD for Social Study

Nova Southeastern University and Towson University are seeking children with high-functioning autism spectrum disorders for a research study of social participation.

The study is called "Social Participation Patterns and Preferences: A Mixed Methods Study of Children with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder." It will look at how children ages 8 to 12 participate in activities when they aren't in school and will "describe their ideas about what they would like to do and who they like to do things with during out of school time."

The study involves the completion of questionnaires or booklets by parents and children, and possibly a short observation of the child.

For information, contact Lisa Crabtree at 410-704-4330 or lcrabtree@towson.edu.

UMBC to Study Video Modeling Children ages 4 to 16 with ASD asked to join

Dr. Laura Stapleton and Anna Burns, M.A., at the University of Maryland Baltimore County are conducting a study of two types of video modeling to teach self-help skills to children with autism.

According to information provided by UMBC:

The study is conducted during home visits, when the child will watch a video of a person performing self-help skills, and then will try to do those skills while he or she is being videotaped. There is limited information about the best ways to teach children with autism.

Video modeling has been used successfully to teach a wide variety of skills to people with and without disabilities. The purpose of this study is to see which of two types of video modeling works best to teach self-help skills to children with autism. The intervention will consist of showing a child a video made using one type of video modeling. The video will attempt to teach your child to do a multi-step task. Prompting and positive reinforcement may also be used to help your child learn this new task.

There are no known risks associated with video modeling interventions.

Participant requirements:

1. The family lives within a 50 mile radius of Baltimore.
2. The child is between 4 and 16 years old at the outset of the study.
3. The child must have a written diagnosis of Autistic Disorder made by a professional using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV).
4. The child is able to sit still and watch a video or television program for a minimum of two consecutive minutes on a regular basis.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact Anna Burns at 443-983-4417 or e-mail burns1@umbc.edu.



Ginny Bicknell, Barb Pavao, Alyssa Pazornick and Dana Varela.

Dolphins Swim for HCAS

On July 12, the Dorsey Search Dolphins, a Columbia Association swim team, held a “Swim Mania” event to raise money for the Howard County Autism Society. The team managers believed that HCAS was a worthy cause because so many families in the area are affected by autism. Swim team families and children swam laps to raise funds. HCAS Board member Ruth Huffman greeted more than 50 swim team members and told them about HCAS and autism. The children had lots of questions, and Mrs. Huffman answered them all. A total of \$1,300 was raised at the event. HCAS extends its thanks to the Dolphins.

Wrightslaw to Return to County

(Continued from page 1)

how to prepare appropriate (“SMART”) goals for an Individualized Education Program (IEP), discuss research-based reading instruction, and help people wade through the alphabet soup of acronyms (ESY, IDEA, LRE, AYP and so on) that can confound anyone new to the process.

At his last seminar in the county, Mr. Wright taught parents how to use the “Columbo strategy” at IEP meetings. Parents using this method, named after the TV detective who can’t resist asking “just one more thing,” will politely pose question after question to get the school team to explain its proposals. This is especially important if

the team says “the law” requires it to do something. The parent, of course, should have his or her copy of the Wrightslaw law book handy for easy reference at the meeting, he said. Read the law aloud, he advised.

Registration costs \$145 for parents, \$175 for family members who register together, and \$165 for professionals. Subsidies are available to HCAS members needing financial assistance to attend. You may register online at www.howard-autism.org, or call 410-290-3466, by November 7. HCAS is offering Continuing Education Units – 12 contact hours for educators – for professionals who attend.

DDA Project Aims To Improve Job Outcomes for Workers with Disabilities

The Developmental Disabilities Administration has begun a project to help improve employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities, it announced in a recent bulletin.

“Through membership with the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), a national technical assistance project, and the support of a project steering committee, the DDA will participate in a state-wide self-assessment to identify the strengths and weaknesses of its existing employment support infrastructure and develop related system improvement strategies.

“Periodic updates on the progress of the project will be sent through Developments newsletter, the DDA Web site (ddamaryland.org), e-alerts, and at scheduled regional provider meetings.” For information, go to www.SELN.org, or contact Colleen Gauruder, Statewide Coordinator for Transition and Employment Services at 410-767-5566.

Message from Kim Manning

(Continued from page 4)

made will go a long way in realizing this goal.

Rotary and Lions Clubs Give Grants to Autism Society

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the **Rotary Club of Columbia-Patuxent** and to the **Glenwood Lions Club**, which have both generously given grants to help with purchasing items for our Autism Resource Center.

It is truly overwhelming to see

the amount of support and resources that businesses, community groups, and individuals invest in helping HCAS fulfill its mission to provide support, information and referral, advocacy, and awareness on behalf of persons with autism and their families.

This isn’t just a line I like to end with; I mean it from the bottom of my heart...

Together we ARE making a difference!

Upcoming Events

September 7, 2008

The Ellicott City SPD-Parent Support Group meeting at 7 p.m. Dr. Linda Spencer, speech-language pathologist, will discuss executive functioning. Location: OT Ventures. Meetings are free and open to the public. To register, call 443-812-6396 or email ot_ventures@hotmail.com.

September 11, 2008

Howard County Asperger's Support Group Meeting. 7:30 p.m. 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia. Information: 410-730-0068.

September 13, 2008

Howard County Autism Society's Second Annual "One Step Closer ... Autism Walk" at Centennial Park, Ellicott City, 8 a.m. Information and registration: www.howard-autism.org or call 410-290-3466.

September 18, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting. Merope Pavlides, MS, will discuss autism service dogs, and **Roger Miles** will speak about Project Lifesaver. 7 to 9 p.m. 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia. Information: 410-290-3466 or www.howard-autism.org.

October 9, 2008

Howard County Asperger's Support Group Meeting. 7:30 p.m. 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia. Information: 410-730-0068.

October 15, 2008

Howard County Book Connection discussion of **Elizabeth Moon's *The Speed of Dark***, "a captivating glimpse into



Autism Society and Asperger's Group meeting location:
10280 Old Columbia Road,
Suite 215, Columbia.

the mind of an intellectually gifted, autistic man who lives in a future time, when the medical community discovers a 'cure' for autism." Discussion panelists include Cindy Jones, the library's Director of Materials; Dr. Linda Schnapp, Assistant Director of Project Access, Kim McSweeney, Assistant Director of Disability Support Services, Howard Community College; and an HCAS representative. 7 p.m. at the Howard County Library's Central Branch in Columbia. Register at www.hclibrary.org or by calling 410-313-7800.

October 16, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting. Dr. Peter Gerhardt will discuss "Understanding Sexuality." 7 to 9 p.m. 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia. Information: 410-290-3466 or www.howard-autism.org

October 23-24, 2008

Kennedy Krieger Institute's Annual Autism Conference, "Autism: Update on Diagnosis and Intervention through Adolescence," at The Conference Center at Sheppard Pratt in Baltimore. Speakers include Dr. Sarah Spence, Dr. Catherine Lord and Dr. Grace Baranek. Information: 443-923-7680.

November 13, 2008

Howard County Asperger's Support Group Meeting. 7:30 p.m. 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia. Information: 410-730-0068.

November 14-15, 2008

HCAS presents Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy Boot Camp with Peter Wright and Pamela Darr Wright. 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Ten Oaks Ballroom, Clarksville. Register online at www.howard-autism.org. Cost: \$145 for parents, \$175 for families, \$165 for professionals. Registration due by November 7. Continuing Education Units available for professionals. Information: 410-290-3466.

November 20, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting. Dr. Brent Whitaker will discuss services at the Aquarium. A representative of Kennedy Krieger Institute will discuss its autism plans. 7 to 9 p.m. 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia. Information: 410-290-3466 or www.howard-autism.org.

December 11, 2008

Howard County Asperger's Support Group Meeting. 7:30 p.m. 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia. Information: 410-730-0068.

December 18, 2008

Howard County Autism Society Meeting. Dolly Magsino of Mt. Washington Pediatric Center will discuss Sibshops. 7 to 9 p.m. 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia. Information: 410-290-3466 or www.howard-autism.org.

One Step Closer ... Autism Walk News

(Continued from page 1)

services provided in the county and the needs of individuals with autism. Registration begins at 8 a.m., with the walk around Centennial Lake at 9 a.m.

HCAS member Roger Miles is the chair of the walk. He has been working on sponsorships with Development Director Ginny Bickell. Special guests who are expected to attend include County Executive Ken Ulman and County Council members Jen Terrasa, Calvin Ball and Greg Fox.

Breakfast will be provided by Roots Market and Krispey Kreme Doughnuts.

Last year more than 440 individuals participated, and this year promises to be bigger and better.

HCAS is looking for teams to participate. Grab your family, friends and coworkers—walk on behalf of a special child; promote your company, restaurant or business; put together a team and show your support for individuals with autism. To sign up as a team or individual, visit www.howard-autism.org. The cost of each walker to sign up for this event is \$20.

If you are interested in sponsoring this event or becoming a vendor, please email Ms. Bickell at gbickellHCAS@yahoo.com or call 410-290-3466.

Parent Roger Miles Chairs Walk

HCAS is pleased to announce that Roger Miles is the chair of the Second Annual Autism Walk. A local business owner, long-time resident of Howard County, and the parent of an 11-year-old son with autism and tuberous sclerosis, Mr. Miles made it his goal to contact hundreds of businesses in the county to support this year's walk.

He has helped various organizations with fundraising activities in recent years. "I was happy to devote my time this year to the Autism Society," he said. "My interest in helping HCAS is directly related to its commitment to Project Lifesaver."

Project Lifesaver is the tracking device and monitoring program funded and administered jointly by HCAS and the Howard County Police Department. Mr. Miles was instrumental in bringing the program to the county and worked closely with HCAS and the police department to ensure its availability. "As a parent of a child who eloped five times in 18 months, I am passionate about Project Lifesaver," he said. "HCAS stepped up to monitor the program. For that, I am grateful. This is just my way of giving back."

Beth Benevides Hill

Preschoolers with Special Needs "Cook Up" \$1,647 for HCAS

By Beth Benevides Hill



Making or baking anything with seven preschoolers is a challenge. Add autism and other special needs to the mix, and it could be a real test of patience! . . .

Not so for special education teacher Jane Berman at Pointers Run Elementary. Ms. Berman and her preschool class baked delicious treats throughout the year and turned their classroom activity into a surprising cookbook fundraiser for the Howard County Autism Society.

On June 11, Ms. Berman's class presented a check for \$1,647 to the Howard County Autism So-

ciety. The class sold over 200 copies of its recipe collection.

"So many people asked for recipes," said Ms. Berman. "We thought why not make a cookbook? It was only natural to want to donate the money to the Howard County Autism Society, as autism is clearly near and dear to our class."

Her class was the Multiple Intense Needs Class—Early Learner (MINC-EL), which specializes in educating children with autism and related disabilities in an intensive educational setting using the Applied Verbal Behavior method. The children all had severe delays in functional communication, engagement, and social interaction. There were four children with special needs in this

preschool class (ages three to six), and three peers.

"We cooked once a week," said Ms. Berman. "It was a great way to facilitate communication, turn taking, following directions, and teamwork."

The easy-to-make treats—most only having three to five ingredients—were shared with the administration and staff, and enjoyed by the preschoolers themselves. Ms. Berman's idea to compile the recipes and print them in a cookbook for the students turned into something much larger and far beyond what she had ever imagined. "The community rallied behind this and has been extremely generous," said Ms. Berman. "It has been such a great experience. I am so proud of our kids!"

Project Lifesaver Helps Locate People with Autism

The Howard County Autism Society is proud to have partnered with the county police department to bring the Project Lifesaver program to the county in 2007.

Project Lifesaver uses radio technology to help rescuers locate vulnerable children and adults who wander. The at-risk person wears a battery powered wrist transmitter that looks like a wristwatch. When the police are notified that he has wandered off, the missing person



can be located by police using a mobile locator tracking system.

Thanks to a grant awarded to HCAS, enrollment in Project Lifesaver is currently free of charge to individuals with autism. It does require a commitment of families to have the batteries on the units changed monthly.

If you would like more information or an application, please contact the HCAS office at 410-290-3466.

ASA Options Policy

The Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) 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>.

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.

Towson University Has Program for Young Adults with ASD

Young adults with autism who want to work on team building, problem solving, and social communication skills in an outdoor setting may participate in a Challenge Course Program at Towson University, on September 14, 21, 28 and October 5, 12, 19. For information, please contact Lisa Crabtree or Laura Hillman at 410-704-4486 or caasd@towson.edu.



Howard County Autism Society Membership

Clip and return with check to:
Howard County Autism Society
10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215
Columbia, MD 21046

Join us!

*Parent dues are
\$10 per year!
\$40 for professionals!*

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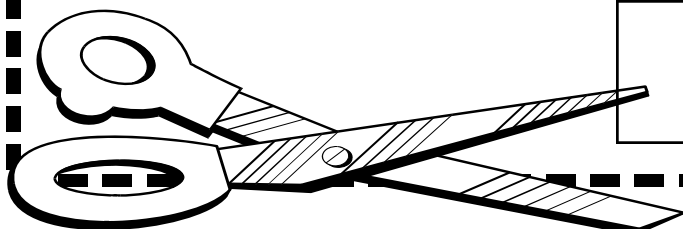
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e-mail _____ Phone _____

2008 Dues/Donation: _____ \$10 (parent membership) _____ \$25 _____ \$40 (professional membership) _____
\$50 _____ \$100 _____ Other \$ _____

HCAS gratefully acknowledges donors in its newsletter.

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



Clip and return with your check payable to
"Howard County Autism Society" or join on-line at
<http://www.howard-autism.org/hccasa/membership/>

About the 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 Number
410-290-3466**

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@yahoogleroups.com

Update Your Address

To join the mailing list or update your address, please call 410-290-3466 or email kmanning@howard-autism.org.

How to Submit Articles, Ads

The Howard County Autism Society Newsletter welcomes contributions from professionals, parents, siblings, and people with autism spectrum disorders. Submit your article, book review, meeting notice, or photo by emailing it to ASAnewsletter@comcast.net. Submissions are due for the November/December issue by October 10.

Advertising rates are available on the HCAS website at <http://www.howard-autism.org>. Please call 410-290-3466 or e-mail kmanning@howard-autism.org for information on how to submit classified or camera-ready ads for this newsletter, which is published five times during the school year beginning in September.

In 2009, the newsletter will move to a quarterly publication schedule.

**Howard County Autism Society
10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215
Columbia, MD 21046**



<http://www.howard-autism.org>

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