

APRIL 2006

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- National Autism Month
- May Meeting Theme
- Membership News
- Committee Members Assigned
- Babysitting now available
- Antiquities Portraits

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Salinas Circle for Children

APRIL 2006

April-National Autism Awareness Month

What is Autism?

Autism is a developmental disability that affects, often severely, a person's ability to communicate and socially interact with others. It is four times more prevalent in males than females.

Currently, autism is believed to affect 1 in every 166 people. The rate of people being diagnosed with autism has increased substantially over the past two decades. Although this may be in part due to improved diagnostic techniques and changes to the criteria for autism spectrum disorders, the majority of experts agree these changes are not enough to explain the epidemic rates at which autism is being diagnosed.

Autism Spectrum Disorders is an

umbrella term that includes classic autism, Asperger's syndrome, and pervasive developmental disorder. Autism is considered a spectrum disorder



because the number and intensity of the symptoms people with autism display may vary widely. However, all people with autism demonstrate impairments in the following three areas: communication, social relationships and restricted patterns of behavior.

The spectrum ranges from those who are severely affected, less able, and dependent on others to those who are above-average intelligence and independent, yet lacking in social skills.

Reprinted from:
www.athletsagainstaism.org



Signs and Treatments of Autism

The hallmark feature of autism is impaired social interaction. Parents are usually the first to notice symptoms in their child. As early as infancy, a baby with autism may be unresponsive to people or focus intently on one item to the exclusion of others for long periods of time. A child with autism may appear to de-

velop normally and then withdraw and become indifferent to social engagement.

Children with autism may fail to respond to their name and often avoid eye contact with other people. They have difficulty interpreting what others are thinking or feeling because they can't understand social cues,

such as tone of voice or facial expressions, and don't watch other people's faces for clues about appropriate behavior. They lack empathy.

Many children with autism engage in repetitive movements such as rocking and twirling, or

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Personal Perspectives

I Don't Wonder Why Anymore

By Jacob Artson, age 13, unedited

You probably have never met anyone like me. For the most part of my life, I was treated as a retarded person. I can't speak or write, and therefore people assumed for the first seven years of my life that my cognitive abilities must be coextensive with my motor abilities—that is, virtually non-existent. When I was seven years old, a speech therapist introduced me to typing and my life began anew. At first, I wondered often why I had to struggle so intensely to produce a simple communication that others take for granted, without even being aware of all the intricate interactions going on in their brains but not in mine. Later I began to wonder whether I had committed some awful sin for which I was being punished by not being able to speak or move my body like all the kids around me.

There have been many supporters in my life, and some detractors as well. In fifth grade, my teacher taught me one of the most important lessons I've ever learned. I had finally been allowed back on a general education campus after two years at a nonpublic school where I had been banished after biting the assistant principle at my home school. My teacher, fortunately, didn't know anything about my background, and so she treated me as a person capable of accomplishing anything she trusted me to do. I had never been trusted to achieve anything before and I didn't want to betray her trust. At the end of that year, I won an award for most improved behavior.

Every person alive is encumbered by challenges and blessed with gifts. Perhaps my ration of challenges to gifts is higher than most, but I also know that I have so many people who believe in me and share my dream of being a productive member of society. It is tempting to spend life wondering about why we have been saddled with illness or poverty or dysfunctional family members or some other perceived or real curse, but in the end our lives are measured by what we do with the cards we have been dealt. So I no longer wonder why I have been forced to deal with autism rather than some other challenge. Instead, I think of all the opportunities I have missed while wasting energy wondering why I was given lemons instead of making lemonade. Maybe it will even taste just as good as the store bought lemonade, but it will probably be even better because it is homemade, not from concentrate.

The Silence of Thought

By Mark Nathanson, age 13, unedited

My name is Mark Nathanson. I want to take some time and tell you about myself and how being autistic has affected my life. Some of you know about autism and some may not. Either way I'm assuming you are here to get informed.

Autism, the anxiety of being in a world that assumes being quote normal is the only way one can function and be happy. Whether you are normal or different society expects you to conform to its rules. That's easier said than done.

The first time I realized I was different I wanted to die. I couldn't ask for help because the words wouldn't come out. I wanted to shout help me but know one could hear my silent thoughts. The anger grew and grew.

My brain sees things as if it happened for the first time. I flap my arms because I need to feel my body. My brain and body aren't connected. I hear everything and take everything in. I just can't tell you when I need to. I think so quickly like a moving picture and I am aware of others.

I am coming to realize that autism is only a symptom of a brain disorder. It isn't who I am as a functioning loving human being.

My doctors name is Ricki Robinson. She is by far the most influential person in my life. About four years ago Ricki introduced the alpha smart computer to me. That is my defining moment. The ability to express ones thoughts should be a given and when its not you turn into yourself and fear runs your every moment. The alpha smart was the hope I was waiting for.

My ability to express my thoughts has given me hope for the future. I can be a lawyer or a space engineer or anything. All children have the right to be heard whether its through facilitated communication or there voice. It's the responsibility of every parent, doctor and scientist to make available to an autistic child or adult the ability to communicate. In that way, the person can connect and live and function as whole members of society.

Thank you Dr. Robinson for dedicating your life to a cause so complicated. We need more Rickis out there. She has made a positive difference in so many lives. Her life on this planet has meaning. I pray that when she is thought of she is remembered with love.

Reprinted from Advances Magazine Spring 2006 issue
Cure Autism Now Foundation

President's Corner



Always looking
for new ideas!

Lets honor Mom with
joy and laughter.

"Come dressed as
Mom" to the May
meeting!

Bring a picture so we
can see the
resemblance.

Thank you for wearing your beautiful and fun Spring Bonnets to the April meeting. We covered so much important business that it was quite refreshing and fun to look up and see you lovely ladies in hats that celebrated the arrival of the spring season.

I am so delighted to welcome Nicole Castillo, Connie Fields, Kimberly Fulton, Elaine Hunt, Debbie Molina, Teresa Nielsen, Andrea Parker and Barbara Villa along with our February new members, Melissa Gomes and M.J. Viglizzo. Great ideas and energy come with new members as these wonderful women have already demonstrated! We still have room for more...please bring potential members with you to the meeting, the more the merrier! Just a note to old members, please consider re-activating your membership. Your expertise and experience are invaluable tools to the success of Salinas Circle for Children.

In April we were successful in approving the By-Law changes. Thank you for your participation

in discussion and the vote. The By-Laws will be included in the 2006 membership book. Terri Jefferson is working on the booklet and hopes to issue it at the May meeting. Irma presented the recommendations made by the Discretionary committee for fund distribution and shared with us examples of the kind of programs and supplies that have been requested. We are sad that we are currently unable to fulfill all the requests that we received, but are happy that we were able to fulfill just under 1/2 of them. These recommendations were approved for distribution and the distribution of funds will be made before the school year ends. Because we were unable to fulfill the requests in full, we will be sending a letter of explanation to the requestors so they understand the cuts that we had to make.

The *40th Anniversary Gala and Auction* planning is in full swing. We are so excited about the upcoming celebration on November 3rd at the National

Steinbeck Center! It looks to be an exciting new event. The Publicity Committee met and the Donor Request Packets are currently in the works.

Okay, here's what you're waiting for...What is Alethea up to this month? Well,...remember Mother's Day is May 14th. Does your mother have a quirky personality? Does she wear curlers to bed? If she's like my mom, she has a style all her own. *Let's honor Mom with joy and laughter. "Come dressed as Mom" to the May meeting! Bring a picture so we can see the resemblance. See you there.*

Aloha, Alethea

P.S. Please join us for the installation of new members directly after the May meeting.

- Regular meeting at 7:00 pm at MCOE
- Installation at 8:15 pm

Signs and Treatments of Autism continued from page 1

in self-abusive behavior such as biting or head-banging. They also tend to start speaking later than other children and may refer to themselves by name instead of "I" or "me." Children with autism don't know how to play interactively with other children. Some speak in a sing-song voice about a narrow range of favorite topics, with little regard for the interests of the person to whom they are speaking.

Many children with autism have a reduced sensitivity to pain, but

are abnormally sensitive to sound, touch, or other sensory stimulation. These unusual reactions may contribute to behavioral symptoms such as resistance to being cuddled or hugged.

How is autism treated?

There is no cure for autism. Therapies and behavioral interventions are designed to remedy specific symptoms and can bring about substantial improvement.

The ideal treatment plan coordinates therapies and interventions that target the core symptoms of autism: impaired social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, and obsessive or repetitive routines and interests. Most professionals agree that the earlier the intervention, the better.

Reprinted from : www.ninds.nih.gov



Come and
Capture the
Moment

Join us for the
New Member
Installation
Ceremony

Someone
to watch
over
me



Antiquities Portraits

Antique Sepia-Tone Portraits

\$10.00 Donation

- One 10' x 13" sepia-tone portrait (\$69.95 Value)
 - Sitting for children up to the age of 16
 - Antiquities will provide clothing and props

May 18-20, 2006

Location: Laurel Inn, 801 W. Laurel Drive, Salinas

By Appointment Only

Contact: Michele Chisum (831) 484-2660

Membership News

Please Welcome our New Members

Nicole Castillo

Connie Fields

Kimberly Fulton

Melissa Gomes

Elaine Hunt

Debbie Molina

Teresa Nielson

Andrea Parker

M. J. Viglizzo

Barbara Villa

New Member

Installation Ceremony

Tuesday, May 2, 2006

8:15 pm

Monterey County Office of
Education

Babysitting—Now Available

We are pleased to announce that Membership Chairperson, Terri Jefferson has generously offered the services of her two daughters, Katelyn and Jillian, to provide babysitting at the General

Meetings.

Katelyn and/or Jillian will be available to watch your little ones during the meeting as part of their Community Service hours for Salinas High School.

They are available to members

and their guests free of charges.

Thank you Terri, Katelyn and Jillian. We appreciate your commitment to the success of Salinas Circle for Children

A Holiday Affair—Committees



If you do not see your name on this list, please call Michelle Chisum at 484-2660 and let her know on which committee you would like to work.

Logistics—Michelle Chisum (chair,) Linda Rios, Connie Fields, Teresa Nielson

Publicity/Marketing—Andrea Parker (chair,) Melissa Gomes, Karen Morgan, Alethea Leandro-Farr

Corporate Sponsorship/Underwriting—Melissa Gomes (chair,) Elaine Hunt, M. J. Viglizzo, Terri Jefferson, Irma Nunes

Fundraising/Procurement—Irma Nunes, Carolyn Sanders, Ande Parker, Dawn Hershgerber-Clark, Nicole Castillo, Vickie Casacca, Alethea Leandro-Farr

Decorations—Debbie Molina (chair,) Kimberly Fulton Diana O'Mary, Teresa Keaton, Rochelle Breschini, Kari Sanders

Finance—Dawn Hershgerber-Clark (chair,) Carolyn Sanders, Debbie Molina, Karen Morgan



Hostesses for 2006 Meetings

May:	Vickie Casacca and Dawn Hershgerber Clark
June:	Kimberly Fulton and M.J.Viglizzo
July:	No Meeting
August:	No Meeting
September:	Melissa Gomes and Teresa Nielsen
October:	Diana O'Mary and Debbie Molina
November:	Andrea Parker and Nicole Castillo
December:	Installation of Officers and Holiday Celebration

A “warm” toast to our members with a May Birthday:
Delia Morales
Peggy Goldman
Sherri Issac and
M. J. Viglizzo

Thank You

The Discretionary Committee met in March with just \$10,000 available for distribution. This year the requests for funds reached just over \$24,000. After carefully reviewing all requests, they were able to make recommendations to distribute all \$11,000.

Irma Nunes, Discretionary Committee Chairperson, presented the recommendations of the committee to the Membership

at the April meeting for approval. The disbursement recommendations were accepted as presented and the funds will be distributed before the end of the school year.

Please give them a BIG THANK YOU at the next meeting for doing such a wonderful job. Making the disbursement choices, particularly when funds are low, is a difficult job. THANKS!!



Salinas Circle for Children



April 2006

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Salinas Circle for Children

The purpose of the Salinas Circle for Children is to raise and provide funds, and to perform needed services, to assist children with physical, mental, or emotional needs in Monterey County.

Our mission is to provide the tools and support needed so they can thrive in their living and learning environments.

**Save the Date !
November 3, 2006**

Board of Directors

President:	Alethea Leandro-Farr
1st Vice President:	Irma Nunes
2nd Vice President:	Dawn Hershberger-Clark
Secretary:	Diana O'Mary
Treasurer:	Karen Morgan
Annual Event:	Michelle Chisum
Membership:	Terri Jefferson
Sunshine:	Mary Turnbull
Communications:	Teresa Keaton
Hospitality:	Rochelle Breschini
Special Activities:	Carolyn Sanders
Parliamentarian:	Vickie Casacca
Discretionary:	Irma Nunes



Special Activities Chairperson, Carolyn Sanders, watches as an AB Ingham School teacher demonstrates the usefulness of the BIG BUTTON, a tool used to assist children who have communication disorders.