



BCC-ASA News

*Baltimore-Chesapeake Chapter
of the Autism Society of America*

July 2006

Our mission is to share all types of information regarding Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and related disorders. We do not necessarily endorse the information printed in this newsletter.

July Support Group Program: Anxiety in Children with ASD

Our July 6 meeting will feature Bridget Trafton from Abilities Network who will discuss the treatment of anxiety in children on the spectrum. Join us for this informative talk on one of the challenges many of our children deal with daily, and how best we can help them.

Join Us in August for Our New and Improved Support Group!

Our August 3 Support Group meeting will feature a new format. We will have a pre-selected topic for discussion with small-group "breakout" sessions. In August the main topic will be **Biomedical Interventions/Alternative Therapies** consisting of breakout sessions on:

1. special diets
2. prescription medications
3. biomedical interventions/DAN protocol
4. non-mainstream options
5. other topics

National ASA Options Policy

Just a reminder that BCC-ASA adheres to the ASA options policy that states *no single type of program or service will fill the needs of every individual with autism and that each person should have access to support services. At the very core of **parent choice** philosophy is the belief that no single program or treatment will benefit all individuals with autism. Providing information and education to help in decision-making are more highly regarded at ASA than is advocating for one particular theory or philosophy.*

Calendar

July 6	BCC-ASA Support Group, 7:00 p.m. Program: <i>Managing Anxiety for Children with ASD</i>
July 10	Administration on Developmental Disabilities Public Forum, University of Baltimore Student Union, 4:00 p.m.
July 11	AARG! (Adult Autism Resource Group), 7:00 p.m.
July 18	Balto. Co. ABA/Verbal Behavior Interest Group, Maiden Choice, 7:00 p.m.
July 25	Summer Workshop: <i>Getting First Words</i> , Cockeysville, 7:00 p.m.
July 31-Aug. 4	Center for Autism and Related Disorders Professional Summer Institute, KKI Greenspring Campus
August 3	BCC-ASA Support Group, 7:00 p.m. Main Topic: <i>Biomedical Interventions/Alternative Therapies</i>
August 8	AARG! (Adult Autism Resource Group), 7:00 p.m.
September 7	BCC-ASA Support Group, 7:00 p.m. Program: <i>Vaccines and ASD</i> presented by Dr. Craig Newschaffer

The Co-President's Co-munication by Heather Thoms-Chesley

Summer: it holds both joys and great trials. The kids are home from school and many of us look forward to the lack of schedules to go on vacation. Yet many of us struggle to get to the grocery store or anywhere during the summer months. What is great about BCC-ASA is the diversity of families and experiences that we all share with each other. We are a support group!! We help each other overcome obstacles and celebrate joyously the successes that you share with us. Whether you get your support from attending the monthly meetings, or are only able to attend the Annual Family Picnic, or rely on the newsletter to find the dates and places of various conferences, BCC-ASA strives to serve the broad needs of the entire Baltimore Autism community.

You will see some changes over the next few months, including an expanded newsletter featuring a variety of articles. The Programming Committee, after receiving input at the May Annual meeting and from member surveys, will be implementing a new format for the support group meetings. The changes are based on member input and committee recommendations. After the next few meetings, we will again ask for input and the success (or failure) of the changes made will be evaluated.

This July BCC-ASA is trying to switch over from a strictly snail-mailed newsletter to an electronically-mailed one, in order to reduce the huge cost of printing and mailing. **If you can receive the newsletter by e-mail we urge you to subscribe to Bccasanews, the newsletter notification listserv (see the "Get Your Newsletter by E-Mail" article on page 2 for details).**

We are excited about the upcoming board term and BCC-ASA is involved in many aspects of improving the lives of individuals with ASD and the families and professionals who support them. Members serve on various committees from the State level down, we provide other trainings for other organizations about Autism, and we also speak to new teachers. There are so many activities going on between meetings and board meetings, it truly is amazing. A HIGH FIVE to the dedicated group of volunteers that propel the mission of ASA forward.

2006-2007 Board Meets for The First Time

Thursday, June 8 was the first meeting of the newly-elected BCC-ASA Board of Directors. The meeting was jam-packed with introductions of the members, reports of previous projects such as the Baltimore Public School Partnership (where we jointly sponsored three well-attended trainings open to both professionals and parents), review of Autism Awareness activities, and a celebration of the success of the Walk for Autism Research.

As we look ahead to the coming year, the board has many things planned – an AARG conference in October, five more speaker series with Baltimore County Public Schools, and an expanded newsletter, as well as shifting the newsletter from printed mail to electronic delivery. Starting in the fall, BCC-ASA will have a representative attend the SECAC meetings and we will be working towards a First Responders Training projected for next spring.

We are an organization composed entirely of volunteers and our progress is dependent on the efforts of you – our members! Thank you to all who take time out of their busy lives to be active in running the chapter. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities, please contact a Co-President.

BCC-ASA Receives Generous Donation

Our chapter was the recipient of a generous gift of Exxon stock from Jeanne Delvett, a benefactor currently living in California. Ms. Delvett did this to honor the memory of Jeanne Simons – a close colleague of Leo Kanner; the Johns Hopkins Doctor who first recognized and described Autism. Ms. Simons went on to found the Linwood School, the first school entirely dedicated to educating children with autism. At the donor's request, this gift will be used to support increased Autism Awareness in the Baltimore area.

Next AARG! Meeting July 11

The Adult Autism Resource Group will meet Tuesday, July 11 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. This sub-group of the chapter meets the second Tuesday of every month at the home of Ellen Feifarek, 508 Hampton Lane. Call Linda Pearl at 410-769-9500 during daytime hours if you plan to attend.

Dr. Craig Newschaffer At Sept. Support Group

Dr. Newschaffer, the Director of the Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, will be reviewing the latest research on vaccines as they relate to ASD at the chapter's support group meeting on September 7. He will also discuss his upcoming research study.

Play Group in SW Area

Families with special kids ages 3-12 in the Southwest area are gathering once a week over the summer for informal fun and time with friends. Typically developing sibs and neighbors welcome. For more info, call Roxanne and Wil Gehne at (410) 719-7273 or e-mail wil4vb@yahoo.com

Check Out Balto. County's Therapeutic Rec Services

For recreation opportunities for individuals with disabilities in Baltimore County, check out the county's website at www.baltimorecountyonline.info/Agencies/recreation/therapeutic.html.

Recent Donors to BCC-ASA

Thank you to the following donors to our chapter:

Mrs. Corazon Aquino
Ronald Glodek
Daneen Henry
Elizabeth Himmer
Employees of John Hopkins University
Deborah Jones
Michael Jones
John Kenny
Malcolm MacDermid
Kenneth & Ann Menser
Alan Rucker
Jennifer Wazenski
Ami Withrow

The Danker Family of Owings Mills also made a thoughtful donation to BCC-ASA in memory of Yale Binder and in memory of Emma Surdin.

In addition, the following members sent donations along with their membership dues:

Gary and Dale Davis
Jerry & Jacqueline Smithson
Nancy Spatafore
Carol & Richard Young
Dr. Andrew Zimmerman

Hats Off!

by Heather Thoms-Chesley, Co-President

A calm soothing voice, a caring embrace, those inquisitive eyes – **Andrea Schanbacher** has offered this to all attendees to the BCC-ASA support groups for over two years. As Co-President (now outgoing, although she's always been *outgoing!*), she has brought warmth and gentle guidance to those people with whom she came into contact. As an Autism Outreach Classroom Teacher, Andrea brought a professional's perspective to our chapter's board. Her presence empowered us; showed us the wonder, magic and excitement in the strides our children made, no matter how big or small. Whether answering the phone line, greeting people at the monthly support groups, or making S'mores for us all at Cascade Lake, Andrea's energy and enthusiasm is endless. We all wish her success in the future with her new position in BCPS and pursuit of a Master's in Education. Thank you for all the hard work you put into Baltimore Chesapeake Chapter of the Autism Society of America!!!!

Get Your Newsletter by E-Mail

This newsletter is going out in two versions. You will receive the hard copy in the mail, but days earlier, while the printer and postal service are spinning their wheels, you will receive an e-mail with a link to the full, PDF version of the newsletter (if we have your **correct e-mail address**). Printing and mailing our current newsletter will cost the Chapter over \$3,000 in the fiscal year 2006-2007. Imagine the additional Autism Awareness projects possible if we didn't have to pay for printing and mailing the newsletter! We urge **ALL readers who use e-mail to please sign up for e-mail delivery of the newsletter**. If you receive the July newsletter e-mail notification, then you are already successfully signed up. If not . . .

Subscribe to *Bccasanews*, the newsletter notification listserv, by sending an e-mail to Bccasanews-request@bcc-asa.org and on the subject line type: **subscribe**.

You will be welcomed to the listserv by e-mail. Please be assured that only the BCC-ASA Webmaster can post a message to this listserv, so you will not receive anything but the newsletter notification and emergency notifications from the BCC-ASA President. If we have an outdated email address for you, simply subscribe with your new address. If you are unsuccessful in your attempt to subscribe, notify us at questions@bcc-asa.org with your name and current e-mail address, and we will add you to the listserv manually.

Winning Entries in our Essay Contest

Below are three of the winning entries from BCC-ASA's "How has autism affected your life?" Essay Contest. We will publish the remainder of the winning essays in future editions of *The BCC-ASA News*:

Coming Up **by Dave Dorsey**

Co-Winner, BCC-ASA Essay Contest, Individual with ASD category

Last year a friend at church said something to me that got me thinking. He said it was his prayer for me that I would get with the right people there at church. His statement left me too perplexed to ask him what he meant by it. The only thing that came to mind was the special friends group held on Sundays at church. There was also a lot of coverage in the news about this pervasive disorder called autism. I wondered about this autism thing. It was so intriguing that I just had to visit the special friends group, just to see, is this me? It sure would answer a lot of questions I had about my life. Weeks went by as I mulled over the idea how anybody could have cleverly sneaked past by my formidable defenses. Being strong on the outside had to mean I was strong on the inside, or so I thought. When I started attending the special friends group it was great. Thinking that I was an administrator helped me to mask the feelings of inadequacy I felt. Now I would not miss it for the world. And joining up with the Baltimore- Chesapeake Chapter of the Autism Society of America has really been delightful. Since all this has happened, the biggest single question of all has been answered. At 49 years old I now know exactly why my life did not work out, yet. Why had I not made it to the big leagues in baseball? Why hardly any success at all? It just seemed like I was always stuck in second gear. Always upset at someone else or myself. People must think that I savor frustration. Constant discouragement and loneliness have played a cruel medley. An almost romance, an almost good job, an almost new friend, competes with the same scenario as yesterday, or the day before that. Now that I know some big answers to some very big questions, I feel quickened by artful rays of towering hope. People at church, and elsewhere now look at me differently. A look that is contagious and dynamic. I am sure that my faith in the Lord God Almighty has brought me to the door of mental health, my life wish. I'm just as sure that this same faith will guide me straight toward a lot more than that.

Having Autism **by Donte Jamal Lewis**

Co-Winner, BCC-ASA Essay Contest, Individual with ASD category

My name is Donte Jamal Lewis. I am 16 years old and I am autistic. I was diagnosed with autism at the age of 4. I didn't come to understand why I had so many mixed up thoughts, feelings of confusion and frustrations about who I was and why I acted peculiar, until I was a teenager. Being 'different' isn't easy at times. It feels like sometimes, I'm not connected with the outside world. I don't understand why I feel alone and afraid of people that I do not know. I sometimes feel like I'm not as smart as others my age. There were times that I felt like giving up because some things were just too difficult for me to do or understand. I soon developed the confidence and courage to keep going and never to give up. I remembered struggling through Math and Social Studies during my middle school years. I thought I was a complete failure and that I would never pass those classes. I got up enough courage and inner strength to keep going and was able to pass those classes with a 'B.' I was very proud of my accomplishments! I'm now in High school and it gets hard at times but I'm more confident that when I put my mind to it, in spite of my mental differences, I can and will be successful!

Trying to 'fit in' with others my age and make friends was a struggle for me until I met my best friend Aaron, who is also autistic. We've been friends for 3 years now, and he has introduced me to other friends. My mom has started a social club called "BOY'S NITE OUT." I invite my friends to hang out with my family once a month. We go to the movies, bowling, video game playing, the mall, restaurants, amusement parks and more! We have so much fun together!

I realize that as I get older, I may face challenges in life that may be difficult and overwhelming for me. With my faith in God, along with the help if my mom, friends, the teachers and staff at Franklin High School, I know that I will be able to overcome those challenges and obstacles of being autistic. My mom sometimes says to me "Speak those things that are not as if they were." Her saying this has helped me to believe more in myself and what I can accomplish. Someday, I plan to own my own business as a T-Shirt Designer. Yes, I may have autism, but autism does not have me.

How Autism Has Affected My Life **by Jesse Wehner**

Co-Winner, BCC-ASA Essay Contest, Elementary School Student category

Autism has affected my life because I'm not payed attention to a lot because my twin baby-brothers get all of the attention because they need it. Most of the time my mommy and daddy are either making my baby-brothers food, researching about autism, playing with my baby brothers, or their giving my baby brothers a bath. Then I have a sister who has PDD which is a form of autism. So, it is hard doing anything with her because most of the time she never wants to do anything with me except watch a movie or play in her room/watch a DVD. So, most of the time I'm playing in my own room, at school, or playing with my two favorite brothers. Also, most of the time it is hard because I am the only person in my family that doesn't have autism or a form of autism besides my parents. Then, between me, my sister, and my twin baby-brothers in one day we all take over 100 supplements. And when they get older I think they won't ever play with me (as if I was playing like a normal child would). So, this is how autism has affected my life so far.

Why Doesn't My Child Speak?

A Look Into the Intricacies of Early/Basic Human Communication

by Katie Rossman, M.S., CCC-SLP

One of the most understandably common questions from the parent of a developmentally delayed child is, "When will my child start talking?" There is no easy or correct answer. Human communication, including speech, is an extremely complex and dynamic process.

The following is information compiled from a wealth of experts and resources in the field of child development, psychology, and speech and language pathology to name a few. I have also included information acquired from 20 years of clinical observation of children during speech/language therapy. Being a keen observer of child behavior as it relates to communication has also helped me to gather my thoughts in an attempt to address the very frustrating question posed by parents of young children, "Why doesn't my child talk?"

There is no exact answer. Human communication, particularly in the form of speech, is an extremely complex event.

In order to learn language/words (whether it be in the form of speech, sign language, or pictures) basic socialization and play should first be demonstrated. Encouraging play skills that are evident is extremely important for language development. If play skills are absent they should be taught, as these basic developmental skills lay a rich foundation for communication. Prior to intentional communication children typically demonstrate the following sequence of play skills:

1. first explore toys
2. use objects conventionally
3. pretend with realistic objects
4. combine actions in play
5. and take turns with an adult in an activity

Children with autism and other developmental disabilities may sometimes demonstrate some or part of this sequence of play skills. In addition, it is not uncommon for these skills to occur out of order for developmentally-delayed children.

Before a child talks they demonstrate non-verbal communication skills such as: mutual attention, awareness of others, sociability, play, and early turn taking. **This is the language or "thinking" part of talking.** Before children talk or formally communicate in some way they demonstrate communicative intent by:

1. regulating the behavior of others (i.e., getting them to do something or stop doing something)
2. purposefully drawing attention to themselves by getting an adult's attention and performing an action they know the adult will react to
3. directing an adult's attention to an object or event to establish joint attention
4. sharing positive affect (laughing/smiling with an adult)

The speech/motor part of communication comes after the thinking or language part. The act of speaking is a complex motor event. In its most basic form it first requires the control of respiration. First we breathe in and then voluntarily coordinate the movement of our vocal cords on controlled exhalation (e.g., breathing out). Almost simultaneously the speech motor planning strip in the brain tells our mouth (i.e., soft palate, tongue and lips) how and when to move. To make one sound is a detailed fine motor movement requiring the coordinated engagement of numerous muscles. Combining sounds to make a word requires even more neurological planning and motor coordination, and so on as the utterances get longer. This occurs simultaneously with the thinking/language part of talking so the complexity of the process becomes even more evident.

The good news is that for those children who are struggling with the challenge of producing speech we can offer alternatives to promote language. Many children use eye gaze, objects, pictures, and signs and gestures to convey their thoughts. As a result we see a child who is happier, more independent, and less frustrated!

Most children with developmental delays who are non-verbal or minimally verbal typically have poor auditory comprehension and processing of verbal language. It may appear that they are not paying full, if any, attention to you when you talk to them. Furthermore they need alternative forms of communication (e.g., pictures and signs) modeled for them regularly and frequently. It is unreasonable to expect that these children will simply begin using gestures or pictures to communicate unless it has been modeled and used with them in the day-to-day setting and on a frequent basis.

The next question then to be answered is "What can I do at home for my child to get this process rolling?" Here is a brief list of suggested activities:

1. Imitate the child's [appropriate] motor acts. This is intended to get the child to continue or take another turn.
2. Move item of interest that the child is looking at near an adult's face to encourage child to look at the adult and pair that with looking at the desired item to create a communicative exchange that involves a partner (i.e., child looks at item, looks at adult, adult returns eye contact, looks at item and verbally states, "Oh, you want . . ." and gives item to child)
3. Establish simple turn-taking games, (e.g., peek-a-boo; bubble blowing; ball rolling; or, gently take a single object from a child's hand, take a brief turn with the object, and hand it back)
4. Use predictable routines to encourage frequent opportunities to practice words
5. Sabotage activities by only giving one or a few of a desired item or food at a time to facilitate a request for "more."
6. Place desired items just out of reach and start by accepting a reach toward desired item as a request; move item further away or put in a clear container with a photograph on or near. Reaching for and eventually exchanging the picture for the desired item is the goal.
7. Include fun, motivating activities that promote active learning (clapping, counting, singing familiar songs that incorporate movements to imitate and make)
8. Increase child's attention to adult's face and mouth by taking turns doing fun oral activities such as blowing whistles or blow-type toy musical instruments, or popping bubbles on a bubble wand on the child's lips

Books Recently Added To The BCC-ASA Library

by Elaine Williams, Librarian

Many of the books recently added to our library were written as resources either for teachers or for parents. However, all of them have ideas, experiences, and activities which are valuable for anyone who cares about and works with persons on the autism spectrum.

Angie Healy wrote ***Sometimes My Brother: Helping kids understand autism through a sibling's eyes*** from the perspective of her son Foster, describing life with his older brother, Gavin, who has autism. Both the storybook text and vibrant photographs are perfect for teaching others what autism is all about, and for letting other siblings of children with autism know that they are not alone.

Sundays With Matthew: A young boy with autism and an artist share their sketchbooks was written and illustrated by Matthew Lancelle (the boy with autism) and Jeanette Lesada (his Artist-Friend), providing an intriguing glance into the mind of a child with autism as he perceives and explores the world around him. This book would be especially useful to help elementary school children learn to accept each other and to embrace individuality.

Ellen Notbohm's newest book (she's the co-author of ***1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders***) is another easy-to-use guide regarding ***Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew***. In fact, this little book gives such a clear, sympathetic and accurate view of the essentials about children with autism, that I think it should be in the hands of every parent, teacher, professional, and others who have autism in their lives. It's a winner!

Capitalizing on children's interest in space themes, ***Space Travelers: Space guide manual***, and its accompanying workbook, ***Space Travelers: Student manual*** is an interactive program for developing social understanding, social competence, and social skills for students with autism or Asperger syndrome. Conceived by experienced teacher Margaret Carter and writer Josie Antomauro, this set of books uses entertaining and informative activities to motivate students' incentive to learn social skills. A highly recommended resource, especially for schools.

Another very useful reference, written by a teacher for other teachers of students with autism, is Barbara Bazeghi's ***Recipe Handbook of Easy to Use Activities for Teaching Autistic Children***. In addition to activities which focus on academic skills, the chapter giving activities to facilitate inclusion is a welcome feature. Other references in this book include a "Methods Section" (hands-on, how-to), and an index of commercial resources.

In Jeffrey Cohen's ***Guns A'Blazing: How parents of children on the autism spectrum and schools can work together—without a shot being fired***, he uses his own experience and much common sense to describe the pitfalls and keys to success of the parent-teacher partnership. This book shows how to approach the relationship with a positive attitude rather than an adversarial one. The father of a son with Asperger Syndrome, Jeffrey Cohen has also authored the Aaron Tucker mystery series, which features a character who has Asperger Syndrome.

Kirby Lentz's book ***Hopes and Dreams: An IEP guide for parents of children with autism spectrum disorders*** helps parents to prepare for the IEP process in a systematic way, which not only decreases the anxiety parents feel when entering the process, but it also facilitates parents and teachers working together as a team. One mother's review of this book said "...it is thought-provoking while laying out the path to being a prepared and invaluable participant in your child's IEP..."

(Workbooks must be "the idea whose time has come!") ***Asperger Syndrome, An Owner's Manual: An interactive guide and workbook***, was written by teacher Ellen Korin for 5th to 8th grade students to identify their personal profile of strengths and challenges in a validating, positive way. It is an easy to use interactive workbook that enables students to understand themselves and become active partners in developing a variety of skills, as well as managing their own behavior.

Anne Sutcliffe's book ***A Rock and a Hard Place*** is a *novel* which quickly draws the reader into the heartbreaking dilemma of a mother with 3 children, the oldest of whom has severe autism. The daily pressures of their child's erratic and often destructive behavior puts a strain on the marriage and the family, often having them make choices between the proverbial rock and a hard place. It is a novel which offers candid insight into family life with a child with severe autism, and the desperation parents feel in their battle to access the right education.

At the other emotional extreme (all of which are encountered as we live with autism spectrum disorders), is Lynley Summers' thoughtful, humorous, and enthusiastic book ***Autism Is Not a Life Sentence***, which describes how she worked with her daughter, Jessica ("Jazz"), who is now a successful college student. Lynley incorporated what she understood of chaos theory into behavioral therapy, and used it to eliminate some of Jessica's characteristically autistic behaviors, help her to understand the environment around her, and to find a loving daughter-mother relationship. Especially insightful are the perspectives of her daughter Jessica at the end of each chapter.

Based on both personal and professional experience, Lisa Lieberman guides the reader through the multifaceted approach necessary to find, hire, and keep an in-home care provider, in her book ***A Stranger Among Us: Hiring in-home support for a child with autism spectrum disorders or other neurological differences***. An experienced psychotherapist whose husband has multiple sclerosis and they have a son with autism, Lisa Lieberman's goal is to provide a framework for families to follow in the recruitment, supervision, training and retention of quality in-home support staff, who ideally becomes "a vital contributor to family dynamics."

Work & Family: Employers Aiding Parents Of Disabled Children

by Sue Shellenbarger, *The Wall Street Journal*

For years, David Bruesehoff hesitated to tell anyone at work about his daughter, Karissa, who has autism and Down syndrome.

At his company and many others, "it's the 'culture of the smart,'" the Dallas father says. "It can be hard when another parent is talking about his child getting into prep school, and your child's big accomplishment is getting on the bus to go to school."

A code of silence has long kept parents of children with disabilities, from autism and Down syndrome to cerebral palsy and depression, from talking about their kids at work. Now, driven by growth in their numbers and in the cost of raising special-needs children, some of these parents are starting to "come out" at work. And a handful of employers are stepping up to help, with support groups, informational meetings and insurance benefits.

The incidence of U.S. children and teenagers with a disabling condition has tripled to 7 percent from 2 percent in 1960, based on data published in 2000 in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, reflecting increased survival rates and a rise in the diagnosis of conditions such as autism. Today, an estimated one in 12 U.S. workers has a child with a disability or special need, says MassGeneral Hospital for Children, Boston, which is conducting a five-year, federally funded project to examine workplace supports for these parents.

"Stigma and fear of reprisal" have kept many workers from disclosing their family situations, says Chris Fluet, director of the MassGeneral project.

The risks of speaking up are real: Soon after Kevin McGarry, Hyde Park, N.Y., started asking questions about insurance coverage for his disabled daughter on a previous job as a paralegal in the mid-1990s, his supervisor got upset and told him to stop asking for benefits. "They didn't want my health insurance company to get wind" of the rare syndrome his daughter had from birth. Although his performance previously had drawn praise, he says he soon started getting negative feedback. Eventually he was laid off.

Having a child with a disability also requires time and effort to find and manage treatment, forcing 30 percent of these parents to quit or cut back at work, says a 2001 survey by the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

Few parents can afford to cut back. More than 40 percent of families with special-needs kids have financial problems because of care costs, says a study published in June in Maternal and Child Health Journal. And 60 percent of children with special needs rely on their parents' employers for health insurance, MassGeneral says.

Now, some parents are taking the opposite tack — turning to the workplace for support. After her autistic son was born 11 years ago, Kathy Gonzalez, a technology manager at Toyota Motor Sales USA, Torrance, Calif., was overwhelmed trying to find treatment for him. Seeing her co-workers networking on other topics, she helped start a support group last year at Toyota that draws up to 40 parents of special-needs kids to its monthly meetings. "If I could help even one parent get on track for whatever service they need for their kid, it would be worth it," Ms. Gonzalez says. At Microsoft, employees with autistic children have formed a similar network.

Jack Harris, whose 11-year-old son is autistic, was startled to learn during on-site meetings of a father's network at PricewaterhouseCoopers's Tampa, Fla., office, that 10 of the 50 other men there also had children with disabilities. With PricewaterhouseCoopers's blessing, Mr. Harris, a practice support manager, is planning an on-site special-needs resource fair early next year. The firm is looking for other ways to support such parents, a spokeswoman says.

In recent years, Mr. Bruesehoff gradually began talking about his daughter on his job in Los Angeles for accounting firm Ernst & Young.

Then, when he was offered a transfer to Dallas in 2002, "I decided I was just going to come clean" and explain that the availability of programs in Dallas for Karissa, now 17, would be pivotal. Co-workers responded warmly, helping his family forge new ties in Dallas, where he now works as a human-resource manager, he says.

Mr. Bruesehoff is among 64 parents of special-needs kids who have joined a parent network formed last January by New York-based Ernst & Young. Sandra Turner, a human-resource manager, says parents on the network's informational conference calls are slowly opening up to each other. While fewer than one-fifth were willing to give their names on the first call, about half now feel comfortable identifying themselves.

Raytheon, an aerospace and defense contractor, has hosted several speaker dinners for employees with special-needs children at its Tucson, Ariz., and Woburn, Mass., facilities. Jeff Stolz, whose son Joseph, 10, has autism and bipolar disorder, was among those attending. Heartened to learn many of his co-workers also had special-needs kids, Mr. Stolz for the first time took Joseph in April to the annual "Take Your Child to Work" day festivities at Raytheon. He was apprehensive; Joseph verged on a tantrum during an introductory session. But as the day wore on and supportive adults reached out to him, Joseph calmed down, and even introduced himself by microphone at the closing session.

In a surprising move in today's cost-cutting climate, a few employers are even expanding insurance coverage for special-needs kids. Microsoft, oil-industry supplier Halliburton, and insurer Progressive Group have begun covering some of the cost of applied behavior analysis, or ABA therapy, intensive early training for autistic kids that can cost \$20,000 or more.

These employers, of course, are the exception. If you have a child with a disability, only you can size up your corporate culture. A MassGeneral manual offers tips and resources, available online at www.massgeneral.org/ebs by clicking on "Resources for Employees," then opening "workplace benefits."

Mediation/Due Process Hearing Info Available

If you need help resolving a disagreement between parents and a public agency (local school system or State operated program that provides educational services to children) regarding the identification, evaluation, educational placement or the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for a child with a disability or suspected of having a disability under IDEA, the Md. State Dept. of Education and the Office of Administrative Hearings have newly revised forms for Requests for Mediation/Due Process Hearing as well as a Frequently Asked Questions document that will help clarify the process of requesting mediation and/or a due process hearing. These forms are available on MSDE's web site, www.marylandpublicschools.org.

Autism Guide for Educators

The National Education Association has produced a new guide for educators entitled "The Puzzle of Autism" to assist those who work with children who have autism. To receive your complimentary copy, e-mail gapsinfo@nea.org or download the PDF at www.nea.org/specialed/images/autismpuzzle.pdf.

CONFERENCE NEWS

Thursday, July 6, 7:00 p.m.

BCC-ASA Support Group: Managing Anxiety for Children with ASD

The chapter's July support group meeting will include a presentation by Bridget Trafton from Abilities Network on the treatment of anxiety in children on the ASD spectrum. See back page of this newsletter for directions.

Monday, July 10, 4:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Administration on Developmental Disabilities Public Forum

The federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities is seeking feedback on the impact of the following programs on you, your family and the community where you live: Kennedy Krieger Institute, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council and the Maryland Disability Law Center. To testify in person, attend the public forum to be held at the University of Baltimore Student Center, 2 West Mt. Royal Ave., Room 516. You may also call in during the forum: the phone number is 443-923-4363 (Conference ID #82640 and Password 82640). If you cannot attend or call in, you may send comments by mail to 217 E. Redwood St, Suite 1300, Balto., MD 21202, or e-mail comments

to comments@mdlcbalto.org before Monday, July 3.

Tuesday, July 18, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Baltimore County ABA/Verbal Behavior Interest Group Meeting

Location: Hope Presbyterian Church, Maiden Choice, MD. For more info, see the group's flyer on the BCC-ASA website at www.bcc-asa.org/VBIG.pdf.

Tuesday, July 25, 7:00 p.m.

Trellis Services Summer Workshop: Getting First Words

All workshops are held at Trellis's Clinic at 150 Lakefront Drive, Cockeysville MD and are free of charge. RSVP to (410) 785-3845 or email info@trellisservices.com to reserve your place.

Monday, July 31 – Friday, August 4
Center for Autism and Related Disorders Professional Summer Institute 2006

Workshop for educators and therapists who work with children aged 2-6 years with diagnoses in the autism spectrum. Location: Kennedy Krieger Institute's Greenspring Campus, Baltimore. Registration (due by July 14): \$1,600 per person. For more information contact Tiffany Williams at 443-923-7880.

MEMBERSHIP FORM BALTIMORE-CHESAPEAKE CHAPTER ASA

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Child's Name: _____ Child's Birthday: _____

Child's School or Program (Optional): _____

Would you prefer to receive the chapter newsletter:

By U.S. mail? By e-mail? Both?

Additional donation to BCC-ASA: _____

Make checks payable to BCC-ASA and mail to:
BCC-ASA, P.O. Box 10822, Baltimore, MD 21234

MEMBERSHIP FEE: \$10.00

CIRCLE ONE:

Individual with Autism

Family

Professional

Student

Please note:

BCC-ASA does not share information on our members with any other organization.

MEMBERSHIP FORM AUTISM SOCIETY OF AMERICA

FROM: Baltimore/Chesapeake Chapter

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

CIRCLE ONE:

Family: \$40.00

Individual: \$30.00

Student: \$15.00

Professional: \$100.00

Mail to: Autism Society of America, P. O. Box 96223, Washington, DC 20090-6223
Remit payment with this form

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Chapter Phone: 410-655-7933

Website: www.bcc-asa.org

E-mail: questions@bcc-asa.org

Support Group Meeting

The next support group meeting will be **Thursday, July 6** at 7:00 p.m. at Mount Washington Pediatric Hospital. The support group meets on the **first Thursday** of every month.

Directions to Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital:

From North of Baltimore:

Take the Beltway (I-695) to the Jones Falls Expressway (I-83) south. From I-83, take the Northern Parkway exit, 10B West. Make a right turn off the exit ramp and make an immediate right turn onto West Rogers Ave. (the first street off the exit ramp). Go north on West Rogers Ave.; the hospital is on the right.

From Baltimore and South:

Take the Jones Falls Expressway (I-83) north to the second Northern Parkway exit, 10B West. Turn right onto West Rogers Ave. (the first street off the exit ramp). Go north on West Rogers Ave.; the hospital is on the right.

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