

Autism BC

Autism ... a part of our world, not a world apart

Volume 10, Issue 3 • Summer 2002

ASBC's Annual General Meeting

Jo-Anne Seip of the Provincial Outreach Program for Autism & Related Disorders gave a

presentation on "Social Skills for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders" at the

ASBC Annual General Meeting on June 1, 2002. Jo-Anne's presentation described the processing problems that students with ASD face, such as a decreased ability to scan an environment to identify and focus on important information, an inability to recognize problems or find solutions to problems, difficulty with time concepts and the perception of time passing, and impairment in automatically or independently organizing information for meaning or relationships.

Jo-Anne then bridged this information to "mindblindness" — an insensitivity to others' feelings, an inability to take into account what other people know, an inability to negotiate friendships by reading and responding to intentions, and an inability to read listener's level of interest in one's speech. Jo-Anne shared examples of how the combination of processing problems with "mindblindness" impedes the ability of students with ASD to learn social skills "norms."

Jo-Anne's workshop was to conclude after the AGM.

However, due to the protracted election, the presentation was unfinished. ASBC and Jo-Anne Seip hope to reschedule the conclusion of her presentation and we will inform members as soon as details are known.

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Jo-Anne Seip, of the Provincial Outreach Program for Autism & Related Disorders, shown here with ASBC's Clair Schuman, Director, Programs & Services.



Volunteers and staff help with set-up for ASBC's Annual General Meeting

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Election Results from the AGM

Michael Lewis, Avery Raskin, Richard Gauntlett and Paul Bowes were not up for re-election, as they were elected in 2001. Dr. Jill Calder, Jamie Collins, Brian Davies, Guy Murphy, and Doug Querns were all re-elected. Newly elected to the board

are Jerome Adirim, Todd Antifaev, Dee Dee Doyle, Robin Gelfer, Justin Himmelright and Laurie Romey. The Board Executive is now Michael Lewis – President, Avery Raskin – Vice-President, Doug Querns – Treasurer, and Paul Bowes – Secretary. ASBC wishes to thank outgoing provincial Board members Shirley Ilic and Carol Baird-Krul for their service and valuable contributions to the Society.



A few of our Board members (left to right): Jamie Collins, Brian Davies, and Guy Murphy.



This year's annual general meeting was held at the Wesburn Community Centre in Burnaby, BC.

Call for Nominations

Outstanding Practitioners in Autism for 2001/2002

The tradition continues! Last year, we asked our members to tell us about practitioners who have gone the extra mile to support people with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families and we were ecstatic to have so many wonderful submissions. We've decided to do it again this year!

Tell us about practitioners, such as teachers, special education assistants, principals, educational consultants, doctors, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, therapists, etc. We also have a category to honor someone from the media who has excelled in reporting about ASD news and views in positive ways.

Please submit your nominations to Clair Schuman by mail, fax or e-mail. No phone calls, please! Tell us the practitioner's name, contact information, and why you wish to nominate them. Deadline for nominations is August 1, 2002. We plan to honour the selected practitioners during Autism Awareness Month in October 2002.

Interim Early Intensive Intervention Funding Option

Clair Schuman, Director, Programs and Services

As we go to press, the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) has announced a redesign of the Individualized Funding for Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention.

The new name of this program is Interim Early Intensive Intervention Funding Option, and it is intended to provide funds to families for treatment of their child, age 6 and under, with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The new program will be administered in a way similar to the AT HOME Respite Program. Qualifying families will complete a simple application form, provide a treatment plan within 90 days to their social worker, employ (or contract with) a service provider(s) from a list of qualified service providers, and maintain records and receipts. Families will receive a monthly payment from MCFD and will submit a record of quarterly expenses to their social worker.

MCFD offices will be mailing out information to qualifying families explaining the details of the program. A qualifying family must have a child age 6 and under with a diagnosed Autism Spectrum Disorder and a multi-disciplinary assessment.

Families must register (or be currently registered) with their local MCFD Community Living Services to Children office.



Freida Lalji, practicum student, with Clair Schuman, Director, Programs and Services

The Autism Society of BC has agreed to provide an information package for qualifying parents that will include a list of qualified service providers in the province, information about becoming an employer, articles that describe research on best practices in autism treatment for preschoolers, and information about ASBC.

This package will be distributed to families by their MCFD social worker. The list of qualified service providers will be continually updated and will appear on the ASBC website as it is updated.

ASBC will not be evaluating service providers beyond

requesting that they provide proof that they have the minimal qualifications as set out by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

ASBC will not be administering this program, nor will ASBC be determining the eligibility of families or administering funds to families. This remains the responsibility of the Ministry for Children and Family Development.

Families should contact their MCFD social worker or consult the Ministry for Children and Family Development website at www.wcf.gov.bc.ca/special_needs.htm for further information.

“ASBC will not be administering this program, nor will ASBC be determining the eligibility of families or administering funds to families. This remains the responsibility of the Ministry for Children and Family Development.”



Facilitators Needed

ASBC welcomes your inquiry if you would like to apply to be a facilitator in your community. Interested parents of children with ASD can contact Clair Schuman at the provincial office by phone at 604-434-0880 or by e-mail at cschuman@autismbc.ca.

www.wcf.gov.bc.ca/special_needs.htm

ASBC News

Moving On

ASBC wishes to thank **Kory Webb**, Office Manager, for her hard work and commitment to the Society. Kory has resigned from her position to see what other interests she can pursue at this time in her life. We wish her much success in all her future endeavours.

We also thank **Perviz Madon**, Office Assistant, whose position has been eliminated due to restructuring. We thank Perviz for her



Ted Kawamoto, ASBC's ever-diligent Accountant, and a member of the hiring committees.

dedication and her graciousness and are delighted that she will stay connected to ASBC as one of our Bingo volunteers.

New Staff

Over the past few months, we have re-evaluated our job descriptions and you will notice a few changes in job titles (please see inside front cover). These changes better reflect the actual work that staff performs on a daily basis.

ASBC is pleased to welcome two new staff members to the team, **Marie Gauthier** and **Marianne Hanson**. Marie Gauthier joins ASBC as the new Communications Coordinator and brings considerable experience in web site re-design, software integration and member database management to the team. Marie was recently with the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils where she was the Information Systems, Communications and Events

Coordinator.

Marie will also be participating as a member of our Communications Committee, chaired by Board member Avery Raskin, who, along with Board member Guy Murphy and the Executive Director Donna McKenna, will be examining how we can better utilize the web site to communicate more efficiently. Stay tuned as the web site changes unfold.

We also welcome **Marianne Hanson** as the new **Director of Fundraising**. Marianne brings over 27 years of fundraising experience in the non-profit sector to ASBC including extensive capital and annual campaigns. As we strive to reach our strategic goal of less

dependency on government funding to increase our financial autonomy, Marianne will be working hard in the months ahead to develop a comprehensive fundraising plan for the Society. As a long-time member of the Rotary Club and an accredited fundraising professional, we anticipate that Marianne will utilize her extensive network and skill sets to help us realize our goals.

Thanks to Board member Michael Lewis, Chair of the Human Resources/Infrastructure Committee, and staff members Clair Schuman, Ted Kawamoto and Ron Van der Mark, who, along with the Executive Director Donna McKenna, participated in the hiring committees.

SUMMER OFFICE HOURS!

During the months of July and August, the ASBC office hours will be Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4:30 pm. We will return to our normal office hours of 9 am to 5 pm on September 3. Also, please note that the office is closed between noon and 1 pm each day for the lunch hour.

Participate in Research on Sight Word Learning

Brenda Fossett is currently working towards her Masters of Arts Degree in Special Education at the University of British Columbia. She is interested in conducting a study regarding sight word learning in children with developmental disabilities. She would like to compare the effectiveness of two methods for teaching sight word reading. One method involves the use of words and pictures together; the other method asks children to match words to pictures.

She is hoping to recruit four children, age 7 or older, diagnosed with a developmental disability such as autism and/or mental retardation. She is looking for children for whom English is the first language and who are able to engage in one-on-one instruction for one hour, with breaks, without displaying problem behaviour. In addition, the children should

not have sight word reading skills and should have a history of failure in learning to read. Participation in this research study will require you to bring your child to the Sunnyhill Health Centre for Children (3644 Slocan Street, Vancouver) for intervention sessions five times per week, for six consecutive weeks during July and August 2002.

If you are interested in having your child participate in this research study, please contact Brenda Fossett directly at 604-728-5891 or bfossett@shaw.ca. Alternatively, you may contact her advisor, Dr. Pat Mirenda, at 604-822-6296 or pat.mirenda@ubc.ca.

If you have any questions or would like more information, you may contact either one of them.

Branch News – Nanaimo

Marja Jorgenson, Branch Coordinator, Nanaimo



Branch Coordinator Marja Jorgenson (2nd from right), along with volunteers who helped make the Litter Day a success.

ASBC Nanaimo Litter Day Fundraiser: “Partners in a Cleaner Community”

As coordinator of the Nanaimo Branch, I would like to thank Nanaimo Board members, Brenda Krastel and Patrick Murphy, for organising a successful litter day fundraising event. Through the City of Nanaimo Roadside Litter Program, the Branch raised \$250 and, at the same time, helped keep Nanaimo clean.

Volunteers from Brenda and Pat’s work, friends, parents and individuals with autism helped pick up litter on Northfield and Estevan Roads. Bob Therriault, a parent of a child with autism, created an informative report that aired on Shaw Cable, and Tim Horton’s provided piping hot coffee. On behalf of ASBC, I would like to thank everyone who participated in making the two days a great success. Our next Roadside Litter Program event will be in the early fall. Hope to see you there.

As parents and persons interested in supporting people with ASD, we sometimes overlook some of the easiest and most informative ways of supporting our loved ones. As parents, we are tired, very busy, and have limited time to give to planning and participating in fundraising endeavours.

An often-overlooked area of fundraising potential is our places of employment. Many employers do give to charities and would like to support charities that aid their employees. Employees, like Brenda and Patrick, who work for the City of Nanaimo, were aware of the Roadside Litter Program available to community groups to raise money. The employees of TELUS and Hydro have generously donated funds for office equipment, alerted to these needs by employees whose children have an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Should your place of employment have a fundraising program and be looking for an organisation to support, or if

you have an idea for a fundraiser, please contact Patrick Murphy, Nanaimo Fundraising Chair, by e-mail at pmurph@shaw.ca or call the ASBC Nanaimo office at 714-0801. We can provide information and presentations about the Society.

Effective Advocacy Workshop

An enthusiastic group of parents and family members met in Nanaimo on May 25 to participate in an Effective Advocacy Workshop. Parents were introduced to the resources they can access, as well as effective advocacy skills and strategies. It was a warm day of caring, sharing, and networking with other parents and family members. I would especially like to thank Janet Philips from BCCPAC for her information and contributions during the workshop. Another Effective Advocacy workshop with an emphasis on education is slated for late September in Nanaimo.

The Get Real Program

As an off-shoot of the Get Real family support program, pre-teens and teenagers will be meeting every first Sunday of the month from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. This is an opportunity for the teenagers to build on and practice their social skills in a recreational setting, while their parents can meet and discuss ideas and issues surrounding their teenagers and the transition process to adulthood. The teens have already participated in two bowling events at Brechin Lanes. It is hoped that the teens will start to generate ideas for future activities.

As we are reading this newsletter, the younger children and their parents will have enjoyed a fun morning at Yesteryear Farm. Petting and feeding the animals, a hayride, and a picnic lunch were on the agenda.

An Oasis Day: A Time for Self Renewal and Self Care

As a parent and support worker for people with ASD and their families, it is very easy to overlook a balance of activities in one’s life. When you have a child with autism, that child often becomes the central, consuming focus in one’s life, causing other areas to suffer.

In April, I attended a Self Renewal and Self Care workshop delivered by Susan Phelan. As a nurse and former nursing instructor, Susan is committed to teaching caregivers the importance of taking care of themselves to avoid burn-out and poor health. A diverse group of caregivers participated in a number of practical, hands-on activities to tend the mind, body, spirit, and heart. All the participants decided to meet again next year for a weekend of renewal and rejuvenation.

Speak Out!

The following Letter to the Editor from one of ASBC's members was published in the Penticton Herald on Thursday, April 18, 2002.

ASBC welcomes submissions to Speak Out

Employment Wanted

Cantonese/English-speaking student, who is a member of the Autism Society of BC and a self-advocate, is seeking part-time employment with an understanding employer.

Please call Alton at (604) 727-5252 if you have a position available.

Dear Editor:
April 12 was a day to remember. I had to get my kids off to school and phone my social worker at Community Living Services.

I touch base, inquiring if I could bump up my daycare hours, because stress is high again and it's hard to manage two special needs kids, as well as my own disability.

Unfortunately, my social worker is given the ugly job of being the messenger for Gordon Campbell and the Liberals.

"I need to inform you that at the end of May you don't qualify for daycare subsidy anymore," she said.

Only families with two working parents are allowed subsidy.

The knot starts in my stomach again. How will we manage? I am on disability pension; my husband works a full-time job and two part-time jobs to support us.

What do I tell my children?

Will they understand?

Will they be scared?

What if mommy has a breakdown and has to go to the hospital again?

Who will look after us?

Why are we being picked on?

It's not fair, mommy says, but you see we are a family of special needs, we don't count.

We are second-class citizens. Do you know what that means?

We come last.

Why? Because Mr. Campbell and the government don't understand living with disabilities.

It's kind of like the person who looks away or crosses to the other side of the road when a disabled person is trying to get their attention, as they walk toward them with an unsteady gait, just wanting directions to the coffee shop.

Are we disabled people? Yes, we are, but in a different way. Why doesn't Mr. Campbell and the government like us?

I guess it's because we are weaker in some ways and it costs some money to help us out. Don't worry, God loves us no matter who we are.

Mr. Campbell, I ask you to look into the eyes of a disabled child, see how they look to you with innocence, hope and determination.

That's one of the beautiful things about a child: innocence gives them the ability to still have hope when they are pushed down.

When they get pushed down again, they still get up with determination.

How long does it take to break them?

I don't know. Maybe you have the answer, Mr. Campbell.

Lorraine Cristofanetti
Kelowna

Branch News – Prince George

Canadian Forest Products Donation

Our thanks go out to Canadian Forest Products' Prince George Sawmill's mechanical shop employees. This group has chosen ASBC to be the future recipients of their bottle return proceeds. Thanks for "pitching in" and making a difference. We gratefully accept your first contribution of \$13.00.

Additions to Resource Library

Our resource library is receiving new books, thanks to the generosity of the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation. An updated listing will be available upon request. Families are urged to take advantage of our free lending library in Vancouver by calling Pam or Melanie at 1-888-434-0880.

Local School District Changes

With cuts to the education budget due to a decline in enrollment, discontinuation of square footage grants, and reclassification of levels of funding for special needs, school boards are opting to close a number of schools in their districts. Local information is available by calling Heather at (250) 561-0881.

Community Group Meetings

A reminder that our community group meets from 7 to 9 pm on the second Wednesday of each month, in room 105-107, at Prince George Regional Hospital. At the June meeting, members will determine if July and August meetings will be conducted. We look forward to meeting you there.

Fundraising News



ASBC Executive Director Donna McKenna, and Pam Collins, Resource Information Worker – Library, with a few of the 160 employees of Canada Safeway at Oakridge Mall during the Charity Introduction Day held on April 27.



ASBC Executive Director Donna McKenna, with Canada Safeway employee Angela Jang, who suggested that ASBC be the charity of choice for this year's campaign. Thank you, Angela!

They raised \$300 within two hours for that effort alone.

We would not be the recipients of their largesse were it not for Safeway employee Angela Jang. Each year, staff bring forward the names of charities they think deserve to be supported for the service they provide to communities. Angela came forward at the staff meeting and talked about autism and the challenges she faces each and every day as a parent of a son with ASD. There were a number of equally worthwhile charities discussed at that meeting, but Angela won the hearts and support of her colleagues. The 160 employees of store #110 decided they wanted to show their support for ASBC and all the parents who, like Angela, courageously deal with such an often misunderstood and challenging disorder on a daily basis.

The Safeway fundraising campaign will continue until the end of September. Their goal is to raise \$20,000 for ASBC and, as of May 24, they have already raised a total of **\$12,500**. We are deeply grateful for this support.

When meeting Angela for the first time she expressed her gratitude to ASBC and said that the increased public and employee awareness of autism has given her a tremendous sense of support in her workplace—a true example of one person making a difference and the maxim that “what goes around, comes around.”

A special thank you to Nadine, Angela and the entire

CANADA SAFEWAY

The employees of Canada Safeway, Store #110 at Oakridge Mall in Vancouver, voted to select the Autism Society of BC as their charity of choice for their annual in-house fundraising campaign. Each year, the Safeway employees decide which charity they will support through a variety of activities: book sales, hot dog sales, gift basket raffles, Show You Care hearts, candy sales, and the sale of entertainment books. Last year, Store #110 raised the most funds for their selected charity out of 80 participating Safeway stores throughout BC.

Led by Fundraising Team Leader Nadine Stevenson, the employees have created some unique ways to raise money, have fun and involve customers. They even tied an assistant manager to a chair with saran wrap and over the store intercom asked for donations before he could be cut loose.

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Fundraising News

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staff team of Canada Safeway, Store #110 at Oakridge Mall, for their support, hard work and dedication. Your support and encouragement have been amazing...go Team!

THE CANADIAN PROGRESS CLUB

The Canadian Progress Club of Greater Vancouver presented ASBC with a cheque for \$1,500 on May 22, 2002 during an awards ceremony held at Cheers restaurant in North Vancouver. These funds will go towards the **Summer Reimbursement Program**, as we continue our fundraising efforts for this much-needed program. Our appreciation and thanks to all the Club members for their ongoing support of ASBC.

CKNW ORPHANS' FUND

The CKNW Orphans' Fund has given ASBC \$4,000 towards the **Summer Reimbursement Program**. Their long-term support of this program has been tremendous. We thank everyone at CKNW for the contribution they make each and every year, helping us to ensure that children with ASD are able to participate in summer recreational activities.



ASBC Executive Director Donna McKenna (seated) with Nadine Stevenson, Fundraising Team Leader extraordinaire, of Canada Safeway #110, Oakridge Mall, Vancouver.

Info Sharing

NORTHERN DIRECTORY OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

As noted in our last newsletter, Micelle Carreiro, Independent Planner for the Kindergarten Transition Funding Program in northwestern BC, is compiling a resource directory for northern BC to provide parents with contact information and rates for speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, behaviour interventionists, ABA services providers, etc. If you wish to be included in the directory, please contact Michelle at her new e-mail address: emmons@magnet.com.

ANCA

ANCA Foundation's 3rd annual conference and fundraiser, "Discovering Our Future," will be held July 12-14, 2002 in Maple Ridge. Pre-registration deadline: May 30, 2002. For registration and brochure, contact Rhys @ 604-879-1136 or e-mail anca_autism@telus.net or ANCA@naturallyautistic.com. Featured guest workshop facilitators:

- **Dr. Lars Perner**, Assistant Professor of Marketing at the University of California (Riverside) and has visited at the University of Maryland and George Washington University. Dr. Perner holds a PhD in marketing, an MBA, and a BA in political science and psychology.

- **Mr. Bill Julien**, author of *Carousels and Storms*, entrepreneur and founder of Maestro Media, father of a 14-year-old. These inspiring and successful autistic individuals have spent decades learning about how they communicate and interact with the world around them, sharing a wealth of knowledge for our local autistic community to gain from.

This conference is for autistic people, their families, support care workers, service providers and educators to help realize/facilitate the potential for the future of autistic people in the areas of self-development, self-esteem and confidence building, workplace experience, accessing applicable and appropriate job placements, and how to develop talents into self-employment.

RIDGE MEADOWS FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Karen De Long, Family Support Worker for the Ridge Meadows Association for Community Living invites any family in Ridge Meadows who would like to advise Ridge Meadows families about a project aimed at providing peer and other support to families with children who have extra needs. She looks forward to sharing information and resources, as well as offering support and advocacy, to families who have children of all ages. Call her at 604-467-8700, extension 234.

This is shared for informational purposes only. ASBC does not endorse or screen products or service providers.

Library News

Melanie Kinsey – Resource Information Worker, Library

As you may have heard, **The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation** for Autism granted our library \$20,000 US, enabling us to acquire around 250 titles so far. Besides ordering many just-published selections, we also acquired more copies of our most popular books and videos. This will mean fewer waitlists for “favourites.” We are really thrilled with each new shipment of material; it all looks excellent!

As we are still receiving, processing and cataloguing material, not all items are available as of yet. Please be patient as we catalogue this big shipment, and bear in mind that once we publish a list of new titles in the newsletter, they become instantly popular, which might mean you'll have to wait! I think once you read some of these titles, you will join me in cheering for Doug Flutie and his family.



Below is a partial list of some of the new titles, with a brief annotation. Our next newsletter will provide a full list of titles and some reviews, so stay tuned!

Teaching Language to Children with Autism or Other Developmental Disabilities (Book) and ***Teaching Verbal Behaviour*** (video), by Mark L. Sundberg and James W. Partington.

This book, assessment form, and video are based on the doctors' method of teaching language (verbal behaviour) on an Applied Behavioural Analysis model. The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) is an assessment scale Partington and Sundberg have developed. The book and video teach the listener how to use this scale. Their teaching method, based on work by B.F. Skinner, seems to be increasingly popular.

Autism & PDD: Adolescent Social Skills Lessons and Autism & PDD: Primary Social Skills Lessons, by Pam Britton Reese and Nena Challenner.

Volumes for adolescents include: Health & Hygiene, Interacting, Vocational, Secondary Schools, and Managing Behavior. For primary students, volumes include: Getting Along, Community, Home, School, Behavior.

Wow! Parents on staff love these books, and I am also very impressed. They are, essentially, simple social stories with accompanying pictures. The books not only include the social stories but also have lesson plans, a quick behavioural assessment form, and a data-taking chart to track a student's progress. We have two sets of the books for adolescents and two primary sets, and we plan on acquiring several more. To be fair to members, each member may borrow only one book in these sets at a time. We are hoping to ease this restriction when we acquire more of these terrific books.

Autism & PDD: Concept Development, by Pam Britton Reese and Nena C. Challenner.

This is another superb set of books. The series includes: Food, Toys and Entertainment, Animals, Clothing, and Household Items. The authors provide material around each concept, including a picture, illustrated declarative sentences, a list of questions, and a generalization page. For example, to teach about what a cat is, they provide a big labeled illustration of a cat, several pages with illustrated, informative sentences (“A cat is a pet,” “A baby cat is called a kitten,” etc.), a list of Yes–No questions (“Does a cat have whiskers?”) and Wh- and How questions (“What sound can a cat make?”). The books are developed by an SLP and a preschool specialist, who clearly know how students with ASDs learn. I'm sorry, but the one book at a time rule applies here, too.

Special Educator's Complete Guide to 109 Diagnostic Tests: How to Select & Interpret Tests, Use Results in IEPs, and Remediate Specific Difficulties, by Roger Pierangelo and George Giuliani.

The authors, both psychologists, provide general test information on each of 109 tests, as well as a description of the test, scoring information, and their assessment of the test's strengths and weaknesses. Though the title suggests this book is meant for educators, its concise information and easy readability make this an excellent resource for parents and others trying to decipher the meaning of test acronyms and scores.

Call for Guest Book Reviewers

Do you have Asperger's Syndrome or high-functioning autism? Are you the spouse of an “Aspie”? We invite you to review one of our new books from an expert's point of view. We will lend you a book or video from our new collection and invite you to send in a review at the beginning of August. Your review will be published in our October newsletter, so all of our members will benefit from your opinion. This is a great chance for you to add to our understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders and how authors write about them. In addition, all reviewers will qualify for a random draw for a \$30.00 gift certificate to Indigo Books. If you are interested, please call the Society or e-mail us before June 28, and we'll mail out the book or video along with an optional review form. We look forward to your participation!

* The term “Aspie” is in wide use among the Asperger's Syndrome (AS) community and is a way individuals with AS often describe themselves.

State of the HART: Habilitative Achievements in Research and Treatment for Mental Health in Developmental Disabilities

Marja Jorgensen, Branch Coordinator, Nanaimo



The Hart Conference was three days of intensive mini-workshops covering a range of disciplines from genetic research to the legal realities for people with dual diagnoses. The following workshops stood out and were of particular interest to me.

Unravelling the Mystery of Autism: From Genotyping and Phenotyping to Prospective Identification

With the advent of the Genome project and my personal beliefs that ASD has a genetic component waiting to be discovered, I found all the presentations on genetic research fascinating. It is comforting to know that over 50 researchers in Canada, some in BC, are working on unravelling the genetic factors that contribute to ASD.

Of particular interest in this workshop, presented by Susan Lewis, were two studies: "The Epidemiology of ASD" to create a database of persons with ASD and the "Study of Families with more than one child on the Autism Spectrum" to determine gene markers that could possibly predict, with a simple blood test, future siblings at risk for ASD (www.autismresearch.ca for further information).

The Mental Well-being of Elementary School Children with Developmental Disabilities in Contemporary Classrooms

This interesting study of 1,114 grade six and seven students was completed in Victoria, with the goal of looking at the physical and mental well-being of children with disabilities. Lily Dyson (of the University of Victoria, Department of Education) looked at the state of social isolation and self-concept of students with disabilities. She found that children with disabilities were less frequently chosen to be playmates by their peers and were perceived by their peers to need more help. Children with disabilities reported that they had less self-competence than regular children. Lily concluded that intervention to improve social status and self-confidence was needed in the elementary school programs.

It must be noted that Lily's study and sampling of students covered the broad range of disabilities. Many disabilities do not have the same communication and social deficits as Autism Spectrum Disorder, which places the social goals of our children at greater risk.

Tips From a Godmother's Handbook: Building Local and National Support for People with Developmental Disabilities

The health care needs of persons with developmental disabilities and dual diagnoses are often overlooked, causing a Cinderella effect in this sector of the healthcare system. Elliot Goldner (University of British Columbia, Department of Psychiatry) suggested a list of practical actions such as lobbying decision and policy makers, grass roots action, education of new professionals in supporting developmental disabilities by using both a balance of brain-power and emotions, which can be undertaken by the community at large and the healthcare professions.

Autism 2002 — “The Neurobiology of Autism: Past, Present and Future”

Heather Borland, Branch Coordinator, Prince George

The following notes were scribed from the above-named presentation by Dr. Margaret Bauman, an Associate Professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical School, Associate Pediatrician and Assistant Neurologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, Director of LAD-DERS (Learning and Developmental Disabilities Evaluation and Rehabilitation Service) and co-editor of the book, *The Neurobiology of Autism*, © 1994, John Hopkins University Press.

Dr. Bauman and her team of lab research personnel are interested in the study of microscopic brain structure in autism, Rett Syndrome, and neurological development disorders.

The team autopsied and compared brains of 30 individuals with autism and 30 neurologically typical individuals. Evidence indicates the ASD brains were typical in size and weight at birth. Between 2.5 to 5 years, however, ASD brains were found to be between 100 and 200 grams heavier, with increased volume. And after about age 18, adult ASD brains were 100 to 200 grams lighter in weight.

The cerebral cortex was found to be identical in ASD and typical brains, but the ASD brain appears to have problems in two areas: the limbic system and cerebellar circuits and their relationship to the brain stem. Interestingly, the subtle difference in ASD brains doesn't appear to be brain damage or degenerative work in progress.

Dr. Bauman's studies on monkeys show the amygdala is an area that controls emotions and behaviour and is related to the process of learning by experience. The hippocampus, performing memory and learning functions, is made of very tiny neurons and is located on both sides of the brain. It is believed these two parts of the limbic system have a role in autism.

The neural tube, out of which the future brain will arise, is only just closing at 20 to 24 days of gestation. Autism-linked research suggests there may be an interruption of brain stem development at this stage, resulting in a shorter brain stem. Early injury could disturb the development of subsequently developing structures.

Our brain contains some 100 billion brain nerve cells, also known as neurons. Neurons are initially produced in the centre of the developing brain. Dr. Bauman's autopsies revealed that ASD brains have about 90 percent more nerve cells than typical specimens. These nerve cells are typical in formation but have failed to mature, therefore growing to only one-third of the mature cell size, and with reduced dendrite branching. Incoming signals are received in the dendrites, passing down or migrating into the cell body, and then through the main stalk, or axon of the neuron.

A family of proteins, known as neurotrophic factors, is responsible for the growth and survival of nerve cells during development and for maintaining healthy adult neurons. These proteins are present in early development of the nervous system, and for the initial growth and development of neurons in the peripheral and central nervous systems.

These neurotrophic factors act by attaching to receptors on the nerve terminals and on the cell body containing the receiving neuron. For normal functioning, these neurons must migrate outward to the brain's cortex, the outer layer, and other structures. Migration is a process that relies on chemical communication between different cells.

Groups of chemical messengers known as neuro-transmitters carry out communication in the brain and body. As the signal reaches the end of one neuron, a neurotransmitter is released, signaling the message to flow onto other neurons acting as receivers.

It was found in the monkey study that neurons often cling to long cells of fibers called glia. The glia fibers act as a highway for the neurons to travel through the brain to their final destination. They then attach to a site on the neuron known as the receptor site.

A single receiving neuron has thousand of receptor sites, capable of receiving many messages at once. This neuron must decipher the incoming signal and determine whether to pass along the information or not. If continued, the signal is then carried through to its final destination, emitting axons, which are the neurons' elongated, fiber-like extensions to the cell body, telling the cell what to do (imagine it looking like a piece of broccoli, if you will.).

It is here at the outer cortex that Dr. Bauman's autopsies revealed ASD brains differ by having an approximately 90 percent decrease in Purkinje cell dendrites covering the outer layer. Whatever caused this reduction occurred prior to 30 weeks gestation.

There is still the need for more research to decipher the correlation between brain abnormalities and Autism Spectrum Disorders.



Autism 2002 — “Early Recognition of ASDs”

Clair Schuman, Director, Programs & Services

On May 2, 3 and 4, I attended **Autism 2002** in Kamloops. Jamie McPartland, a doctoral student in Child Clinical Psychology at the University of Washington, provided an interesting session describing their research into early recognition of autism. Dr. Geraldine Dawson heads the project.



McPartland gave a brief overview of the project, which involves the use of family home videos of first birthday party celebrations of children, some later diagnosed with autism and others who later received no diagnosis, as well as another home video study of children 8 to 10 months old who were later diagnosed with autism. The videos were observed and coded for differences in social behaviour, joint attention differences, and failure to orient to name.

Conclusions from the home video studies revealed that: (1) there were fewer differences in social behaviour apparent at 8 to 10 months relative to one year; (2) joint attention differ-

ences (not evident until the first year) may be important diagnostic indicators; and (3) failure to orient to name appears to be one of the earliest emerging symptoms of autism.

A third home video study replicated the previous first birthday tape and attempted to disentangle the effects of developmental delay. Four groups of infants were compared: those with autism only (normal IQ), autism plus developmental delay, developmental delay only, and typically developing. This study replicated the findings from the first home video study and found that social behaviours such as orienting to name and looking at others are intact in infants with developmental delay alone but are impaired in infants with autism.

These studies pointed to an emergence of autistic symptoms from birth to 15 months of age and, therefore, with further study, identification of autism may be possible prior to a child's first birthday.

Further information is available from Dr. Geraldine Dawson, Autism Research Program, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

Canadian Association of Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists Conference

Pam Collins, Resource Information Worker – Library

Dr. Amy Wetherby, Ph.D. of the Department of Communication Disorders at Florida State University, is the Project Director of FIRST WORDS – Model Demonstration Project. She is also a developer of the SCERTS (Social, Communication, Emotional, Regulation, Transactional, Support) Intervention Model.

At the (CASLPA) Conference held April 24–27, 2002 in Victoria, BC, Dr. Wetherby made a fabulous, two-day presentation to an audience of speech and language pathologists, audiologists, occupational therapists, autism interventionists, educators and parents. The focus was on early identification, assessment and intervention for young children (0 – 5 years) with Autism Spectrum Disorders.



On the first day, Dr. Wetherby presented video case examples and discussed the core deficits in joint attention and symbol use. She clearly demonstrated the profile distinguishing those children with ASD and those with delayed language development. She then presented the findings of a committee report commissioned by the National Academy of Sciences on Education Interventions for Children with Autism – birth to eight years.

One of the many interesting conclusions was that behavioural and developmental approaches have become increasingly integrated. There are many strategies that are now common between the developmental and the contemporary ABA styles.

On the second day, Dr. Wetherby went into further detail discussing meaningful assessment and evaluation strategies. She discussed the principles of evidence-based practice and introduced the SCERTS Intervention Model. She closed her presentation with strategies for communication and peer interaction.

Community Groups

Our community groups continue to be a major source of information and networking for family members and others interested in Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Group facilitators are members of the Autism Society of BC, but you do not have to be a member to attend, nor is there any cost to you.

Call your local facilitator for specific information for the group in your area!

Delta

We say goodbye to Stacey del Fabbro from our Delta group. Stacey is making the move back home to Ontario. We wish her well and thank her for many years of work with the group. We welcome Forrest Wilton and Brenda Viala who will continue the group with the same commitment and humour, we're sure!

Ridge Meadows

Our Ridge Meadows facilitator, Amy Cocking, is moving on to other pursuits. It has been a pleasure having you on board, Amy! Replacing Amy is Nancy Auersperg.

Nancy is a long-time member of the Ridge Meadows group and looks forward to taking on the leadership role with this active group.

Burnaby/Vancouver & Kamloops

Also retiring from co-facilitating are Kelly Sheldon from the Burnaby/Vancouver group and Glynis Rodrigues from the Kamloops group. We thank you both for the work you have done for your groups. Dawn Steele will continue to facilitate the Vancouver group and Betty Anne Garreck will continue with the Kamloops group.

Nanaimo

Nanaimo has a new facilitator, Alexandria Stuart. She'll be replacing Marja Jorgensen, our Nanaimo Branch Coordinator, who has been leading the group in anticipation of a volunteer replacement. Welcome, Alexandria!

Mission/Abbotsford

Joining the Mission Abbotsford group as a co-facilitator is Leslie Bowling. She and Virginia Renaud have been sharing responsibilities for this group for some time, so now her position as co-facilitator is official!

LOWER MAINLAND

Vancouver	Dawn Steele	604-874-1480
Chilliwack	Shelley Marochi	604-794-3533
Delta	Forest Wilton	604-591-2583
	Brenda Viala	604-940-3882
South Langley	Elma Kozak	604-534-0207
North Langley	Carole McCarthy	604-888-4995
Mission & Abbotsford	Virginia Renaud	604-820-2645
	Leslie Bowling	604-850-7260
TriCities	Clair Schuman	604-434-0880
North Shore	Anne Sulzberger	604-929-7017
Ridge Meadows	Nancy Auersperg	604-467-3407
Richmond	Pam Collins	607-277-2454
Surrey	Laurie Romey	604-951-2880
Mandarin-Speaking	Carol Ywan	604-594-8986

VANCOUVER ISLAND

Campbell River	Judy Hollywood-Bonnet	250-923-5654
Cowichan Valley	Aisha Sawchuk	250-743-0367
Nanaimo	Alexandria Stuart	250-754-3732
Port Alberni	Cheryl Magnussen	250-724-7233

Victoria Community Contact - Arlene Zuckernick is the person to call if you need information about ASBC activities and you live in the Victoria area. Arlene's number is 250-592-0911 or email arlenez@shaw.ca

INTERIOR & NORTHERN BC

West Kootenay	Dave & Sue Henke	250-367-6373
East Kootenay	Mike Fisher	250-427-9616
Kamloops	Betty Ann Garreck	250-376-5495

Central Okanagan	Lorraine Cristofanetti	250-862-3162
	COCDA (ext. 523)	250-768-1144
North Okanagan	Cindy Methot	250-542-5213
	Lorraine Donald	250-549-1281
Penticton	Shirley Bergeron	250-494-5241
Kitimat	Karen Jonkman	250-632-7947
Prince George	Heather Borland	250-963-7926
	Louise Blais	250-964-4870
Prince Rupert	Larissa Goruk	250-624-5984
Peace River Region	Zita Cole	250-788-2989
Terrace	Christine Cook	250-638-0485
Bulkley Valley Community Contact – Call Jan Morrison-Hines at 250-847-5740.		

OTHER GROUPS WELCOMING ASBC MEMBERS

- **Parents Support Group for Families of Mentally Handicapped Adults Living at Home.** Call Gwen Lee or Janice Reithofer, 604-321-6253.
- **Parent Discussion Group focusing on ABA programs** (Lower Mainland), run by F.E.A.T. of BC. Call Jean Lewis, 604-925-4401.
- **Victoria Society for Children with Autism.** Presidebt: Michael Yarr, 250-385-3862.
- **Parents for Inclusive Education** (Powell River). Call April Sweet, 604-485-5885, or Linda Leutz, 604-485-5386.
- **Parents of Exceptional People Prayer & Support Group** (Dawson Creek). Call Jennifer Van Spronsen, 250-782-8342.
- **Gateway Parents Advocacy Group.** Call Karen Philipchuk, 604-535-0903.
- **Canadian Chinese Autism Association of BC.** Call Hugo Chan, 604-641-6620

Autism Society of British Columbia

Summer Reimbursement Program 2002

To qualify for the Summer Reimbursement Program, you must:

- 1) be a current member of the Autism Society of BC (priority will be given to members residing in BC or the Yukon);
- 2) have limited financial resources;
- 3) have limited or no services in your community; and
- 4) have made a contribution of time and support to ASBC, e.g., worked at a bingo, had a friend volunteer on your behalf, facilitated a support group, wrote an article for the newsletter, sent a thank-you card and/or photo for last year's reimbursement, or participated in other volunteering or awareness efforts.

Those who qualify can receive up to a maximum of \$250 in reimbursements when an original receipt is sent in. The Autism Society accepts applications from around the province and will distribute the reimbursements fairly throughout British Columbia. *The number and amount of reimbursements are determined by ASBC's success in raising funds for this program.*

HOW TO APPLY

Members who wish to be considered for reimbursement of summer program fees must fill in the Summer Reimbursement Application Form and mail or fax it to the Autism Society of BC, #301 – 3701 E. Hastings Street, Burnaby, BC V5C 2H6, postmarked by **June 28, 2002**. Fax (604) 434-0801. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

IMPORTANT!

Please remember that only current ASBC members qualify for this program, and it is your responsibility to ensure that your membership is current. Last year, over 145 reimbursements were provided throughout the province. Please be sure to include *all* information requested under services and income.

HOW TO BE REIMBURSED?

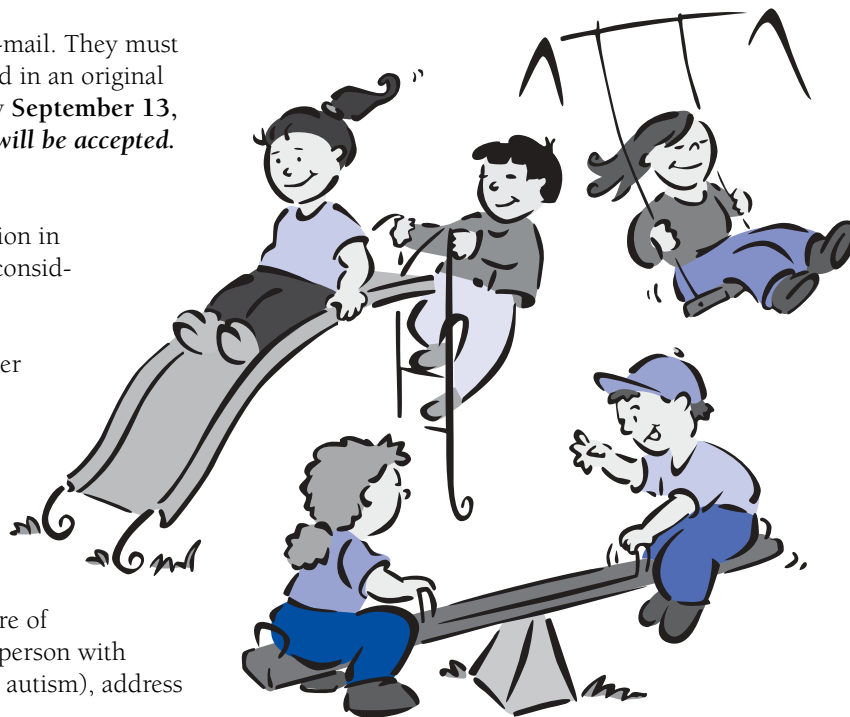
Members who are accepted will be notified by mail or e-mail. They must pay the recreation fees for the summer program and send in an original receipt to the Autism Society of BC, Vancouver office, by **September 13, 2002** at 5 pm to be reimbursed. **Only original receipts will be accepted.**

WHAT PROGRAMS WILL QUALIFY?

Any program or expense related to enhancing participation in summer activities for an individual with autism will be considered, as long as it is not part of an ongoing, year-round program.

Overnight camps, community centre programs, soccer or other athletic camps, computer courses, art courses, and similar programs would all qualify. Fees for a childcare worker or one-to-one worker also qualify, as long as the worker is not directly related to the child/adult (e.g., brother, parent).

An original receipt must be submitted that includes: name of childcare worker or one-to-one worker, number of hours worked and total cost, signature of worker, address and phone number of worker, name of person with autism, name of parent or guardian (if not an adult with autism), address and phone number of guardian.





Autism Society of British Columbia

Summer Reimbursement Program 2002

APPLICATION FORM

Please submit the application by mail, postmarked no later than June 28, 2002, or fax it to us at (604) 434-0801.

Please fill out one form for each child with autism.

Date of Application _____

Name of Child _____

Family Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

City/Town _____

Phone Number _____

Child's Age? _____

E-mail: _____

Family Contact _____

Phone Number _____

Current Membership with ASBC? YES NO

Please describe other services currently supporting this child (e.g. At Home Program, etc.)

Is there any additional information that you would like to give us:

Total income earned by all family members, before taxes, last year:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$21,000 – \$30,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$31,000 – \$40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$41,000 or more |

Family size, including all dependents: _____

Certification and Authorization

I certify that all information given on this application is correct. I understand this information is confidential and will be used only to verify eligibility for the Autism Society of BC Summer Program reimbursement and will not be shared with any other agency or private individual for any reason.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Autism Society of British Columbia

Autism ... a part of our world, not a world apart

301 – 3701 E. Hastings Street, Burnaby, BC V5C 2H6

Phone: (604) 434-0880 Fax: (604) 434-0801

Toll-free: 1-888-437-0880

E-mail: info@autismbc.ca Web: www.autismbc.ca



OUR LIFELINE IS MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS! YOU CAN HELP!

- \$ 5.00 Person with Autism/Asperger's
- \$ 5.00 Student/Low Income
- \$ 25.00 Family
- \$ 25.00 Professional Individual
- \$ 100.00 Corporation/Group (school or non-profit)
- \$ 500.00 Lifetime membership
- \$ _____ Donation (optional)

\$ _____ Total Enclosed

All donations are tax-deductible, and a receipt will be issued for contributions of \$10.00 or more.

Method of Payment: Cheque Visa Mastercard Amex

Name on Card _____

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

MAIL TO: Autism Society of BC, 301 – 3701 E. Hastings St., Burnaby, BC V5C 2H6
or FAX TO: (604) 434-0801



Your donations allow us to provide extra services, such as the Summer Reimbursement Program.

This information is for our files and is optional and strictly confidential. It is designed to help us better plan services for our members. We do NOT sell our membership list.

Name

Company/Organization

Address

Postal Code

E-mail

Phone (residence)

(business)

Fax

Child's Name

Date of Birth

Name and Age of Siblings

Parent's Occupation or Employer

Language(s) Spoken/Written at Home